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Creating an Environment for Growth: Utilizing Classical Spiritual Disciplines within a Spiritual Formation Curriculum for a Postmodern World

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CREATING AN ENVIRONMENT FOR GROWTH:
UTILIZING CLASSICAL SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINES WITHIN
A SPIRITUAL FORMATION CURRICULUM FOR A POSTMODERN WORLD

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO
THE FACULTY OF GEORGE FOX EVANGELICAL SEMINARY
IN CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE OF
DOCTOR OF MINISTRY

BY
JOHN R. MORLEY JR.

NEWBERG, OREGON

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DATE: MARCH 7, 2007

TITLE:

**CREATING AN ENVIRONMENT FOR GROWTH: UTILIZING
CLASSICAL SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINES WITHIN A SPIRITUAL
FORMATION CURRICULUM FOR A POSTMODERN WORLD**

***WE THE UNDERSIGNED CERTIFY THAT WE HAVE READ
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SCOPE AND QUALITY TO COMPLETE THE REQUIREMENTS
FOR THE DOCTOR OF MINISTRY IN
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**GEORGE FOX
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First and foremost, I want to thank our loving and wonderful Savior, who has been with me all along my journey. The Lord has met me, restored me, kept me, refined me, loved me and called me His beloved all along the path toward wholeness in Him.

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Dedicated to the memory of Elizabeth Delano Bertrand, a life lived simply for God.

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ABSTRACT

The postmodern college students of today are highly tolerant of others, technologically advanced, overly protected, and exceedingly busy. Excitedly though, many of these young men and women, desire to live in community and are returning to more traditional Christian values. These spiritually sensitive students are looking for ways to grow in their personal relationship with Christ and serve others in the world. They are coming to traditional Christian colleges in record numbers in search of opportunities to deepen their walk with Christ, but many of these students do not possess the necessary tools to do so. To help these young people grow in their faith during their college careers, institutions must develop programs which utilize classical spiritual disciplines to effectively nurture these students toward growth in Christ. If Christian colleges are going to assist postmoderns in building a strong foundation with Christ and possess the necessary tools for a lifelong journey with God, it is imperative to develop an intentional spiritual formation curriculum which integrates classical spiritual disciplines, which fosters growth, and which meets the needs of the postmodern generation.

Thesis

To assist the growth of college students in their walk with the Lord and equip them to impact the world for Jesus Christ, Christian colleges should intentionally teach and incorporate classical spiritual disciplines in all campus ministry programs. This curriculum will require careful evaluation and development of spiritual formation programs to ensure each initiative is presented in an appropriate format. It is vital to

present material in a format which will effectively connect with the Millennial students and address their unique needs. The postmodern students are prone to compartmentalize their Christian faith. Any spiritual growth initiative must focus on integrating Christian principles and spiritual disciplines into the whole of the student's life. Postmoderns, especially the Millennials, seem to possess similar values to those John Wesley addressed in 18th century England. It would be prudent to examine Wesley's model of theology and ministry as campus ministers endeavor to implement classical spiritual disciplines as a means of relaying God's grace. Wesley's theology and methods would seem to respond to the needs of these postmodern college students and meet them where they are.

About twenty years ago, I was introduced to a little Oswald Chambers book entitled *If Ye Shall Ask*¹. Reading this work really began my journey of spiritual growth utilizing the spiritual disciplines. As Chambers so simply asserts, "It is not so true that "Prayer changes things" as that. prayer changes us, and we change things."² I have had the privilege of working with college students for the last fifteen years. I realized a different model of ministering with college students was necessary to effectively assist them to grow in their personal walk with Christ. It seemed that an effective program would be made up of classical spiritual disciplines. This study will demonstrate the need for such an intentional program and suggest what such a program might look like.

¹ Oswald Chambers, *If Ye Shall Ask* (New York, NY: Dodd, Mead & Company, 1938).

² Ibid., 13.

Overview of Research

To begin this process I first identified the characteristics and needs of the postmodern generation. Then I began with an investigation of what it means to be created in the image of God, walking with God, and three journeys from the Scripture. I then reviewed methods John Wesley used to minister to the masses in 18th century England. I further defined and described why spiritual disciplines are important to the Christian journey and detailed six specific disciplines which seem to be integral to the postmodern's spiritual growth. Finally, I outlined what a four year curriculum for spiritual formation might look like.

Chapter 1 - Introduction

This work will begin with a narrative which reflects the ministry problem which I intend to address. Specifically, helping postmodern college students establish a strong spiritual foundation and gain the necessary tools for a lifelong journey with God. To enable the reader to more easily understand some of the terminology contained within this project certain "key definitions" I will present brief descriptions of these identified terms at the end of this chapter.

Chapter 2 - Characteristics of the Postmodern Generation

This chapter will identify some of the unique characteristics of the postmodern Millennial generation of today. The Millennials are far different from even their closely related Generation-X brothers and sisters. The proliferation and aptitude of these young adults toward technology has rapidly influenced cultural changes within the Christian college academy. Trends and cutting edge thoughts, which once took several years to

spread across the United States, are now briskly shared on myspace, in blogs, chat rooms, and via emails throughout the country.

In order to minister effectively with these postmodern students, Christian leaders must have an adequate understanding of who the Millennials are and how they think. This chapter will be a broad sweep of some of the basic characteristics of the postmodern Millennial generation. It will identify specific attitudes, behaviors, belief systems, and distinctives of college students today.

Chapter 3 - Biblical Perspectives on the Journey to God

This chapter will discuss what it means to be “created in the image of God” Humankind’s ability to be in a relationship with God stems from this original doctrine. Then three unique journeys toward wholeness with God will be reviewed. The lives and walks with God of Caleb, Terah, and Paul will be examined. Each journey will be examined in detail attempting to derive lessons for the Christian spiritual journey. The truths gleaned from these three journeys will then be considered in light of spiritual journeys of college students. Scripture provides wonderful examples of how one is to know Him more intimately and to follow Him more nearly on a daily basis.

If a sojourner is to learn how to go deeper in their personal walk of faith, then it is paramount they use the Word as the foremost authority and blueprint for developing a God-bearing life. The three unique journeys represent: someone who started a journey with God and finished strong (Caleb), someone who began a journey strong, but settled for less than God’s best (Terah), and someone who began their journey with God fighting against the Christian religion, but finished his journey consumed by his intimate relationship with God (Paul).

Each story represents a distinct character making particular choices which influence the sojourner's ability to maintain a lasting relationship with the Lord. Within each respective story and life there are truths and examples to be examined. These Biblical truths can have a significant influence on the postmodern's journey with God. It is only as believers emulate and imitate those disciplines, which Biblical patriarchs modeled, that Christians can grow deeper in their faith and experience the loving infilling of God. This union with Christ allows the disciple to find true peace, freedom from striving, and the fulfillment for which humanity is desperately longing.

Chapter 4 - Spiritual Disciplines for Postmodern Generation

This chapter will define the nature of spiritual formation. Participating in disciplined acts of formation provide the means for the thirsty-seeker to connect with God's living water. This chapter will identify six spiritual disciplines which seem strategic in effectively meeting the corresponding identified needs and characteristics of the Millennial generation students. These six practices are simplicity, solitude, contemplative prayer, Scripture reading, community, and service. The Millennial generation students possess unique characteristics and needs in relation to their spirituality. With the propensity toward busyness, technologically based interactive activities, and a strong desire to be with other people there is a deficiency in a basic understanding of the need for quiet times alone in prayer, contemplation, and listening to God. This generation is overly stimulated by video games, constantly connected to others via the cell phone, and inundated with information from the internet. Teaching the need for recovering the disciplines of simplicity, solitude, quiet prayer, and reflective Bible reading is an important goal and vital aspect of any spiritual growth plan.

Chapter 5 - Wesleyan Methodology for the Postmodern Generation

The fourth chapter will discuss John Wesley's theology, ministry perspectives, and his methodology of ministry. Each of Wesley's methodologies will then be related to how it might be considered for working with the postmodern generation. Wesley's commitment to adhering to means of grace, willingness to meet people where they are, dedication to serving others, and belief that Christian growth best occurred in community with others will be the focus of this section. The small group band and class meeting initiatives have long been seen as the central impetus for the Wesleyan revival. John Wesley's vision to share the truth of Scripture to all of the 18th century English society has been referred to as one the most effective evangelistic movements the Christian world has ever known. Initiatives like these influenced a sixty year revival and seem uniquely fitted to ministry with the postmodern generation.

Chapter 6 - A Spiritual Formation Curriculum

A plan will be outlined for integrating the spiritual disciplines into a four-year spiritual formation curriculum. This outline will represent and identify specific programs and initiatives that will most effectively connect with college students. This will serve as the primer for what the overall program will look like and identify the necessity of each activity in assisting students develop holistic relationships with Christ. Without such specific plans we are often left to attempting to initiate appropriate activities without a broad based vision or goal. To ensure the success and fruitfulness of such a program a comprehensive program matrix must be developed and committed to by an institution.

A second model for specifically implementing the six identified spiritual disciplines will also be presented. This additional model will serve as a complementary

initiative to promote spiritual formation. This type of program allows staff to first seek the Holy Spirit and invite God to move in and through the entire program. Asbury College, will serve as a representative Christian college to demonstrate how such a program might be implemented.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Narrative

Friday, August 15th had finally come. This is the day the freshmen arrive and everyone anticipates. It is when all the new students and their parents descend on campus for fall semester and the new year. The past couple of years students have been bringing more and more “stuff” to fit into their dorm rooms: computers, televisions, stereos, Xbox, and all the comforts of home their parents can fit in their Honda Passport. Some parents wanted their children to be so comfortable they had to rent trailers to carry all the stuff. I wonder if this year will be the same? I have also wondered several other things as the new school year drew near: will they bring a new hunger to know God? Will they be teachable? Will they feel welcomed into our community? Will they leave college different? Will they graduate with the necessary foundations and tools to continue a lifelong journey with God? The students of today definitely are different than those in the past; I sure hope we are ready to meet their needs.

As I was sitting in the office organizing forms and rosters, a bright eyed squeaky-clean student bounded through the door. He was donning a “No Fear: Jesus is with you” t-shirt and exuded the confidence that went along with his shirt. His parents were in tow right behind him, of course carrying the first load of furnishings for his room. He was definitely a freshman, here to conquer the world of college life and begin to make his mark on the world.

Mark: “Hey, I’m Mark Jones”

Staff: “Welcome to Asbury, Mark”

Mark: "I'm in room 312 on the Zoo. That's where my dad lived when he went here."

Staff: "Third Main has a great tradition."

Dad: "Yea, I wanted to make sure he was on the best floor at Asbury. I know how much I grew from living up there. Is it still a good place to live?"

Mom: "I'm sure it's not the same, honey. Where is the nearest Wal-Mart? We have lots of stuff to get for Mark's room."

Staff: "It's in Nicholasville, just eight miles away. I can give you directions."

Mark: "I'm gonna major in Bible. When I finish, I'm going to go back to my home church and be the youth director, our current director, Pete, is way cool and organizes the best activities. I think I could do well there people really like me and I've got great ideas for things to do."

Dad: "We go to Sunshine United Methodist and Mark's a strong Wesleyan Holiness guy, he should do well here. The college is still Methodist right?"

Mark: "I'm so excited to be here. When do the rest of the students start coming?"

Staff: "Freshmen arrive today. The returning students come in on Sunday."

Mark: "Good! My parents told me during these four years I'll make the friends I'll have for life. I'm real excited to meet the rest of the guys on my hall."

Staff: "There are a lot of great guys who go to school here."

Mom: "So how do we get to his room?"

After this brief introduction, Mark and his parents began the seemingly endless unloading of their Suburban. Of course with the help of RAs, SLAs and several other upperclassmen who were available to help.

Two months later in early October, I received a phone call from Mark's parents worried that he was not doing well. He had not called home in a while. I decided to go up to Third Main and see how Mark was doing. I found Mark in his room playing Xbox by himself.

Staff: "Hey Mark, How's it going?"

Mark: (without looking up from the game on the screen) “OK, I’m playing the game my parents got me while they were still here. I’ve got to meet with my TAG group in a minute for dinner.”

Staff: “That’s good. So how are you doing so far? Have you met many people?”

Mark: “Yea, freshman orientation was great. We did all kinds of crazy things and I met a lot of people. But, I am glad that is over with, man we were going non-stop for like everyday. I barely had time to come back here and play a couple games or hang out on the floor.”

Mark: “Man, I met this one girl and I have been spending a lot of time with her and her roommate. She’s cool. I signed up to be part of the prison ministry group and a weekend ministry team.”

Staff: “Those are good things.”

Mark: “Yea, I thought I could help them. I’ve done stuff like that at home.”

Staff: “Great”

Staff: “How’s it going with your roommate?”

Mark: “He’s cool, we don’t have that much in common. He’s from Michigan and is a pretty strong Calvinist. I think they think they are the only one’s getting into Heaven. Which is wacko. He didn’t know much about Asbury. Thankfully, it’s non-denominational. But he’s cool...I’ve never been around one of them much before. There is another guy Paul on our floor who is just here because his parents wouldn’t pay for him to go anywhere else. I don’t think he is a Christian. We hang out a lot together playing ball and games. He was supposed to be here now. He’s probably surfing the net in his room. He’s a computer junky and is really into some funky stuff, but we get along.”

Staff: “Funky stuff?”

Mark: “He lives here in town, so he has lots of friends. I think he goes out with those guys and does stuff. He’s not hurting anyone, so it’s all good.”

Staff: “Have you tried to talk to him about any of that?”

Mark: “No, I don’t want him to think that I am condemning or judging him. Paul’s a good dude and everyone likes him. “

Mark: “Getting to meet all these great people has been the best part about coming to college. I never thought there could be so many people who wanted to grow in Christ

together and be just like me. I really like the worship meetings we have on Wednesdays. They are great. God has really been talking to me through them.”

Staff: “That’s great... What kind of things has He been saying to you?”

Mark: “Mostly about love and how much He loves me and wants me share that love.”

Staff: “Wow, that’s neat.”

Mark: “It is awesome to be with all those other kids singing choruses and they always have a kickin’ praise band. I think God might be calling me to be a worship leader.”

Staff: “Really, why do you think that?”

Mark: “I don’t know. Every time I am singing and worshipping the Lord, He just feels so close. I think He wants me to help other people have that same experience.”

Mark: “I think that is what Jesus wants me to be about, singing and worshipping Him.”

Staff: “What else are you doing to build a relationship with God?”

Mark: “Not much, singing and worshipping Him is enough right now.”

Mark: “Hey, can you do anything about the people right above us. They are jerks. We’ve asked them to turn down their music like almost everyday. They say they will, but their idiots and just blare it again the next time they come in the room. We’re planning on trashing their room over the weekend.”

Staff: “Have you talked to your RA about the situation yet? I’m sure he’d be willing to help in the situation. You probably should do that, before trashing their room.”

Mark: “Yea, that’s true”

Mark: “Yea, my RA Sam’s a cool guy. I need to make some time to talk with him. He stays to himself a lot and is not always out and about messing with us. Hey, my air conditioning hasn’t been working right and the cable on the TVs doesn’t have MTV. Seems like with all the money we are paying to go here we should get MTV and FoxSports South so I can watch the Marlins. (Mark looks down at his watch) I need to finish this game before I take off for my group meeting, thanks for coming by I’ll talk to you later.”

Staff: "It's been good to talk with you. Come over to my office some time to say Hi!"

As I headed back the steps to my office, I ran into a very sweaty freshman running up the stairs.

Staff: "Hey, Brent!"

Brent: "What's up?"

Staff: "Where you coming from?"

Brent: "I've been in the Luce Center playing ball. I've been playing four days a week. Our floor is going out together tonight to Applebee's."

Staff: "Great, you're a better man than me."

Brent: "I'm working three nights a week at UPS, working with Big Brother and taking a full load."

Staff: "Sounds like you are crazy busy."

Brent: "Yea, but I can handle it. God will give me strength. Talk to you later."

With those words, Brent romps up the last set of stairs.

Wait this is a teachable moment, I better say something that will challenge or encourage him.

Staff: "Make sure you make time for yourself and to be alone with God."

I am not sure he heard me, but at least I tried to say something. I walked down the steps grinning and shaking my head and pondered the journey Mark and Brent have been on and the task before our staff.

A myriad of thoughts, ideas and questions ran through my head. The new students coming to college are so different from even the ones just a couple years ago. What could we do for Brent and Mark and all the students just like them? How do we ensure they have a quality experience and grow during their four years at college? What do we need to do to make sure they have the tools to continue to go deeper with God? Are we helping

them create enough space for God to move in their lives and for them to integrate all they are experiencing?

Students of today have been coddled by their parents. These young people have been told all their lives how good they are. Yet, they have not been given many tools to succeed. As postmoderns they have a positive outlook on life. They want to live in community with others, but they do not know how to find it and have minimal healthy models to follow. They possess a hunger to worship and experience God more deeply, but do not have the necessary tools to develop an abiding relationship with Christ. Theirs is the first generation that really has the opportunity to touch the whole world for Jesus, if we can help them grow in their relationships with Christ and prepare them for lives of service.

I almost stumbled as I slipped down the steps under the weight of the task that lay before us. Mark and Brent have the potential to be amazing leaders here on campus and throughout the world. If we can help them connect to Jesus, become a part of our community, and prepare them for ministry in the world. What a daunting task, but I believe God has given us rich resources to meet these new students where they are. If we help them understand the dynamics of spiritual growth and expose them to some intentional spiritual disciplines our students will have the means to experience God in new ways. The most difficult task will be to help them understand that the spiritual journey is not one they control. Following God is about relinquishing control and making room for the Lord to move in their hearts. This is going to be a tough lesson for the students to learn. Thankfully, we have an awesome God, who loves each of us

unconditionally and longs to have a deep and abiding relationship with us. I know I don't always seek Him well, but I know I sure need Him every moment.

Entering the office, I quickly got on the computer and did a Google search for "spirituality and Millennials." Maybe, the better idea would be to just stop and pray. I don't know. Thank God, I do not have to do this alone. Thank God, there are wonderful resources of time tested disciplines that have allowed saints of the past meet God face-to-face. I wonder if the things of the past will be effective for working with the students of today?

Problem

How to effectively assist Millennial college students grow in their relationship with Christ, integrate their faith into everyday life (choices, relationships, etc.), and be prepared for a lifelong journey with God.

Key Definitions

Slang and vocabulary from campus to campus differ greatly. It is almost as if each campus has its own unique vocabulary. These words and phrases are typically used to describe belief systems, staff positions, and various programs or activities. For the purpose of understanding some of the terms contained within this work, specific items will be more specifically defined to add clarity for the reader.

Postmodern generation. The postmodern generation (pomo) has been determined to include all those students who were born roughly between 1982 and 2000. Millennials vary greatly even from their brothers and sisters in the previous generation (Generation X born between 1965 and 1975). There have been numerous labels placed on this

generation; the Internet Generation, Digital Generation, Nintendo Generation, Echo Boomers, Nexters, Generation Y, Generation Next, Bridgers, Mosaic, and most commonly the Millennials.¹ This title is in reference to the high school class of 2000 and entering college at the start of the new millennium. Each of these titles refers to some prevalent aspect or unique characteristic of this generation, which will be further developed in chapter two.

IMing. There are slang and key terminology used by the current generation. Many of these refer to the use of technology, which include, IMing and text messaging. Instant Messaging (IMing) describes a method of corresponding with other people using the internet. Through IMing the sender has the ability to carry on a conversation over the internet through sending short typed-out messages back and forth to someone else. These messages often contain shortened representative phrases or acronyms such as, “lol” which means “laugh out loud.” The use of these types of shortened or hyphenated words allows conversations to occur at a much faster rate.

Text messaging. Text messaging is the same type of communication except this takes place over cell phones or other hand held communication devices. This type of communication is quite popular and students are prone to text message each other, more than actually talk on the cell phone.

Christian colleges. The focus of this work is on Christian college students of the postmodern generation. What delineates a private Christian College from other colleges and universities? In addition to educating the mind Christian colleges typically have as

¹ Claire Raines, *Managing Millennials* (Generations at Work, 2002, accessed February 2003); available from <http://www.generationsatwork.com/articles/millennials.htm>.

significant part of their ethos, addressing ministering to the students' hearts and glorifying God. Even though how this takes place and what a campus might look like may widely vary, at the core of "Christian" institutions is an intentionality, which creates an environment where students can come and grow in their personal relationships with Jesus Christ. Activities like, weekly chapel, special focus programs, community service, small discipleship groups, and the idea of Christian community, make up the discipleship dynamic of a Christian College. These schools are private because they espouse a particular belief system, sometimes with a denominational affiliation, and expect students to adhere to some type of community life standards. These standards are often centered around moral behavioral choices regarding, things like: premarital sex, drinking, and use of illicit drugs. Most Christian schools include in their mission statement a commitment to integrating faith, living and learning. For example, Asbury College's motto is "erudition et religio" translated "spiritual vitality and academic excellence."

Resident Assistant. Within all colleges there is terminology and acronyms used to describe various places, positions, and events. It is important to describe some of these terms in order to add understanding to the following discussion. Residence halls are the dormitories where a majority of the students are housed. Resident Assistants (RA) are students hired by the school to monitor a floor or wing. At a Christian College the resident assistants' role would involve building relationships with the members of their area and serving as a mentor.

Freshman transition leaders. Transition leaders (TAG-transition and guidance) are employed to assist freshmen make a smooth transition into college.

Spiritual life staff. Many schools also appoint specific students to serve as chaplains (SLA spiritual life assistants or SLC spiritual life coordinators) for respective areas. The focus of these students is to coordinate specific spiritual activities, creating an environment conducive to Christian growth. These activities might include activities like: prayer meetings, small group meetings, and community service events.

Chapel. Chapels are often a central component of the spiritual life program of Christian Colleges. These gatherings of the entire campus community – students, staff, faculty and administration -- reflect a typical church service. A wide of range of speakers make up the majority of the chapel services. These speakers share messages and talks on a variety of topics and issues. Most importantly these speakers present the Gospel message and challenge the students in their spiritual lives. Many schools are currently implementing the arts into chapels with dance, drama, and other creative arts programs. Christian colleges usually hold at least one chapel service a week. Many choose to organize several weekly meetings. Some schools make chapel attendance mandatory, while others schools have less restrictive optional attendance policies. Chapel is often viewed as one of the key characteristics of a Christian college and at the heart of the campus community's desire to create an environment for students to grow in their walk with God.

Campus Ministry Department. Most Christian colleges will contain a Campus Ministry Department. The role of the staff in this department is directed specifically toward ministering to the students' spiritual life. To foster spiritual formation, the campus ministry department staff provide leadership in organizing the chapel program, outreach opportunities, retreats, and all aspects of on-campus discipleship.

Statement of faith. Another characteristic of a “Christian college” is that faculty members are usually asked to commit to some type of statement of faith. This is done to ensure while in the classroom students are exposed to wonderful thinkers and teachers. Who also serve as models of a vibrant relationship with Christ. Asking faculty members to adhere to the institution’s statement of faith is another way to focus every aspect of a student’s experience around an integrated core of faith.

Spiritual formation. Spiritual Formation is an important aspect of the Christian college experience. This is the process whereby the believer can grow into Christlikeness or Holiness. It is the transformation of a disciple into a clearer reflection of the image of God. This will take place through a myriad of activities, experiences, and personal relationships. A further definition and description of the process of spiritual formation will be discussed in chapter five.

Holiness. Holiness, which can be termed “moving to the center,” refers to the believer being surrendered to God, set apart for the purposes and the service of God. It describes the heart of the disciple with God being the core of identity and service.

Means of grace. The term “means of grace” refers to activities, experiences, and people God chooses to use to minister to believers to help move them closer to Him. These means could include: prayer, fasting, service to others, and the sacraments to name only a few. For John Wesley the means were divided into two groups, works of piety and works of mercy. Both of these will be investigated further in chapter four. The classical spiritual disciplines would be included in any list of “means of grace” God would use to build the faith of a seeker. These practices or habits are built into the disciple’s life to allow the disciple to experience God more fully and make room for Him to work.

Although there is not a specific list of disciplines, it would include activities such as:
fasting, prayer, scripture study and service.

See the Appendix B for a more complete list of spiritual disciplines.

CHAPTER TWO

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE POSTMODERN MILLENNIAL GENERATION

Introduction

Over the past few years the make-up of students arriving on Christian college campuses has begun to look radically different. The postmodern students are quite different even from the students who attended the same Christian schools just a few short years ago. The arrival of the newest generation of students has brought with it a wide array of noticeably distinctive characteristics and has ushered in a paradigm shift for campus ministry programs. Campus ministers who work with this new breed of college students need to be aware of these characteristics if staff members are to understand where these students are coming from and effectively minister with them. This chapter will identify some of the unique characteristics and thoughts of the Millennial generation. This basic understanding of who these students are is necessary if Christian colleges are to effectively address needs, develop relevant programs and initiatives best suited to foster spiritual growth among these young adults.

Scholars have had a hard time naming this current generation, using terms such as the Internet Generation, Digital Generation, Nintendo Generation, Echo Boomers, Nexters, Generation Y, Generation Next, Bridgers, Mosaic, and most commonly the Millennials to describe them.¹ In response to the Millennials being overly coddled, several colleagues and I have termed them the “rub my belly” generation. “Don’t

¹ Claire Raines, *Managing Millennials* (Generations at Work, 2002, accessed February 2003); available from <http://www.generationsatwork.com/articles/millennials.htm>.

confront me, don't challenge me, just make me feel good about myself." However, all readily agree that the current generation has the potential to be the next great generation. This expectation is due in part to the sheer number of those who were born between 1982 and 2000. These postmoderns are seventy million strong compared to forty-one million in Generation-X.¹ Of the seventy million, fourteen million Millennials are children of immigrants. As such, the Millennials have become the most racially and ethnically diverse generation in American history.²

Aside from its enormity there are several other traits leading to such lofty expectations. The Millennials are the most educated, wealthiest, and most technologically advanced generation. They are extremely optimistic and highly desired by those who care for them.³ These young adults have been told they can change the world for good and fully expect to do so. Much of their conduct is a direct attempt to redeem what they believe has been cynicism, negative characteristics, and failures of their older siblings and parents in the Generation-X and Boomer generations. Neil Howe and William Strauss who have extensively researched and written about American generations, believe the Millennials will "entirely recast the image of youth from downbeat and alienated to upbeat and engaged—with potentially seismic consequences for America."⁴

The proliferation and aptitude of these young adults toward technology has rapidly influenced cultural changes within the college academy. Trends and cutting edge

¹ Neil Howe and William Strauss, *Millennials Rising: The Next Great Generation* (New York, NY: Vintage Books, 2000), 14.

² Ibid., 85.

³ Ibid., 43.

⁴ Ibid., 4.

thoughts, which once took several years to spread across the United States, are now briskly shared on personal blogs, through Myspace and Facebook postings, and via emails sent throughout the country. In the past students would communicate through phone calls, cell phones, and emailing one another. Students of today are more prone to communicating via text messaging and responding to items placed on their personal Myspace or Facebook websites.

The Millennials have been characterized as having the ability to paradoxically think simultaneously.⁵ No longer is truth an either/or proposition. Postmoderns wonder why truth cannot be both/and. Because of this tendency to be syncretistic, the Millennials are often a generation of contradictions. It would seem the frequent wide and varied contrasts would result in some internal conflicts, but these young people appear to be able to deal with the ambiguity and incongruity with no problem.

The postmoderns are regarded as being open to discovering truth from different forms and forums, overly scheduled, passionately tolerant, and overly-protected by their parents. They are committed to building strong relationships and place a high value on doing things together in community. Despite the commitment to relationships, community, and the extensive involvement of their parents, these students have been referred to as an abandoned and lonely generation.⁶ These young adults are looking more to peers for truth and help in understanding spiritual matters. For the Millennials, spiritual truth and dogma are not found simply from being connected to a system, familial belief or a particular denomination or theological tradition. Instead, these students are open to

⁵ Leonard Sweet, "Strategic Vision for the Church," (George Fox University, Portland, OR: 2004).

⁶ Chap Clark, *Hurt: Inside the World of Today's Teenagers* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2004), 43.

discovering “real” truth from a variety of sources and venues. No longer is it safe to believe that the students entering Christian colleges today possess a sound understanding and support for basic Christian principles. However, many of these students desire to be connected to something larger than themselves, which provides a wonderful place of entry for the Gospel message and the Christian life.

Postmodern Characteristics

Relationally Oriented

For the Millennial generation, friends and family are paramount. Building and maintaining strong relationships are the highest priorities for these young people. They are highly team-oriented and would rather do things together with others than seek personal achievement. They enjoy relating in interactive small groups and are prone to participating in group dates because “the more the merrier.” “Community” is all about the team or group members experiencing a sense of camaraderie and belonging. Sadly, most young people do not have quality models of what a healthy community looks like and have not been given the necessary tools to effectively develop strong relationships with others. In my nine years of living and working with college students in residence life, I have found that more and more students are coming to our campus without the necessary social skills to build the kind of relationships they so desire. There is a void in their social development that does not allow them to readily move into and develop a healthy community. This lack of skill is evidenced through their inability to separate other’s differing thoughts and opinions from all of whom the other person is. A shortcoming that

produces thoughts like: “they don’t agree with me or they think differently than me, so I cannot be their friend.”

This belonging-focused definition of Christian community has resulted in the formation of a false sense of community for many postmodern young adults. In these communities the highest good is not all members walking uprightly and growing in their personal relationship with Christ. Instead, it is ensuring everyone feels a part of the group not “judged” or marginalized. False beliefs have resulted in community members often being unwilling to challenge friends who might be making harmful choices for fear the confronted individuals might feel judged and thus alienated from the group. One has to wonder what the members of the community have lost in choosing to settle for pseudo-community. How much more fruitful growth may have been derived if leaders and Christian communities were more committed to living in authentic biblical community? One can surmise that these young people have not been provided healthy models of community and the tools necessary to create and maintain such a community because parents, leaders, and even Christian servants have failed them. Nevertheless, it will be the Millennials commitment to forming genuine community that will bring about change and growth. This truth should make the formation of a sense of true community a high priority for all Christian colleges.

Parents continue to have the greatest influence and impact on the lives of young people. However, due to the high incidence of divorce and abuse within the family, this generation has many deep-seeded wounds, scars, and a corresponding high degree of conflict. Divorce rates in America continue to hover above fifty percent and reports of child neglect and abuse are at all time highs. In spite of such discouraging statistics, these

postmodern students still cling to the high value and importance of family. In his exposé on attitudes and characteristics of teenagers, *Real Teens: A Contemporary Snapshot of Youth Culture*, George Barna maintains that “though they have been deeply wounded by their families of origin these young people have a deep commitment to achieving family health in the future.”⁷ This is supported by the belief of over three-fourths of the young people (78%) surveyed by Barna, who identified their parents as having the most significant influence on their lives.⁸ Howe and Strauss’s research further tempers this acknowledgement as they state, “When Millennial teens are asked to identify ‘the major causes’ of America’s problems, their seven most popular answers all pertain to what they perceive as an excess of adult individualism.”⁹ They want and expect their parents and other adults to influence their lives, but have seen these same adults fail in this endeavor because they are caught up in worrying out their own needs and issues.

Not only has the nuclear family failed this generation, other important role models have also fallen terribly short. In the last decade there have been significant failures on the part of numerous adult leaders that have been widely reported by the media. Teenagers have seen the former President of the United States, Bill Clinton, bend the truth to cover his failures; Enron CEO Kenneth Lay, former Enron president, and other business leaders selfishly embezzle millions of dollars at the expense of entire companies; and even Major League Baseball players, participants in America’s national pastime, implicated in the illegal use of steroids to get ahead. Because of the failure of

⁷ George Barna, *Real Teens: A Contemporary Snapshot of Youth Culture* (Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 2001), 61.

⁸ Ibid., 73.

⁹ Howe and Strauss, 181.

adult-led institutions that were once the foundation of American life, the Millennials are wary of adults and the organizations they represent. These mixed messages have caused the Millennials to endure much confusion and finally to look outside the traditional family unit for love, support, and encouragement. As Jimmy Long, a long time area director with InterVarsity, surmises, “the Millennials have experienced so much pain from within their respective families, they now put more trust in their friends than their family resulting in the formation of ‘urban tribes.’”¹⁰ This banding together is played out in the most popular television shows and movies of this generation. We hear the stories of groups of friends living, working, and journeying together from *X-Men*, *Lord of the Rings* and *Harry Potter* to TV series like MTV’s *The Real World* and *Survivor*. The conviction has become that even though families and institutions may be dysfunctional and have failed the Millennials their friends, their new tribe, will always be there. This reality is personified in the lyrics of the theme song from *Friends* one of the most popular TV shows of the last decade.

No one told you it was going to be that way.
 Your job's a joke. You're broke. Your love life's DOA.
 It's like you're always stuck in second gear.
 But I'll be there for you when the rain starts to fall.
 I'll be there for you like I've been there before.
 I'll be there for you.

The Christian college community has an amazing opportunity to fill the gaps that have been left by our modern society. If campus ministry staff are to assist these young sojourners along their journey toward Christ, leaders must commit themselves to providing the needed models, support, and nurturing atmosphere necessary to create an

¹⁰ Jimmy Long, *Emerging Hope: A Strategy for Reaching the Postmodern Generations* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2004), 51.

environment of growth. Most importantly campus leaders must live transparent godly lives before their students. These healthy models will encourage the postmoderns to be authentic and real with themselves and those around them. It is in this communal environment that growth toward God can most readily take place. Creating this type of transparent environment and Christian community is one of the main goals of campus ministry programs. At Asbury College, helping students be rightly related to God, self, and others are integral components of the mission statement for the residence life department.

Favored and Over-Protected

The hope in and attitude toward the Millennial generation is lofty. In fact, Mark Tittley, a long time youth worker, recognizes that there is “almost an angelic characterization of Millennials as opposed to the almost satanic view of Xers.”¹¹ Howe and Strauss have acknowledged that “the Millennials are indeed special, since they are demonstrably reversing a wide array of negative youth trends.”¹² The former cynicism and pessimism of adults toward Gen-X young people has faded and has been replaced with an overabundance of positivism toward the current generation. The adult world has seen this trend and is committed to protecting, empowering, and supplying these young people with everything seemingly necessary in order to be successful.

¹¹ Mark Tittley, *Ministry and the Millennial Generation* (2004, accessed November 2004); available from www.next-wave.org/may99/millennials.htm.

¹² Howe and Strauss, 16.

Because of all that has been provided for them, young people experience an enormous amount of pressure to succeed. The postmoderns confidently believe they can make a difference in their world and are prepared to gather together as a team and make it happen. The skepticism of former generations is gone. Barna reports that eighty percent of this generation is optimistic about the future.¹³ These young people believe higher education is what will make a difference in their lives, and seventy-five percent report that they intend to go to college.¹⁴ But the reason for attending college has changed dramatically with today's college students. Where students once attended college to try to develop an effective meaning of life, today they desire a college education because they believe it will help them secure a better job and thus be "better off" financially.¹⁵

Parents are going to extraordinary measures to protect and supply for the youth of today. Lawmakers have passed an abundance of laws directed at protecting children, and more money than ever has been allocated to improve the educational experience of young people. Parents are reaching deeper into their pockets to provide for their children. Research from Harris Interactive estimates that America's youth, Generation Y, has \$175.1 billion dollars per year spending power in today's economy. Of this, parents are paying \$55.9 billion to cover their children's spending habits.¹⁶ The boomer generation noted for being the "me" generation has now expanded their moniker for the present generation to "my children and me." David Perini reports that "parents have learned from

¹³ Barna, 46.

¹⁴ Ibid., 80.

¹⁵ David G. Myers, *The American Paradox: Spiritual Hunger in an Age of Plenty* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2000).

¹⁶ Kathryn Katz, *The Buy Now Pay Later-Generation Y's Budget Deficit* (emediawire.com, 2003, accessed April 2004); available from http://www.creditguard.org/press_release_2.html.

mistakes in the past, it seems, but are making all-new ones, like neglect, lack of discipline, and a theory of relativity that gives kids the belief that whatever they do is “okay” or “right for them.”¹⁷ Parents are pervasively involved in all aspects of their children’s lives and are careful to schedule as much as they can possibly fit into a week to ensure their offspring are well rounded and have experienced the fullness of all that life has to offer.

Parents of today are accurately referred to as “hovering” or “helicopter parents” because of their over-involvement and desire to manage all facets of their children’s lives even from a distance. It has been remarkable to watch this trend take place as freshman arrived on our campus. During my last two years serving as residence director at Asbury College, I had more conversations with parents regarding the needs of their children than the previous seven years combined. The concerns ranged from “their room is too cold” to “they are having problems with their car, can you help them get it fixed?” I even knew of a mother who called one of our male students to discuss why he had broken up with her daughter. Though parents believe they are helping their children, in the end they are actually doing more harm than good. This well-intended parental immersion has impeded students’ ability to make healthy choices, develop responsibility and thus inhibited growth.

This excessive control and over-protective nurturing has produced some serious negative effects on the Millennial generation. These students are stunted in their personal growth, and acceptance of responsibility. Even when they go off to college they are connected to their parents twenty-four hours a day via the cell phone or internet. This

¹⁷ David Perini, *It's a Teenage World* (2002, accessed February 2003); available from <http://www.surrealstudio.org/psychology/superhereos.html>.

continual parental influence has caused some students difficulty in building a new community and adjusting to college life. Since their boomer parents have made so many of the important decisions in their lives many postmoderns have not been required to make important decisions on their own and grow the requisite muscles for successfully working through ethical, moral, and other life choices. Douglas Rushkoff refers to the societal failures of the postmodern generation this way, “Born into a society where traditional templates have proven themselves quaint at best, and mass-murderous at worst, Busters feel liberated from the constraints of ethical systems, but also somewhat cast adrift.”¹⁸ Another bi-product of being so excessively catered to and overly esteemed is a sense of entitlement. Anyone who works closely with postmodern young adults can readily attribute selfish thoughts and attitudes to these students like: “we are the best of the best and the hope of America rests upon us, and you should treat us accordingly,” or “my parents pay a lot of money for me to attend this college, so I should be allowed to do whatever I want to do.” Instead of being content and satisfied with all the wonderful gifts bestowed up them, Millennials are prone to want even more and are willing to throw morals aside to get what they think they deserve.

It is unreal to watch parents literally pull up to residence halls at Christian colleges with U-Haul trailers filled with their student’s stuff and promptly unload it all into a tiny college dorm room. There is no regard for simplicity or even courtesy to the poor roommate who has to maneuver through the maze of belongings and hopefully find room to fit in their things. The idea of sharing is not even a consideration. The prevalent thought is “this is my stuff and I need it all.” If this is not bad enough, parents are quick

¹⁸ Douglas Rushkoff, *The GenX Reader* (New York, NY: Ballantine, 1994), 4.

to get directions to the nearest Wal-Mart to purchase those items they forgot or they know their student will need in order to be more comfortable. I am happy to report that most freshmen do realize how much unnecessary stuff they have, while packing up at the end of the year. They have learned a little lesson in simplicity and continue to bring much less each of their remaining three years. Experience is often a very good teacher.

Weak Morality

Probably the most significant impact of parental permissiveness and overindulgence for the postmodern generation is in the area of morality. The gauge of what is morally right and appropriate is “whatever” the individual or group deems as acceptable. With no moral compass provided by adult leaders, the fabric of postmodern values is becoming more liberal to accommodate personal choice and permissiveness. Boomer generation parents and society have not provided anchors for the Millennials to hold on to. While the American culture continues to bombard students with images and examples of doing whatever seems right in the eye of the individual with little regard for the consequences or impact on others. As Wendy Zoba contends, “this has placed our children in the unlikely position of being shamelessly exposed to the nitty-gritty realities of a morally vacuous adult world, while still possessing their childlike outlook and emotional faculties.”¹⁹

The postmodern society has become a sensate culture driven by the desire for the material, which will bring the next momentary sense of happiness. Sensate culture desires what is bigger, flashier, louder, faster, and the most exciting. In this type of environment,

¹⁹ Wendy Murray Zoba, *Generation 2k: What Parents and Others Need to Know About the Millennials* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1999), 56.

Pastor Richard Dunn in *Shaping the Spiritual Lives of Students*, has defined the postmodern reality as “what one can experience.”²⁰ For the postmodern, the experience is paramount. This mindset has transformed much of our society into a frantic pursuit of pleasure with no regard for values, morality, or others. In this self indulgent culture, as participants in North American postmodern culture shift in their experience and expression of what is “good” (in the case of pleasure pragmatism) “what brings me pleasure,” the moral conscience of the culture shifts accordingly. To remain consistent with the commitment to tolerance, moral consciousness must be morphed to encompass previously divergent moral values and the definition of society’s moral center changes. As experiences are more and more unable to produce the necessary degree of pleasure, the moral center has to be continually redefined to provide for new acceptable pleasure-producing experiences. There is little deterrent to change this type of behavior. Sexual intimacy rarely produces negative consequences. In the odd chance significant relational problems do arise, in television shows like *The OC*, characters readily deal with the issue within-the-hour time slot with no lasting effects.

Technology Based, Compartmental and Constant Change

Author Sydney Lewis calls the Millennials “the most plugged-in generation ever.” Their electronic world has become their community, their tribe, their family.²¹ This generation could easily be termed the iPod generation. Duke University went as far as

²⁰ Richard R. Dunn, *Shaping the Spiritual Life of Students: A Guide for Youth Workers, Pastors, Teachers & Campus Ministers* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2001), 40.

²¹ Wendy Zoba, *The Class of '00'* (Christianity Today, 1997, accessed January 2004); available from <http://www.ctlibrary.com/1046>.

presenting each member of the freshman class of 2004 with a new iPod, which was deemed an educational tool. One does have to wonder what effect the entire freshman class walking around campus with their earphones plugged into the iPod all day has on community development.

The way the Millennials process information and make choices is one of the most lasting effects of being exposed to so much technology. Television, Satellite Radio, and especially the Internet offer any number of choices. Don't like what you see or hear? Click a button and move on. As Kevin Eckstrom reports in the Religious News Service, "Researchers say the attention span of Millennials has been so shortened that it's hard for them to keep focused on much of anything."²² The remote control has become the symbolic icon for this generation. They can multi-task with ease and "maximize" the technology by watching several television stations at the same time. There is no need for PIP (picture in picture) since they can flip between several channels with no difficulty or loss of content. College students are easily bored and thrive on constant change, thus the remote fits them perfectly. Change is but a button push away.

Since media images are continually changing, the Millennials have developed the ability to fragment their focus and spread it across several different fields. Jumping back and forth between several TV shows is quite common. This compartmentalization has spread into other areas of their lives, especially their spiritual lives. For many postmodern Christians there is no correlation between personal beliefs, God's truth, and everyday actions. This compartmentalization has produced a disconnect between what one says they believe and choices they make in everyday life. Their relativistic nature and the lack

²² David Eckstrom, *Millennials Search for Serious Faith* (1999, accessed February 2003); available from http://www.baptiststandard.com/1999/10_13/pages/millennials.html.

of integration of faith, living, and learning allow postmoderns to live their lives in many different worlds, between which they can fluidly move with no regard for how Christian values, principles, and standards should influence every facet of who they are. For the Millennials faith is a personal thing that makes up simply one component of their lives. When a questionable activity or decision arises that might not fit within a Christian value system they seem to have no problem quarantining the Christian side of who they are.

The most popular activity for many young men is networking several students' computers together and then competing in interactive games like *Madden Football*, *Counter Strike* or *Halo*. Video games are a participatory narrative journey from level to level until you "beat" the game. The problem is in real life students cannot save their game right before they try a difficult move or make a suspect decision. In the digital world of computer games, if you die, you can just reboot the game and live the experience all over again. There is no connection between choices made and potential impact, thus no consequences.

Continual playing of computer games or video gaming systems like Xbox and Playstation has resulted in many Millennials demonstrating an electronic haze and a correlating dulling of creative processes. Combined with the exhaustive and detailed scheduling of activities and the barrage of hours spent staring at a video screen playing games has left little time for free play. It seems there is almost a numbing of the brain. If young people are not expressly entertained they do not know what to do with themselves. No one knows how to take an old can or stick and create a game or activity that could last for hours. Instead, most young adults move right into a state of boredom. College ministries certainly cannot compete with the flash of MTV programming or the attraction

of the newest video game. As such, the model of campus ministry employed throughout most of the 1980's and 90's must be retooled to meet the needs of the current generation.

On any given night around college campuses there are numerous guys all plugged in together playing video games for hours. It has been such a struggle for residence life staffs to deal with this reality. RAs would organize great interactive and fun events, only to have a small group attend. Other staff members are more content to connect with the fellow residents through donning a screen name and competing against the guys next door or across campus. These students often wind up playing computer games into the early hours of the morning, while never having personal interaction, except for the next day during meals together when the rehash last night's game and make plans for the following night's gaming.

These students are digital natives having never known life without the Internet and email is not a new and helpful way of communicating, but a part of normal life. Chat rooms, blogs, text messaging, and instant messaging (IMing) are now used to gather information and remain connected with friends all over the planet. This has allowed them to stay more connected with issues and events from around the world. As David Eckstrom states, "They have been exposed to more information, and have more access to it, than any other generation by the time they reach adulthood."²³

Wendy Zoba refers to this generation as a "cyber-suckled community."²⁴ Through the use of cyberspace the Millennials can become anyone they wish to be and do not ever need to have a face-to-face conversation with another person. Because of the anonymity

²³ Ibid.(accessed).

²⁴ Zoba, *The Class of '00'* (accessed).

of the Internet users do not have to be real and can relate to others in any way they choose. You can be blunt, sarcastic, rude, and as uncaring as you want, since you will not see the impact of your words on the face of the hearer. The failure to develop healthy ways of interacting and tools for developing genuine relationships has hindered the postmoderns' ability to cultivate strong friendships or even relate to one another.

I was dumbfounded recently, when I spoke to a student who was having trouble with his roommate. When asked if he had discussed the issue with his roommate. He responded, "we are always having heated arguments, but we don't talk we fight while IMing each other." I was so taken back that I had to ask clarifying questions to get to the reality of what was taking place. These two students would sit at their respective computers in the same room and argue about something, instead of talking to each other. "If we would talk it would get too out of control" was the reason given for not talking to each other. They could not even turn around and talk to the other person that was sitting a few feet away. No wonder they were having roommate problems!

Passionately Tolerant

Tolerance for others, their views, beliefs, and culture is the most prolific characteristic of the Millennial generation. In America today not everyone looks alike, not everyone talks alike and people are from all over the world. Walker Smith of Yankelovitch's research group believes "the single biggest influence on this generation has been the increasing diversity of America."²⁵ The combination of a strong desire to be in community, the immense racial, ethnic and cultural diversity, and the loss of absolutes

²⁵ Long, 247.

has brought about the necessity for a high degree of tolerance among the postmodern generation.

It is almost as if the highest good is community at any cost. For fear of offending or excluding someone from the community, the Millennials have become quite relativistic. Postmoderns are fine in a world of “simultaneity” as described by Leonard Sweet. Millennials are comfortable in the paradox of two contradictory things both being true.²⁶ They are willing to allow others to do what they want and believe what they want even if it is quite different from their own values and beliefs. This is demonstrated by the University of Southern California student who was attending her first Campus Crusade for Christ meeting wearing a tee shirt reading, “Gay? Fine By Me.” She explained, “If Jesus came back, he would be just as liberal for today as he was for his time. He’d go to the people whom nobody loves just like he went to the prostitutes and those who were unclean and unworthy. That’s his example.”

Tolerance and acceptance of others is a positive trait, which allows Christian college students the ability to reach-out to others without condemnation. However, this excessive tolerance has resulted in the more “loving” response being not to say anything to friends who are making a poor choice, as opposed to “care-fronting” them for fear that they might feel judged and alienated. This is especially difficult for evangelical Christian youth who uphold a strong belief in absolutes and yet care deeply about their friends. This quandary has caused them to struggle with questions like: how can I believe that my Jewish friend is going to Hell? How can I believe that Jesus is the only way when there are so many other ways that people claim to have a spiritual relationship with God? How

²⁶ Sweet.

can I tell another person they are wrong about their beliefs when their spiritual experiences are so real to them? With so many testimonies of the power of spirituality outside the Christian faith, how am I supposed to share with another person that I believe they need Jesus Christ?²⁷ Because of this tolerance and communal nature of postmoderns, Stanley Grenz has determined the undermining maxim for this generation to be, “What is right for us, may not be right for you,” and that is alright.²⁸ The breaking down of genuine community has had a significant impact on the experience of students at Asbury. I have seen numerous students begin to go down roads where they do not want to go and have no one to confront their poor choices. Everyone knew this was happening, but no one wanted to be the “bad guy” or “judge” the other person. We have worked extensively to combat this viewpoint and help students realize that sometimes the most loving thing we can do for others is to confront their action, while always loving the individual. This idea has been well received by the staff, but for a large population of students this is a foreign way of thinking.

Service

The confidence and positivism of the postmodern generation can readily be seen by their desire to reach out to others. Tony Jones reports that “altruism: giving away one’s time and resources to others is highly valued.”²⁹ Millennials are willing to deny themselves and seek to serve those in need. Serving together in teams and groups with

²⁷ Dunn, 34.

²⁸ Rogier Bios, *Engaging the Post Modern Culture: An Interview with Stanley Grenz* (NextWave Church and Culture, 1999, accessed June 2005); available from [http://www.the-next-wave.org/stories/storyReader\\$607](http://www.the-next-wave.org/stories/storyReader$607).

²⁹ Tony Jones, *Postmodern Youth Ministry: Exploring Cultural Shift, Creating Holistic Connections, Cultivating Authentic Community* (Grand Rapids, MI: Youth Specialties, 2001), 35.

friends has now become one of the favorite activities for young adults. *US News and World Reports* estimates that about one quarter of high school students regularly performs some type of community service, and another forty percent occasionally serve.³⁰ These troupes can be found serving locally in soup kitchens, child-care facilities and senior citizen centers. Others participate on short-term teams traveling around the globe to care for those less fortunate. Access to the Internet has allowed this generation to become aware of the needs of others from around the world, which has resulted in the exhortation “to think globally, act locally.”

This is a wonderful characteristic to possess and one Christian leaders need to foster, through developing opportunities where students can serve their local community, as well as finding ways to impact those in third world countries. In order for these experiences to have lasting impact on the students’ lives leaders must carefully help students reflect upon their experiences and then instill the truths learned into their lives. If not, we set-up our students to continually live in search of the next feel-good moment they get from serving others and the experience not resulting in any lasting changes. Postmoderns do not know how to reflect well and are prone, as T.S. Elliot writes, “to have the experience, but miss the meaning, because we failed to reflect.”

The desire to serve together has taken two extremes lately around the Asbury College community. Mission organizations, like OMS International, WGM (World Gospel Mission), the Salvation Army, and New Hope International Ministries, have all had to cancel mission trips over the past couple of years because of lack of participation. This reality has been perplexing to the leaders since it does not fit with the current

³⁰ Angie Canon and Carolyn Kleiner, "Teens Get Real," *US News and World Report*, April 17 2000.

understanding and commitment of the Millennials to serve others, especially on a team. At the same time, over seventy percent of the student body has reported participating in some type of community service, according to the fall 2006 Co-Curricular Involvement Survey of Asbury College students. This is a significant rise over the past few years (see Appendix C). In a conversation with three students who chose to spend last summer serving at a children's home in Guatemala, all agreed that if the others had not gone they might not have committed to going themselves. All three affirmed that they grew far more from the trip because they went together, and would not have had the same type of experience had they gone alone.

Spirituality and Theology

The postmodern generation is a highly spiritual generation. They have seen the cynicism and rejection of God in the previous two generations and actively rebel against the notion that God is not important. Spirituality is definitely “in” and is invading pop culture everywhere. This celebration of the spiritual has been noted by Stanley Grenz, “the entertainment industry has become the vehicle through which postmoderns express their spiritual quest.”³¹ This reality is demonstrated in the movies and shows being produced by Hollywood and television studios. Movies, like the *Chronicles of Narnia*, *The Passion of the Christ*, *Luther*, *Lord of the Rings* and even *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, and television series like *Charmed*, *Joan of Arcadia*, and *Touched by an Angel*, have attracted wide audiences and all contain considerable spiritual dimensions. While there is a renewed hunger for spirituality, Millennials are often confused and conflicted because

³¹ Bios, *Engaging the Post Modern Culture: An Interview with Stanley Grenz* (accessed).

of the loss of moral absolutes, the desire to be tolerant, and their syncretistic approach to shaping one's belief system. Yet, somehow they seem to fit the paradoxes together without much stress or problems with the apparent incongruities.

Postmodern thinkers have denied the existence of a grand metanarrative. As observed by Jimmy Long, "the search to find a central theme of life or distinguish the grand narrative has given way to multiple alternatives and competing viewpoints."³² As such, Millennials are not attracted to old institutional religion, denominationalism, and church dogma. They do not want to be forced into a box and because of their high value of tolerance, are more open to others' views and beliefs. Grenz asserts, "many postmoderns are content to allow seemingly conflicting constructions of reality to exist side by side."³³ Thus the exclusive nature of Christianity's claims is hard for the passionately tolerant and open-minded Millennials to accept. They are much more interested in creating their own belief system, much like working your way down a salad bar line and choosing the things you have an appetite for and putting them on your plate.

When developing their personal belief system Millennials participate in a similar practice. Postmodern seekers draw from their personal experiences, diverse ideas about mysticism, faith, and God to formulate their own brand of Christianity. They draw from various aspects of spirituality, no matter the source, and adopt them into their spiritual life. Richard Dunn sums up this propensity well as he writes, "the postmodern seeker opts for the more alluring creation of one's own Designer God."³⁴ While the relativistic nature

³² Long, 73.

³³ Stanley Grenz, *Answering Pilate: The Concept of Truth in a Postmodern Context* (Enrichment Journal, 2003, accessed December 2005); available from http://www.ag.org/enrichmentjournal/200601/200601_110_AnsweringPilate.cfm.

³⁴ Dunn, 31.

of postmodern theology has caused Chuck Colson to conclude that “the postmodern philosophy is one that could be summed up in one word, ‘*whatever*,’” referring to their openness to all types of spiritualities.³⁵

“Rooted in postmodern spirituality is a philosophical contempt for all absolute propositions of truth” according to Dunn.³⁶ George Barna’s research has determined that only thirty percent of American teenagers believe there is absolute moral truth, and “8/10 claim that all truth is relative to the individual and his/her circumstances.”³⁷ The minimization of absolutes allows Millennials to determine what is right for themselves and not be confined to linear thinking. Long characterizes the main focus of the postmoderns as ultimately “to be true to yourself.”³⁸ For this generation, truth is whatever the tribe decides is right. This tribalism is demonstrated in numerous reality television shows on the air today, like *Survivor*, where the tribe or group decides what is right, and ultimately, who to vote out of the tribe as each show ends with “*the tribe has spoken*.” No wonder there is so much confusion among the Millennials as they move between various groups. Truth and expectations change and they do not have a consistent belief system to gauge competing ideas. Openness to new ideas and a willingness to live Christian lives without all beliefs lining up permits the Millennials to press on in their journey with God without having to fully understand all the mysteries of the faith.

³⁵ Barna, *Real Teens: A Contemporary Snapshot of Youth Culture*, 96.

³⁶ Dunn, 31.

³⁷ Barna, *Real Teens: A Contemporary Snapshot of Youth Culture*, 92.

³⁸ Long, 73.

Postmodern Evangelicals

For postmoderns, religion is definitely a community experience. They want to participate in meaningful worship together with other believers and grow from interacting with their close friends. They desire to experience God. No longer are they interested in being entertained during church and the slickness of many mega-churches turns them off. The Millennials desire an experiential faith and want truth presented in a meaningful manner. In his book, *The Younger Evangelicals*, Robert Webber reports, “The younger evangelicals know they must stand for the absolutes of the Christian faith in a new way.”³⁹ They want to stand for something. Today these young people want to come to church to hear the truth shared within the context of a story. This format allows students to use their imagination and makes the ideas presented come alive in the heart and head. Students of today are not interested in merely listening to a rationally defended sermon geared solely for the mind. There is a new appreciation for the arts. Postmoderns are apt to see God through the visual and abstract of canvasses and clay, as artists attempt to express the message of the story in these mediums.

Meeting in small groups for accountability, support, encouragement, and sharing is an important aspect of their spiritual growth. These intimate meetings provide the opportunity to develop long lasting authentic relationships. Millennials are apt to grow from the shared experiences as they apply the truths heard and learned to their own faith. Asbury College and most Christian colleges today are aware of this trend and have

³⁹ Robert Webber, *The Younger Evangelicals: Facing the Challenges of the New World* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2002), 49.

fashioned some type of small group ministry as a key component to the overall spiritual life program.

Robert Webber asserts, “They know they must embrace the past and recognize the road to the future runs through the past.”⁴⁰ The Millennials are attracted to participating in “ancient-future” spiritual disciplines because of the renewed interest recovering historic practices and adapting them to current culture. This makes for another interesting paradox of the postmodern generation. They are not interested in many aspects of traditional denominations and important tenets of the church, while simultaneously being attracted to the historical practices of the early church mothers and fathers.

The needs and characteristics the postmoderns display lend themselves to a desire to know God more deeply and to commit to doing so together in an authentic Christian community. The presence of this strong sense of community is often one of the primary reasons why the Millennials are choosing to attend traditional Christian colleges at increasing rates over the past decade. According to the Department of Education numbers, enrollment at Council for Christian College and University (CCCU) schools has risen a staggering seventy percent since 1991.⁴¹ The Millennials are choosing to attend schools where faith is encouraged and spiritual growth is intentionally fostered.

This reality places a significant responsibility upon every faculty and staff member at these institutions, especially the campus ministry departments. If Christian colleges are to honor God and the decisions these students have made to attend these

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Jocelyn Green, *CCCU Reports Surging Enrollment for Christian Higher Education* (Council for Christian Colleges and Universities, 2005, accessed October 2005); available from http://www.cccu.org/news/newsID.396/news_detail.asp.

private schools, institutions must ensure their respective campuses are nurturing places of Christian growth. Campus leaders must be careful to do all they can to provide the necessary resources, service opportunities, environment, relationships, and especially role models these students will require to promote spiritual growth. In this setting students will have the support and freedom needed to grapple with their faith, to find God in new ways, and to ultimately take ownership of their personal relationship with Jesus. What a wonderful privilege campus ministry professionals have to walk beside these young sojourners at this crucial time in their life and to journey with them toward a deeper walk with Christ. The foundational experiences and “spiritual rocks” laid during college will serve as the underpinning for a lifetime of Christian growth and service.

Finally, these Millennial students have a broad worldview and aspiration to serve others, especially in groups. Technology and media have provided a constant access and barrage of information from around the world. This has brought about sensitivity to the plight of others and a corresponding desire to do something to make the world a better place, both locally and abroad.

CHAPTER THREE

BIBLICAL PERSPECTIVES OF THE JOURNEY WITH GOD

Introduction

It is through a submission to and a personal relationship with God that the seeker finds true freedom. It is in Christ where the believer finds his or her true self and complete freedom. This chapter will examine what it means to be created in God's image and how that affects humanity's opportunity to be restored by walking with God as His children. Three Biblical examples of journeys with God toward transformation and holiness will be analyzed. These characters represent three individuals. One who started well and finished well, another who started well but finished poorly, and finally, someone else who started poorly yet finished well in their journey with God. This study will utilize a Wesleyan-Arminian theological perspective.

The journey of transformation toward wholeness in Christ begins with humanity being formed in the image of God. This truth allows all people to fulfill the eternal purpose for which each man and woman was created. Each person was designed for intimate fellowship with God and to walk with Him. Though some of what it means to be created in God's image was tarnished at the fall, the essence of one's being is still engrained with the Creator. One's life and spiritual journey are the mediums for reestablishing a relationship with God.

The transformation back into Christlikeness does not occur in a single moment, though there are some defining occasions along the way. True discipleship (becoming like Christ) is a process and a lifestyle. This develops over time as the believer walks

through joys, hardships, trials, and celebrations of daily life. Each encounter, relationship, and experience helps the disciple along the journey of rediscovery of all that it means to be in Christ.

Imago Dei

On the sixth day God created human beings. “Then God said, ‘Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground.’ So God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them” (Gen. 1: 26-27). The second chapter of Genesis further describes God’s creation of man and breathing life into Adam. “The Lord God formed the man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being” (Gen. 2:7). Creation of humanity was the climax of all creation. Creation of mankind is referred to and is celebrated throughout the Old and New Testaments:

You made him a little lower than the heavenly beings and crowned him with glory and honor (Ps. 8:5).

Where can I go from your Spirit? Where can I flee from your presence? If I go up to the heavens, you are there; if I make my bed in the depths, you are there. If I rise on the wings of the dawn, if I settle on the far side of the sea, even there your hand will guide me, your right hand will hold me fast. If I say, ‘Surely the darkness will hide me and the light become night around me,’ even the darkness will not be dark to you; the night will shine like the day, for darkness is as light to you. For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb. I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made (Pss. 139:7-14).

For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son... (Rom. 8:29 NASB).

Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ. For He chose us in Him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight (Eph. 1:3-6).

. . . and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness (Eph. 4:24).

He is the image of the invisible God . . . (Col. 1:15).

And we, who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his likeness with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit (2 Cor. 3:18).

Being created in “the image of God” is translated in Hebrew “*tselem elohim*” as the “likeness,” “fashioned,” or “image” of God. There has been some discussion concerning *tselem elohim* referring to a physical likeness to God. Most scholars would agree this image is more of a likeness in relationship with God not a physical likeness to God. Drs. Edmund Jacob and J.G. Murphy voice support for this translation. Dr. Edmund Jacob explains, “Imago Dei means for man a relationship with and dependence upon, the One for whom he is only a representative.”¹ J. G. Murphy reasons that being created in the image of God “in a figurative sense denotes a spiritual conformity to God.”²

Being created in God’s image reflects three different aspects: a natural image, a political image, and a moral image.³ The natural image provides humans the capability to reason, possess freedom of will, the ability to make choices, display emotions, demonstrate affections, and develop personhood. The natural characteristic of one’s being

¹ Edmond Jacob, *Theology of the Old Testament* (London, England: Hodder & Stoughton, 1958), 171.

² James G. Murphy, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Genesis* (Boston, MA: W. F. Draper, 1866), 63.

³ Alan Coppedge, “John Wesley's Theology for Today,” (Asbury Theological Seminary, Wilmore, KY: 2005).

incorporates the “soul,” “spirit,” or “heart” of a human. Matthew Henry’s, commentary on Genesis, refers to the spirit of man as “perhaps the brightest, clearest looking-glass in nature, wherein to see God.”⁴ This transcendent aspect represents humankind’s spiritual plane. It is in this spiritual plane that humans can more intimately interact with and more accurately reflect God as each believer is conformed to His image. The natural image is what makes each soul eternal.

Humankind’s dominion and rule over the world is derived from reflecting the political image of God. This attribute of being created in God’s image causes people to desire relationships. Dr. Gilbert Bilezikian, theologian and co-founder of Willow Creek Community Church, believes this is why God declares His creation “not good” in Gen. 2:18. “The LORD God said, ‘It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him’” (Gen. 2:18). Bilezikian contends that God’s Trinitarian communal nature as reflected in human beings causes them to seek out “human community” in relationships with others.⁵ “Then God said, ‘Let us make man in *our* image, in *our* likeness’” (Gen. 1:26). In being made in God’s image, the Three existing in Oneness, each person has within them a desire for relational fulfillment that can only be met through living in community with others. This is why disciples cannot grow in Christ in utter isolation and aloneness. It is not the reason humanity was created. Human beings were made to reflect God’s character and live life together in community.

⁴ Matthew Henry and others, *Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1992), 4.

⁵ Gilbert G. Bilezikian, *Community 101: Reclaiming the Church as Community of Oneness* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1997), 19.

The moral component is the final piece of what it means to be created in God's image. The moral image originally made Adam and Eve pure and innocent in their knowledge, love, righteousness, and holiness. Their affections, appetites, passions and will were aligned with God's.⁶ There was no selfishness, self-will, or pride. Because Adam and Eve were pure in their created beings, they were able to be in complete fellowship with God as they walked with Him in the garden.

With the onset of sin, the image of God in Eve and Adam was marred, but not lost in totality. Each person is still created in God's image, but now are affected by sin. Humanity is now born into corruption, pridefulness, self-orientation, and total depravity. Humankind's connection and heritage from Adam and Eve compel each one to be self-serving. As J.I. Packer infers humanity's selfishness "robs us of the power to love God with all our heart, mind and strength."⁷ Humanity is still created in His "likeness," yet this likeness is no longer perfect in the reflection of God. This reality is seen throughout the Bible:

Gen. 5:1 "When God created man, he made him in the *likeness* of God,"

2 Cor. 3:17-19 "Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. And we, who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord's glory, are being transformed into His *likeness* with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit," and

Jas. 3:9 "With the tongue we praise our Lord and Father, and with it we curse men, who have been made in God's *likeness*."

⁶ John Wesley and G. Roger Schoenhals, *John Wesley's Commentary on the Bible: A One Volume Condensation of His Explanatory Notes* (Grand Rapids, MI: Francis Asbury Press, 1990), 23.

⁷ JI Packer, "What Does Genesis Mean by Man Being Made in the Image of God?" *Christianity Today*, December 2003.

Though human beings are created in His likeness, the original sin that is passed down to each person comes with inheriting infirmities and a fallen nature. In Gal. 5:16-21, Paul challenges the Galatians to live life in the Spirit, instead of living life out of this sinful nature.

So I say, live by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the sinful nature. For the sinful nature desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the sinful nature. They are in conflict with each other, so that you do not do what you want. But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under law. The acts of the sinful nature are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God (Gal. 5:16-21).

Humanity's current state reflects being made in the image of God, yet touched by sin. This view helps derive a balanced view of humanity. People are neither universally good nor evil. Individuals are still created in the image of God, but as Paul declares in Romans, "all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Rom. 3:23). Now humanity's political and moral images of God have been partially lost. However, the most significant aspect of the fall is that the moral image of God has been totally lost.

Today people are too often caught up in a negative view of humanity. Many are prone to believe this sin-touched, fallen state is the "norm" and people must just learn to live with it. Fortunately, this is not the "norm," and it is not what God intended in the Garden of Eden. Jesus came to restore that original intention and proclaims in John, He "came to save the world, not condemn it" (Jn. 3:17). Jesus later builds on His hope for humanity as He declares, "I came that you might have life and have it more *abundantly*" (Jn. 10:10). Thus, humanity is not condemned to live in this fallen state. Every person can be transformed into Christlikeness if they choose to follow God.

John Wesley believed aspects of the political and moral image were restored to human beings through Christ's atoning work on the cross. Christ's sacrifice produced a prevenient grace that was imparted upon all humanity. This prevenient grace restored a degree of personhood to all. The freedom of will that humans now possess is not the same freedom that Adam possessed. The dominion over the earth, men and women currently have, is not the full rule that Eve exhibited in the garden. Now, through grace, each person has enough reason and freedom to make a decision for Christ.⁸

Humanity now exists in a sense of general depravity and infirmity, which are the effects of living in a fallen world. Intellectually individuals have the ability to think, but wrong knowledge can lead to wrong choices. Emotionally men and women are consumed by various fears and phobias. Socially human beings are influenced by poor relational skills like; rudeness of speech or roughness in manner. Physically each person's body is condemned to fail. Humanity's destiny is to perish. As Paul wrote to the Corinthians, "For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive" (1 Cor. 15:22). Each person is condemned to live with these depravities until heaven. Upon entering heaven those in Christ will receive their heavenly bodies (1 Cor. 15:35-49).

Humans can adapt their corrupt bodies along the journey through exercising, diet, becoming a life-long learner, developing a balanced lifestyle, and learning to better relate to others. In spite of all efforts to slow down the dying process, all bodies will eventually fail.⁹

⁸ Coppedge.

⁹ Ibid.

The moral component of personhood was completely affected by the fall, resulting in an inheritance of a sinful nature (carnal nature). Now human nature is totally corrupt and driven by self-will and pride. Paul describes this current state, “for there is a root of sinful self-interest in us that is at odds with a free spirit, just as the free spirit is incompatible with selfishness” (Gal. 5:17). Self-centeredness and human’s propensity to seek after self-fulfillment are what bring about personal acts of sin. Peter describes the extent of this fallen state, “especially those who walk according to the flesh in the lust of uncleanness and despise authority. They are presumptuous, self-willed” (2 Pet. 2:10).

Wesley believed that through prevenient grace each person possesses the ability to willfully choose to resist temptations. Contrastingly, when individuals give into temptation and intentionally act against God’s laws, this becomes a selfish personal choice and thus sin.¹⁰ Another effect of prevenient grace is it helps absolve the guilt produced from original sin. Humankind is not held guilty for Adam’s sinful actions in the past. Wesley’s words are quite fitting regarding humanity’s continued failures and guilt:

For allowing that all the souls of men are dead in sin by nature this excuses none, seeing there is no man that is in a state of mere nature; there is no man unless he has quenched the Spirit that is wholly void of the grace of God. No man living is entirely destitute of what is vulgarly called natural conscience. But this is not natural. It is more properly termed preventing grace. Everyone has sooner or later good desires; although the generality of men stifle them before they can strike deep root. So that no man sins because he has not grace, but because he does not use the grace which he hath.¹¹

The final benefit derived from prevenient grace is the opportunity to receive several types of general revelation, which can draw people back to God. General

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ John Wesley, *The Works of John Wesley*, ed. Frank Baker (Grand Rapids: Francis Asbury Press, 1986), vol. 6, 512.

revelation includes qualities such as, conscience, the ability to experience God in various ways (i.e., from nature), and understanding the read or spoken Word. Ultimately, this ability to receive God's revelation is what causes human hearts to hunger for God.¹²

Wrestling with this hunger and thirsting for something beyond oneself have been at the core of human existence since the fall. A significant problem for most has been the inability to identify the cause of this void. Consequently, many seekers have resisted admitting it is a search for God. The reality is that each heart is longing to recover the intimate relationship with God that was lost in Eden. Throughout history this search for meaning and the filling of empty hearts has been one of the key concepts discussed in literature, music and film. Theologians, authors and even rock stars have tried to verbalize the cry within the human heart. King David sang about his yearning in Ps. 42 and Ps.107:

As the deer pants for streams of water, so my soul pants for you, O God.
My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When can I go and meet with
God? My tears have been my food day and night, while men say to me all
day long, "Where is your God?" These things I remember as I pour out my
soul: how I used to go with the multitude, leading the procession to the
house of God, with shouts of joy and thanksgiving among the festive
throng. Why are you downcast, O my soul? Why so disturbed within me?
Put your hope in God, for I will yet praise him, my Savior and my God.
My soul is downcast within me; therefore I will remember you from the
land of the Jordan, the heights of Hermon—from Mount Mizar. Deep calls
to deep... (Pss. 42:1-7).

For he satisfies the longing soul, and fills the hungry soul with goodness
(Ps. 107:9).

St. Augustine in his *Confessions* put it this way, "You have made us for yourself, O God,
and our hearts are restless until they find their rest in you."¹³ Thomas Merton in his

¹² Coppedge.

autobiography *Seven Storey Mountain* describes the state of human lives and the work of God as:

He created man with a soul that was made not to bring itself to perfection in its own order, but to be perfected by Him in an order indefinitely beyond the reach of human powers. We were never destined to lead purely natural lives, and therefore we were never destined in God's plan for a purely natural beatitude. Our nature, which is a free gift of God, was given to us to be perfected and enhanced by another free gift that is not due it. This free gift is "sanctifying grace." It perfects our nature with the gift of life, an intellection, a love, a mode of existence infinitely above its own level.¹⁴

Bono, lead singer for the rock group U2, possesses every luxury this life could afford, and yet he continues to yearn for something more. This search can be heard in the words to the song, *I Still Haven't Found What I'm Looking For*:

I have climbed highest mountain, I have run through the fields
Only to be with you, Only to be with you
I have run, I have crawled, I have scaled these city walls, these city walls,
Only to be with you. But I still haven't found what I'm looking for
But I still haven't found what I'm looking for
I have kissed honey lips, felt the healing in her fingertips,
It burned like fire, this burning desire
I have spoke with the tongue of angels, I have held the hand of a devil
It was warm in the night, I was cold as a stone
But I still haven't found what I'm looking for
But I still haven't found what I'm looking for
I believe in the kingdom come, then all the colors will bleed into one
Bleed into one, well yes I'm still running
You broke the bonds and you, loosed the chains
Carried the cross of my shame, of my shame
You know I believed it
But I still haven't found what I'm looking for
But I still haven't found what I'm looking for
But I still haven't found what I'm looking for
But I still haven't found what I'm looking for...¹⁵

¹³ Saint Augustine, *Confessions. Books I-IV*, trans. Gillian Clark (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 1995), I. 1:1.

¹⁴ Thomas Merton, *The Seven Storey Mountain* (New York, NY: Harcourt, 1948), 169.

¹⁵ U2, *Joshua Tree* (Island).

Even Hollywood has attempted to address this issue and help the postmodern culture grapple with what it means to be fully human and the desire for something beyond one's earthly existence. This search is seen in the movie, *The Matrix*, as Morpheus begins to explain to Neo that there is something more out there:

You don't know what it is but it is there like a splinter in your mind, driving you mad. It is this feeling that has brought you to me...do you know what I'm talking about? *The Matrix*¹⁶

After a long journey toward God seeking Him in a variety of places and ways, Donald Miller, the mouthpiece for postmodern young adults, has come to the conclusion that:

The problem is not a certain type of legislation or even a certain politician; the problem is the same that it has always been. "I am the problem. "I think every conscious person, every person who is awake to the functioning principles within his reality, has a moment where he stops blaming the problems in the world on group think, on humanity and authority, and starts to face himself. I hate this more than anything. This is the hardest principle within Christian spirituality for me to deal with. The problem is not out there; the problem is the needy beast of a thing that lives in my chest."¹⁷ *Blue Like Jazz*

Dr. Dallas Willard, in his book, *Divine Conspiracy* sums up human beings current condition this way, "The deepest longings of our heart confirm our original calling. Our very being still assigns us to 'rule' in our life circumstances, whatever they may be."¹⁸ Human lives will not be complete until they find fulfillment in Christ. Humanity was created for something far better and much more fulfilling. Willard later defines the purpose of human creation when he writes, "God equipped us for this task by framing our nature to function in a conscious, personal relationship of interactive

¹⁶ Andy and Larry Wachowski, "The Matrix," (Warner Brothers, 1999).

¹⁷ Donald Miller, *Blue Like Jazz: Nonreligious Thoughts on Christian Spirituality* (Nashville, TN: T. Nelson, 2003), 20.

¹⁸ Dallas Willard, *The Divine Conspiracy: Rediscovering Our Hidden Life in God* (San Francisco, CA: Harper, 1998), 23.

responsibility with him. He intended to be our constant companion or coworker in the creative enterprise of life on earth, which is what his love for us means in practical terms.”¹⁹

There is a hunger and longing imparted into the heart of each individual for more of God. This yearning has been at the core of men and women’s search for meaning. The search for this wholeness is what has been referred to as a person’s journey with or toward God. This drive influences all other aspects of a one’s life. Dr. Robert Mulholland, in his classic work, *Invitation to a Journey*, speaks to this idea, “the image of Christ is the fulfillment of the deepest hungers of the human heart for wholeness. The greatest thirst of our being is for fulfillment in Christ’s image. The most profound yearning of the human spirit, which we try to fill with all sorts of inadequate substitutes, is the yearning for our completeness in the image of Christ.”²⁰ Paul, in his second letter to the church in Corinth, sums up the fulfillment of human desire and the transformation that takes place as one continues to tear away the false self to more accurately reflect God’s image. “But whenever anyone turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away. Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. And we, who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord’s glory, are being transformed into his likeness with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit” (2 Co. 3:16-19).

¹⁹ Ibid., 22.

²⁰ M. Robert Mulholland, *Invitation to a Journey: A Road Map for Spiritual Formation* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1993), 34.

Walking with God

Adam and Eve were created to be in intimate relationship with God and to walk with Him. It does not take much imagination to envision Eve and Adam daily walking with God around the majestic garden that He had created. There was nothing between them but unbridled love, joy, and peace. The imagery of walking with God is continued throughout the Bible. “Then the man and his wife heard the sound of the Lord God as He was walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and they hid from the Lord God among the trees of the garden” (Gen. 3:8). Dr. Dennis Kinlaw contends the key idea of Genesis is not obeying or believing in God, but it is *walking* with God as a *friend*.²¹ Even after the fall, God was in the garden seeking out Adam and Eve to walk with Him. However, because of the onset of sin, they were afraid and hid themselves from Him.

The idea of walking with God is seen in Biblical characters like Enoch, Noah and Abraham. Enoch walked with God all his days, until he was no more, because God took him away (Gen. 5:24). In Gen. 6:9 Noah is described as a “righteous man, blameless among the people of his time, and he walked with God.” In Gen. 17, God covenants with Abram, “walk with me and be thou perfect” (Gen. 17:1). Abraham walked this path with God and was a *friend* of God. In scripture, Isa. 41:8, 2 Ch. 20:7, and Jas. 2:23 all refer to the friendship God shared with Abraham. “Abraham believed God and was set right with God,” which included all his actions. It was the synthesis of belief and action that caused Abraham to be named “God's friend” (Jas 2:23, *The Message*). How exciting that the first

²¹ Dennis F. Kinlaw and John Oswalt, *We Live as Christ* (Nappanee, IN: Francis Asbury Press, 2001), 18.

metaphor used in scripture describes the relationship believers can possess with God as friendship!

Walking intimately with those He created is how God intends to relate to humanity today. He desires to walk with, commune with, relate to, and journey with each sojourner through all of their days. This intimate relationship with the Heavenly Creator is what each one was created for, but have lost. Although, a remnant of humanity's divine heritage is maintained today. Humankind exists in this fallen world. For John Wesley, to walk with God was always to set God before him. "To think, speak and act in everything as those that are always under his eye."²² This righteous way of living is not simply a discipline or a choice, it is a lifestyle. Walking with God is choosing to live a life of integrity before the Lord in all things.

The idea of walking with God is one that is relative and vital in the postmodern world. To walk with God is to join the Lord in a covenantal relationship, where the Christian chooses to live for God in all things. David declared his covenant with God in Psalms 56, "For you have delivered me from death and my feet from stumbling, that I may *walk before God* in the light of life." (Ps. 56:13). The metaphors most often used for the spiritual life are walking with God and journeying with Christ. This idea reflects a process and growth through the experiences of everyday life. As each believer continues down the path with Christ, there is growth and transformation into His likeness. The journey with God can be seen throughout both the Old and New Testaments. God's faithfulness is clearly seen, whether it was through the wanderings of Israel, the lives of the patriarchs, or through Christ's path to the cross.

²² Wesley and Schoenhals, *John Wesley's Commentary on the Bible: A One Volume Condensation of His Explanatory Notes*, Genesis 17.

The Journey

Two important characteristics of the postmodern generation are the passion for story and the desire to connect with something greater than themselves. These two qualities reveal a deep need to reacquaint this generation with the Scriptures and some heroes of the Christian faith. To address this reality in a practical way, the next section of this chapter will look at the lives of Biblical characters and their journeys with God. Three different journeys will be discussed: a single minded spy, who was faithful throughout his life and received his just reward; a family patriarch, who started out leading his family to the Promised Land, but settled for much less; and finally, a misguided zealot, who started out as the chief persecutor of the faithful, but who became a pillar of the Christian faith.

Caleb: A Model of Consistent Faith

It had been forty days, Moses and the people of Israel were anxiously awaiting a report from the twelve spies about the land of Canaan. The first ten reported with fear and trepidation that powerful giants and fortified cities inhabited the land. However, Caleb possessed a “different kind of spirit” and admonished the crowd, “Let us go up at *once* and take possession, for we are well able to overcome it” (Num. 13:30 NKJ). Caleb believed if God were in it, surely the Israelites would prevail. The same faithful spirit which motivated Caleb to call his countrymen to go up at once into the Promised Land was maintained throughout his life. His joyful passion for fully following the Lord, no matter the circumstance, caused God to recognize Caleb as “His servant.” Forty years later, Caleb’s consistent, set apart spirit earned him his just reward.

God wants to be faithful to the Christian, but often can only do so once the sojourner takes the first steps of faith and begins to move. Because Caleb was fully surrendered to God, he was secure in his faith and trust of God's constant provision. Caleb had witnessed God's faithfulness to Israel on numerous occasions, often through miraculous means. His confidence in God's sovereignty allowed Caleb to challenge his peers to "come, let's go." He was able to base future expectations with God on past experiences, no matter the situation. Caleb's thoughts as he surveyed the obstacles, which hindered the Israelites from entering the Promised Land, must have been, "why would God not supply all our needs and drive out our enemies on this occasion, like He had faithfully done so many times in the past?" He had seen God work mightily in the past and had confidence in God's power to bring about Israel's victory. It was not about what the Israelites could do as a people, even a chosen people. Caleb's faith was based on God's promises and what He might do in and through them. In the end all the honor and glory would be the Lord's.

On six occasions Caleb was described as having "fully followed the Lord." His commitment was absolute and his trust in God complete. His desire was to fully please God in all things (Nu. 14:8), whether that be through daily devotion or through removing an adversary from the Promised Land. Dr. Roy Lauter summed up Caleb this way, "his heart was completely yielded to God. His full-time job was to follow God."²³ John Wesley referred to a life completely surrendered to God as perfected or the experience of entire sanctification. Sanctification can be defined as setting oneself apart for God's purposes and will. Caleb's life was regulated by rule and his single-minded focus was to

²³ Roy Lauter, "Caleb Possessed 'a Different Spirit'," (New Hope Community Church, New Washington, IN, 1985).

worship God. The most important thing in his life was to honor and please God. Caleb's stalwart commitment caused him not to be swayed when his friends refused to trust in God's authority. Caleb, instead, reminded them of how much God loved them and appealed to them not to refuse God's authority.

Caleb's commitment to God allowed him to put his full confidence in God. "But My servant Caleb, because he has a *different spirit* in him and has followed Me fully" (Numbers 14:24). Obstacles, circumstances, or even the potential of being stoned by his peers did not dissuade Caleb. His assurance in God remained firm and he would not allow his hope and joy to be squelched. While all those around him were saying "no" to God, Caleb said "yes" (Josh. 14:7, 8). He audaciously stood up for an unpopular position. His trust in God allowed him to overcome his fears and stay the course of what he believed to be right. He withstood the peer pressure from an entire nation and remained steadfast in God's provision. While all the other spies fearfully trembled at the sight of the giants in the land and failed to trust God's direction. Caleb tried to convince the Israelites to immediately move into the land of Canaan.

The problem of overcoming fear and stepping out in faith is one of the most controlling factors on a Christian's journey with God. Dr. Raymond Brown argues, that "the Israelites lost their one and only chance to go into this Promised Land due to one main reason - fear and lack of true faith and belief in the power of God to see them through."²⁴ Giants, fortresses, or the contentions of others around him would not immobilize Caleb. He "wholly followed God" and trusted the Lord to defeat the giants in life, so that God might be glorified.

²⁴ Raymond Brown, *Caleb: The Problem of Fear* (Wycliffe Associates (UK), 2001, accessed February 2006); available from <http://www.easyenglish.info/problems/tpaou03-pbw.htm>.

With the words of God echoing in his ears, the sweet taste of fruit lingering on his tongue and pictures of a land flowing with milk and honey playing in his mind's eye. Caleb headed out away from Canaan with the people of Israel. Caleb possessed a different spirit, therefore, his faith never wavered. He never questioned God's commitment to Israel or himself. His heart never became bitter and hardened toward his peers whose faithlessness had cost him his just reward. Caleb's trust in God for all the facets of his life brought about a divine peace. This peace allowed him to press on along the wandering path without complaining, resentment, condemnation, nor feeling sorry for himself. Caleb's resolve to fully follow God was what ultimately allowed him to cross into the Promised Land (Josh. 15:13-15). Caleb did not question God. He did not complain, "You promised me this land and I am getting tired of wandering. When are you going to keep your promise?" His intimate relationship with God did not allow fleshly traits of resentment and bitterness toward his peers to take a hold of his spirit. Caleb could have easily held the other spies responsible and felt in his heart something like, "Because your faith in God was so weak you were too afraid to face the giants, and now I have to suffer because of you and I do not get what I deserve." Instead, Caleb joyfully journeyed with the Lord through the wilderness, fully trusting God's authority, faithfulness, and love.

After forty years of unwavering commitment and perseverance Caleb received his just reward. This reward came in several aspects: the distinction of having divine approval, "my servant Caleb" (Num. 14:24), the joy of obediently following God, and finally inheriting the land that God had promised him long ago. Through it all, Caleb

focused solely on God's faithfulness and goodness, which he referred to in Jos. 14:6-12, as Caleb reminds Joshua of the journey that he has taken with God:

And Caleb the son of Jephunneh the Kenizzite said to him: "You know the word which the LORD said to Moses the man of God concerning you and me in Kadesh Barnea. I was forty years old when Moses the servant of the LORD sent me from Kadesh Barnea to spy out the land, and I brought back word to him as it was in my heart. Nevertheless my brethren who went up with me made the heart of the people melt, but I wholly followed the LORD my God. So Moses swore on that day, saying, 'Surely the land where your foot has trodden shall be your inheritance and your children's forever, because you have wholly followed the LORD my God.' And now, behold, the LORD has kept me alive, as He said, these forty-five years, ever since the LORD spoke this word to Moses while Israel wandered in the wilderness; and now, here I am this day, eighty-five years old. As yet *I am as strong this day as on the day that Moses sent me; just as my strength was then*, so now is my strength for war, both for going out and for coming in. Now therefore, give me this mountain of which the LORD spoke in that day; for you heard in that day how the Anakim were there, and that the cities were great and fortified. It may be that the LORD will be with me, and I shall be able to drive them out as the LORD said." And Joshua blessed him, and gave Hebron to Caleb the son of Jephunneh as an inheritance. Hebron therefore became the inheritance of Caleb the son of Jephunneh the Kenizzite to this day, because he wholly followed the LORD God of Israel (Josh. 14: 6-12).

Caleb was a man governed by his walk with God. His faith never allowed him to settle for less than God's best. Consistent with his life on a higher plane, Caleb was a man of altitudes. He was not content with the commonplace, thus he asked for the mountain country.²⁵ His faithful journeying with God across the wilderness allowed Caleb to proclaim, "I am as strong today as I was when Moses sent me. If the Lord will be with me then I shall be able as the Lord said" (Josh. 14:11-12). Caleb had walked closely with the Lord daily surrendering to His will and love. Surely, his relationship with the Lord had grown more intimate and richer, as he had continually abided in God. Though it had been forty years and Caleb was now eighty-five years old. His confidence

²⁵ Herbert Lockyer, *All the Men of the Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1958), 83.

was still in God's provision to work through him and drive out his enemies according to the Lord's original plan. Caleb's life is a testament that the believer who faithfully abides and honors God can surely "do all things through Christ" (Phil. 4:13). In Christ the sojourner possesses all that is necessary to overcome the obstacles of life and victorious living.

Caleb's self-sacrificing nature continued to dominate his life even after receiving his inheritance. Upon entering the Promised Land, he immediately grants his daughter Achsah's request. Caleb blessed her and gave her some of the best land he now owned, since it contained springs of water. "Caleb said to her, 'What do you wish?' She answered, 'Give me a blessing; since you have given me land in the South, give me also springs of water.' So he gave her the upper springs and the lower springs" (Josh. 15: 18, 19). Dr. Victor Hamilton, Bible professor at Asbury College contrasts the blessing given to the descendents of Caleb versus the blessing of Solomon. The difference was based on fully following God. The Lord promised that Caleb's descendents shall possess the land because of Caleb's faithfulness. "But My servant Caleb, because he has a different spirit in him and has followed Me fully, I will bring him into the land where he went, and his descendants shall inherit it" (Num. 14:24). But, Solomon did not completely follow the Lord, "Solomon did evil in the sight of the LORD, and did not fully follow the LORD, as did his father David" (1 Kgs. 11:6). So "his kingdom shall be torn from him and only a portion of it left for his descendents." (1 Kgs, 11:11-13).²⁶ Caleb fully followed God and was blessed, to be a blessing to all his descendents.

²⁶ Victor P. Hamilton, *Handbook on the Historical Books: Joshua, Judges, Ruth, Samuel, Kings, Chronicles, Ezra-Nehemiah, Esther* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2001), 404.

Lessons for Today

Millennial Christians are determined to follow God along the tumultuous paths of these postmodern times. In addition to Caleb, there are other wonderful examples of women like Ruth, Deborah and Esther who set all things aside to courageously journey with God. Encouraging Millennials to examine these heroes of the faith would bear much fruit. This type of study would help postmoderns identify some key components for navigating the way to Heaven. First, and foremost, Caleb “followed God wholeheartedly.” He desired to please and honor God in all things. Caleb was confident in God’s provision and like Peter believed that God’s,

“divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness. Through these he has given us his very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature and escape the corruption in the world caused by evil desires” (2 Pet. 1:3, 4).

Crises in life, like that of Caleb and Israel, should be viewed as opportunities for God to work and demonstrate His faithfulness. It is often through crises along the believer’s journey that growth takes place and followers are transformed into a more accurate reflection of Christ.

Postmodern believers should follow Caleb’s example of fearlessly obeying God’s instructions, even when it is unpopular and the cost is great. In American society today, especially among the Millennials, there is a desire to remain secure and comfortable. This is not the typical path toward growth in Christ. Like Caleb, the postmodern believers’ security should be derived from a deep and abiding relationship with God. Just as Jesus teaches in Jn. 15:

I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains (abides) in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing. If anyone does not remain in me, he is like a branch that is thrown away and withers; such branches are picked up, thrown into the fire and burned. If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be given you. This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples. As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love. If you obey my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have obeyed my Father's commands and remain in his love. I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete (Jn. 15:5-11).

As believers unreservedly follow God and obey His commandments, they will receive the greatest reward being called Jesus' *friend*.

Terah: A Model of Settling for Less than God's Best

When theologians consider biblical characters that did not finish well in their journey with Christ, Judas Iscariot typically comes to mind. Others may consider Paul's friend, Demas, who was distracted by things of the world and walked away from solely following Jesus. This section will focus on another character who failed to stay the course to the Promised Land, Abraham's father, Terah. Though he began the journey of faith and headed out to Canaan, he never finished the race and settled half way to the Promised Land. Terah's story has been used to illustrate those who begin a life in Christ, but for some reason never press on toward holiness and fall short of God's best.

Abraham's ancestry began quite contrary to what believers might expect. Terah, Abraham's father, was a pagan, who served other gods, as noted in Joshua 24. "Long ago your forefathers, including Terah the father of Abraham and Nahor, lived beyond the River and worshiped other gods. But, I took your father Abraham from the land beyond the River and led him throughout Canaan and gave him many descendants" (Josh. 24:2,

3). Terah and his family resided in Ur of the Chaldees. Ur and Haran were both centers for the worship of sin, the Babylonian moon god. According to the early Judaic midrash in *Genesis Rabbah*, young Abram did not adhere to the practice of idol worship. Abram even tried to convince Terah of the foolishness of worshipping idols:

When Abraham was a boy, he was placed in charge of his father's idol shop one day when his father was gone. Abraham stages a riot among all the idols. He smashed all the idols, except for the largest one. When his father returned and questioned Abraham, he answered that the idols were hungry so he brought them food. The largest idol then grabbed Terah's ax and killed all the other idols and took the food for himself. Terah replied that this was nonsense; everyone knew that idols have no life or power and could not talk, move, or do anything. Abraham then responded to Terah, Father, let your ears hear what your tongue speaks. Then why do you worship them? ²⁷

Though an idol worshipper, Terah must have embraced God's call of Abraham and began his own journey with God. In Genesis 11, Terah decides to leave the corruption of Ur and take his family to the Promised Land of Canaan. Although Terah was headed toward a deeper walk with the one true God, he only made it half way and died in Haran.

This is the account of Terah.

Terah became the father of Abram, Nahor and Haran. And Haran became the father of Lot. While his father Terah was still alive, Haran died in Ur of the Chaldeans, in the land of his birth. Abram and Nahor both married. The name of Abram's wife was Sarai, and the name of Nahor's wife was Milcah; she was the daughter of Haran, the father of both Milcah and Iscah. Now Sarai was barren; she had no children. Terah took his son Abram, his grandson Lot son of Haran, and his daughter-in-law Sarai, the wife of his son Abram, and together they set out from Ur of the Chaldeans to go to Canaan. But when they came to Haran, they settled there. Terah lived 205 years, and he died in Haran (Gen. 11:26-32).

Did Terah leave Ur in order to travel to the land of Canaan or was he simply trying to get away from Ur? Perhaps his son Abram's life and call helped him to realize

²⁷ Jacob Neusner, *Genesis Rabbah: The Judaic Commentary to the Book of Genesis: A New American Translation*, 3 vols., Brown Judaic Studies (Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1985), vol. 2, 38:8, 56.

that Ur and the worship of idols did not satisfy the hunger within his heart. So, when his son was determined to head out for Canaan, Terah decided to go along. Although, Terah set out with his entire family to reach the Promised Land of God, he chose to settle half way there. One must wonder what was going through Terah's mind as he journeyed out of Ur and headed across the desert to Canaan.

When he finally reached Haran, something caused him to go no further on his journey. "But when they came to Haran, they settled there" (Gen. 11: 31). Though the Bible does not describe specific causes there are several possibilities worthy of consideration. Did Terah, who was well over one hundred years old by then, just become tired and too feeble to continue on the journey? Was leaving behind his past in Ur so hard, that it did not allow Terah to go any farther? Did Haran provide too many comforts that made it too hard for Terah to leave? In spite of Terah's initial commitment to journey with God, maybe he did not possess the conviction to completely follow God. Instead, Terah decided to compromise and only go half way with God. Each or all of these possibilities may have been the reason for the derailment of Terah's journey. A closer examination of each may be helpful for further application.

Haran was a well-watered fertile plain. Surely, the journey out of Ur to Haran was arduous. The travelers were probably tired of packing and unpacking their tents in a different site each night. Upon arriving in the lushness that was Haran, Terah could have easily given into some creature comforts. Terah's entourage had just traveled a long way. They may have felt they deserved to take it easy and enjoy all that Haran had to offer. Although, Terah might have intended to rest for only a short while, a sense of contentment may have overcome the travelers. This momentary satisfaction may have

caused the band to begin to put down some roots. Webster's dictionary describes contentment as: "comfortableness, happy enough with what one has, not desiring something more or different: satisfaction without examination." Since Haran was located on an important trade route merchandise would be constantly brought into the city where residents could easily get all they wanted. Because of a plenteous supply of water, gardens flourished, crops thrived, and food abounded. Haran's accommodations surpassed those experienced by Terah's clan on their journey. Perhaps, the comforts of Haran were just too tempting, creating a real sense of contentment within Terah. This superficial satisfaction may have caused him to stop short of the fullness of God's blessing. Terah may have chosen to cherish those things that rust and wither away and settled for much less than what God had intended for him.

The lure of the materialistic world has always been a temptation to the seeker. John warns believers of this trap in his second letter "Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For everything in the world—the cravings of sinful man, the lust of his eyes and the boasting of what he has and does—comes not from the Father but from the world. The world and its desires pass away, but the man who does the will of God lives forever" (1 Jn. 2: 15-17).

Another possibility for Terah's decision to stop short of the Promised Land may have been a By the time Terah departed Ur he was an old man and the journey might have been too difficult for him to complete. If Terah was seventy years old when his sons were born, then Terah was over one hundred years old when he began the journey (Gen. 11:26). The trek across the ancient Near East landscape between Ur and Haran was

certainly challenging and difficult. Maybe Terah developed some type of disease or other infirmity. Matthew Henry theorized that Terah could not continue on the journey beyond Haran “because the old man was unable, through the infirmities of age, to proceed in his journey.”²⁸ If this conclusion is true, it is quite contrary to Caleb’s experience as he fully followed God throughout Israel’s forty years of wanderings in the wilderness.

Terah may have stopped in Haran because he was afraid to leave behind all that he valued. He had buried his son, Haran, in Ur; perhaps the thought of traveling so far away from that place was more than he could bear. Maybe residing in Haran was a way to honor and grieve for his lost son. He had left behind the false idols that he worshipped in Ur, but maybe he never fully let go of that practice. Settling in Haran would have allowed Terah to maintain some connection to his pagan idolatry. This practice would certainly have hindered maturity in his relationship with God. Instead of solely focusing on God, Terah might have attempted to integrate some pagan philosophy into his life, attempting to receive the best from both worlds. However, as Jesus would later teach in the parable of the shrewd manager, “No servant can serve two masters. Either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and Money” (Lk. 16:31). Terah might have held tight to his old idols for security and thus disobeyed God. Terah’s hesitancy to renounce his false god’s and fully follow God, contributed to Joshua’s final admonition to the people of Israel:

Now therefore, fear the Lord, serve Him in sincerity and in truth, and put away the gods which your fathers served on the other side of the River and in Egypt. Serve the Lord! And if it seems evil to you to serve the Lord, choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods

²⁸ Henry and others, *Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible*, 26.

which your fathers served that were on the other side of the River, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you dwell. But as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord (Josh. 24:14-15).

Terah responding to God's call set out to travel to the Promised Land of Canaan, however, he did not make it all the way. Charles Spurgeon surmised that Terah's troop might have gotten wearisome from the travel and decided to compromise with God. God would certainly be satisfied with the move they had made away from Ur. Haran was not Canaan, but it might do as well.²⁹ Dr. Roy Lauter wondered, "if the brightness of Canaan began to dim" or "maybe the ugliness and foulness of Ur began to fade."³⁰ Maybe Terah decided to stop and think over this decision before he had gone too far. "Would not Haran meet the spirit of God's command?" "Do I really want to become a religious fanatic or holy roller?" If deciding to compromise with God is what kept Terah in Haran, then he failed to take hold of the truth that Spurgeon refers to in his sermon, *Abram's Call – or, Half Way – And All the Way*, "to obey the Lord partially is to disobey."³¹

Lessons for Today

The story of Abraham and his father settling in Haran for a time has often been related to Christians beginning a walk with God, but not completing the journey. "Many who step out for Christ, but whose hopes of discipleship die half way. Halfway converts never make wholehearted saints."³² Presently, there are numerous things in life that vie

²⁹ C. H. Spurgeon, *The New Park Street Pulpit; Containing Sermons Preached and Rev* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Pub. House, 1963), vol. 24.

³⁰ Roy Lauter, "And Terah Died in Haran," (New Hope Community Church, New Washington, IN, 1985).

³¹ Spurgeon, *The New Park Street Pulpit; Containing Sermons Preached and Rev*, vol. 24.

³² Lockyer, *All the Men of the Bible*, 325.

for the Millennials' attention. They are expected to achieve greatness in their academics, fulfillment in their vocation, intimacy in their relationships, and compassionately serve others. Successful completion of these endeavors in the world's eyes requires much time, effort, and commitment. This often results in young believers giving God the leftovers of their time and life. The drive for worldly success leaves minimal space for God to work. It leaves little opportunity for young believers to receive God's lavish love. The Hebrew meaning of Haran is "parched, barren." Those who remain in this type of dry and empty place, refusing to press on toward God, will surely die. There are many young believers who settle for just enough of God to make themselves miserable and ensure they get into Heaven. Without the affirming love of God and the knowledge of being one of God's beloved, many postmoderns are apt to settle for much less than God's best for them.

In Hebrew, Terah means "to delay." For some reason, Terah delayed in Haran and settled for life outside the Promised Land. The same obstructions, which may have affected Terah along his journey, are not exclusive to him. These same obstacles can be readily used by Satan to inhibit postmodern sojourners' completeness in Christ. Common barriers for postmoderns today include: fear of moving on with Christ because of a tainted past, a hesitancy to move forward with Christ because of an unwillingness to step out from comfort zones, not solely focusing on Christ because of being easily seduced by the sensate culture of today, not finding contentment in Christ because of a materialistic desire for things of the world, not discovering fulfillment in Christ because of a willingness to compromise, and/or not trusting in Christ to provide the necessary tools for the deeper walk with God.

Haran, in a spiritual sense, is any place short of holiness. Paul reminds us to “not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up” (Gal. 6:9). Believers must continue to faithfully rest in Christ and allow Him to move the disciple along their journey with Him. All believers should affirm with Paul regarding their journey with Christ and desire to not settle for less than Christ’s best:

Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already been made perfect, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me. Brothers, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus (Phil. 3: 12-14).

The believer’s journey is toward wholeness in Christ and to “be holy as I am holy” (Lev. 11:44, 45; 19:2; 20:7). When postmodern Christian’s learn to trust God for all aspects of their lives and follow His call to live a surrendered life, they will experience a fullness and joy against which the world cannot compete. Spurgeon summed up the Christians’ journey well, when he said; “We live here as strangers and sojourners and we find little to charm us in this foreign land. Our treasure is above and it will be a joy for our souls to rise to the place where our hearts already dwell.”³³

Terah did not finish strong and failed to complete the journey to the Promised Land. He settled for Haran and died there. God was not willing to allow Abraham to settle and remain in Haran. Immediately after Terah’s death, God renewed His call on Abraham’s life and directed him to continue the journey to Canaan. He desires more for today’s believers than they want for themselves. God merely asks that each follower press-on, allowing the Lord to demonstrate His faithfulness.

³³ Spurgeon, *The New Park Street Pulpit; Containing Sermons Preached and Rev.*, 14.

Paul: A Model of Radical Transformation

When anyone considers Biblical examples of radically transformed lives, Paul (Saul) is one of the first characters to be mentioned. There is much debate as to whether his life was partially or completely changed at the moment of his encounter with God on the road to Damascus. What is never questioned is the extent of transformation.

Transformation into Christlikeness is a process, which typically involves a journey. Paul's encounter with God began, "as he neared Damascus on his journey" (Ac 9:3), and continued throughout his life. This journey with Christ changed him from a Hebrew of Hebrews into a pillar of the Christian faith (Phil. 3:3-4). His conversion and subsequent journey with God transformed Paul from a man filled with hate into a strong voice for community and love; from a belief that one had to carefully earn justification through works to a deep trust in the sufficiency of Jesus' work on the cross and grace to bring about salvation; and from a strict keeper of the law to a willingness to be a fool for Christ.

Paul possessed a rich heritage and was taught to be a defender of the Jewish religion and the law. The son of a Pharisee, Saul became a Pharisee as well. He studied under one of the leading members of the Sanhedrin, Rabbi Gamaliel (Acts 22: 3). From Paul's personal account he zealously followed the "strictest sect of his religion, as a Pharisee" (Ac. 26:5). He excelled above his contemporaries and was on the fast track to becoming a leader among the Jewish people (Gal. 1:13-14). His knowledge of and zeal for the law had brought Saul a degree of fame and recognition as the next great Jew.

However, the Lord does not intend for anyone to remain bound to solely keeping the law for salvation. For Saul it was his encounter with God on the road to Damascus that began his journey of heart restoration and the transformation of his life:

As he neared Damascus **on his journey**, (emphasis added) suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him. He fell to the ground and heard a voice say to him, 'Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?' 'Who are you, Lord?' Saul asked. 'I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting,' he replied. 'Now get up and go into the city, and you will be told what you must do.' The men traveling with Saul stood there speechless; they heard the sound but did not see anyone. Saul got up from the ground, but when he opened his eyes he could see nothing. So they led him by the hand into Damascus. For three days he was blind, and did not eat or drink anything. (Acts 9:3-9)

Coming face to face with God was a crisis for Paul, as it would be for anyone.

God can see the inner false self. When the seeker is transparent before God, the ugliness, pain, and brokenness rise to the surface. A point of crisis along one's journey is what is often required for deep healing and cleansing to take place. Crisis in the Greek refers to the term judgment. In Hebrew this corresponds with the term *mashber* which means breaking and place of new birth. This accurately describes Saul's experience on the road to Damascus. Saul was broken before God. The journey proceeding away from that spot in the road led to a wonderful new birth.

For three days Saul was blind and did not eat. There has been much speculation about the meaning of this time of blindness. Was it punishment for Saul's persecution of Christians and an indication of God's disapproval of Saul? Was it a time of penance? Was it an allusion to Jesus' time in the tomb and rising again with a new body? Was it a living metaphor for the spiritual bankruptcy that Saul had experienced up to that point? What was going through his mind and heart during these days, repentance, self-examination, healing, surrender, sadness, pure joy? Working through these questions and

emotions were an important aspect of the initial stages of Paul's inner transformation. There were surely numerous things he did not yet understand. Though blind and fasting for three days, one could easily imagine Paul basking in the shekinah glory of God and experiencing the fullness of Christ's love. This fullness of God certainly kept Paul praising God and continuously praying. God heard Paul's prayers and sent Ananias to minister to him and to help restore his soul (Acts 9:11). It does not take much imagination to picture Ananias opening the door to Paul's room and seeing Paul in prayer communing with God, glowing like an angel, or singing out Charles Wesley's *And Can It Be*, especially the fourth stanza:

Long my imprisoned spirit lay,
Fast bound in sin and nature's night;
Thine eye diffused a quickening ray—
I woke, the dungeon flamed with light;
My chains fell off, my heart was free,
I rose, went forth, and followed Thee.

Paul readily began to boldly proclaim Christ throughout Damascus and caused such a stir that his followers had to steal him out of the city. Paul did not remain in Damascus or Jerusalem long. Instead, he chose to retreat to Arabia for a time of personal retreat and preparation. Little is known about Paul's experiences during these three years in Arabia (Gal. 1:15-18). However, this time was certainly a time of processing his encounter with God, being still before God, receiving His blessing, and attaining inward revelation, and preparation for the task that the Lord had assigned Paul: bringing the Gospel to the Gentiles.³⁴ Paul's ministry did not begin for another fifteen years. He had extensive time to listen to God and to be grounded in the love of Christ before his formal

³⁴ Risto Santala, *Paul's Conversion Experience* (2006, accessed May 2006); available from <<http://www.kolumbus.fi/hjussila/rsla/Paul/paul07.html>>.

ministry began (Gal. 2:1). This is a testament to the fact that growth in Christ is a process and it does not happen over night. It might begin with a crisis or Kairos moment, but real growth occurs over time as the believer allows God to enter all the various facets of a believer's life. The Bible does not record many details regarding Paul's activities during these fifteen years prior to writing his letter to the Galatians. It most certainly was a time of growth, change, and transformation. The scales that covered his eyes, after being exposed to God's glory, fell off after three short days. However, it probably took much longer for Paul to allow Christ to work in all the dark places of his hardened heart and soften it in preparation for service. This heart surgery and conformity of Paul's life to God's will definitely occur during these years of preparation. When Paul steps back into the story of scripture he is a transformed man. The next section will contrast three particular changes, which result from Paul's conversion experience.

Works versus Grace

Paul's encounter on the road to Damascus can be related to John Wesley's experience on Aldersgate Street in London. "I felt my heart strangely warmed. I felt I did trust in Christ alone for salvation; and an assurance was given me that He had taken away my sins, even mine, and saved me from the law of sin and death."³⁵ Both realized it was Christ's love and grace that brought about salvation and there was nothing anyone could do to earn it. It was a free gift through faith in a loving Savior through faith in Him. This

³⁵ John Wesley, *The Works of John Wesley*, ed. Thomas Jackson (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Publishing, 1996), vol. 1, 103.

truth would be at the core of Paul's message and according to James Dunn make up Paul's most memorable slogan: "justification from faith and not works."³⁶

Paul's upbringing, in the strictest sense of the Jewish religion, caused him to live a life consumed with regulations and laws. Saul was committed to honoring God and adherence to Judaic rules with the utmost zeal and fervor. Saul's attempt to achieve perfection through diligently following out a prescribed list of laws undoubtedly brought little joy, instead wrought a life of hopelessness and despair. In Acts 26 Paul describes to King Agrippa the extent to which he was willing to go to follow the law. "I myself was convinced that I ought to do many things in opposing the name of Jesus of Nazareth. And I did so in Jerusalem; I not only shut up many of the saints in prison, by authority from the chief priests, but when they were put to death I cast my vote against them" (Acts 26:9). All Saul did he did to honor and serve God, which included squelching the upstart movement, "the Way." Saul's desire to follow his conscience and God, even prior to his conversion, can be heard in his words; "Brethren, I have lived before God in all conscience up to this day" (Acts 23:1).

In the dirt on the Damascus road after his intimate encounter with God, Saul was convicted of the fact that he could never measure up to the law. He realized he was powerless to bring about his own salvation apart from a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. The error of his earlier education and life gave way to freely receiving the grace and love of Christ. He now understood that the law was intended to bring about a death to self, not life. From this place of surrender, Paul could obediently follow God's voice and live out a yielded life "in Christ." He testified to the transformation in his first letter to

³⁶ Richard N. Longenecker, *The Road from Damascus: The Impact of Paul's Conversion on His Life, Thought, and Ministry* (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans Pub., 1997), 101.

Timothy; “Though I formerly blasphemed and persecuted and insulted Him, yet I was dealt with mercifully, for I had acted ignorantly and in unbelief. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ was poured out lavishly on me, filling me with the faith and love which are conveyed to us in Christ Jesus. If He could do that for me, then He can be trusted to do it for any. None need ever doubt that this grace is for them”(1 Ti. 1:13-16). Paul realized there was nothing in his strength that would allow him to keep the law, but in his weakness God’s love could abound. Now Paul could boast about his infirmities, failures and weaknesses because God’s power was made perfect in weakness. Christ’s grace was sufficient. There was nothing else required in order to receive mercy and acceptance into the family of God (2 Cor. 12:7-10).

Hate versus Love

Saul had become the chief persecutor of the Christians and seemed to almost revel in his harsh treatment of the church. There was something deep inside which drove him to “breathe out murderous threats against the Lord’s disciples” and seek out special permission to arrest followers of the Way (Acts 9:1-2). What was the source of Paul’s authoritarian aggressive nature? By all accounts his education under Gamaliel was moderate and actually promoted tolerant care for others. Did Paul possess a misguided quest for power and prestige among his peers? Had he taken to Rabbi Shammai's stricter interpretation of the Law and zealously carried out administering judgment on those who he perceived had fallen short of the law? Perhaps his outward rage was caused by an inner pain and identity issues stemming from an inferiority complex and guilt due to the fact that Saul knew he could never measure up to his name’s heritage and be “a head

taller than everyone else” (1 Sam. 9:2). Whatever the cause, Saul was filled with a vile hatred. The majority of this hatred was projected toward the followers of Christ.

Then Saul met face to face with God and Christ’s love permeated all aspects of Paul’s new heart and life. The transformation of Paul’s hard heart consumed with hate, to a gentle heart, filled with Christ’s love, is the most dramatic consequence of his conversion. Paul’s writings are filled with exhortations to share the fullest expression of the Christian life: “love one another,” “bear one another’s burdens,” “love your neighbor,” and “the goal of this commandment is love.” All that Paul had become was centered on the love of God and sharing this love with others. This is best represented in his culminating “love chapter” written to the Corinthians.

If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal. If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. If I give all I possess to the poor and surrender my body to the flames, but have not love, I gain nothing. Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. Love never fails. But where there are prophecies, they will cease; where there are tongues, they will be stilled; where there is knowledge, it will pass away. For we know in part and we prophesy in part, but when perfection comes, the imperfect disappears. When I was a child, I talked like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I put childish ways behind me. Now we see but a poor reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known. And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love (1 Cor. 13:1-13).

After his encounter with God, Paul is gripped with love and promoting the unconditional care for all. Now Paul shares these words regarding the law, “The one who loves another has fulfilled the law” and responds to the other commandments regarding

adultery, murder, stealing and covetousness through the simple command to “Love your neighbor as yourself” (Rom. 13:8-9).

Throughout Paul’s epistles the idea of working out one’s own salvation within the bounds of Christian community is a central theme. Most of Colossian chapter 3, which is referred to as Paul’s “Guide to Holy Living,” discusses how to live selflessly and together in perfect unity. “And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity” (Col. 3:14). The impact of the Christian community upon Paul’s faith was continuous as he endeavored to help other seekers grow in righteousness. As Ben Witherington infers, “Paul set the example of Christlike loving service and then bid his converts “imitate me as I imitate Christ” (1 Cor. 11:1).³⁷ Love consumed all of who Paul had become. Reverend Charles Bertrand, a retired United Methodist pastor, considers the fruit of the spirit that Paul personifies in Galatians, as a description of the revolution and maturity that has taken place in Paul’s life after his Damascus road experience.³⁸ Where Paul once brought pain and suffering, now through God’s love and righteousness, he had become a model and bearer of a message of love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control (Gal. 5:22-23).

Life by the Law versus Being a Fool for Christ

Paul’s early life and strict upbringing led him to seek all answers through law. The highest good and best means to honor God was to keep and preserve the laws which were sent down from his forefathers. This required seeking out rational solutions to all of

³⁷ Ben Witherington, *The Paul Quest: The Renewed Search for the Jew of Tarsus* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1998), 85.

³⁸ Charles Bertrand, "Life of Paul," (Berea, KY: Conversation, 2006).

life's questions and possessing a strong foundation for all decisions and actions. For the Jew this entailed keeping the covenant and specific things like circumcision, abstaining from pork, and for Saul, persecuting the followers of the Way. The Jews' identity was wrapped up in how well they maintained the covenant and the laws. Compliance produced rigid, self reliant and often robotic followers of God.

Paul preached a different message and way of living. He was not willing to throw out the law. Paul's salvation and encounter with God began with his introduction to the law at an early age. However, "In Christ" Paul found more freedom and a willingness to trust God for all things. As such, Paul was able to declare, "But now a righteousness from God, apart from law, has been made known, (to which the Law and the Prophets testify). This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is no difference" (Rom. 3:21-22). "He has made us competent as ministers of a new covenant—not of the letter, but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life" (2 Cor. 3:6). For Paul, the pursuit of righteousness no longer involved blind adherence to a list of rules and obedience to the Law, now salvation was the result of total reliance in the love and grace of Christ.

The realization that Christianity could not be explained through human reason brought about a new freedom. Paul was eager to be termed "a fool for Christ," if foolishness meant childlike faithfulness. He was able to resist the conventional wisdom of the age and acknowledge the mystery of the Christian experience. This freedom allowed Paul to no longer have confidence in the flesh and what he could reasonably prove. "But whatever was to my profit I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. What is more, I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing

Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things” (Phil. 3:7-8). How foolish of Paul to part with everything that gives one value. Since Paul’s identity was no longer tied to how well he knew or kept the law, he was now quite willing to be seen as a foolish servant, that Christ might receive all the glory. Matthew Henry looks at being a fool for Christ this way, “We can pass for fools in the world, and be despised as such, so that the wisdom of God and the honor of the gospel may by this means be secured and displayed.”³⁹

Lessons for Today

The life of Paul demonstrates the extent of transformation possible for those who are in Christ. For Paul, there were no compartments to his life. Being in Christ permeated all that he was and had an impact on all that did. He considered himself Christ’s slave. It was in relationship to Jesus that Paul found meaning to his life. This is a significant contrast to the compartmentalization that is often taking place with today’s postmoderns. Many Millennial believers have their Christian side, sporadically connecting with God, through experiences like participating in a praise and worship meeting. However, when these young Christians depart from their intimate time with God, they seem to shut off that compartment of their being and move onto the rest of their life. These postmoderns do not allow the life changing grace of God to affect their entire personhood and everyday choices.

Significant life changing spiritual growth does not occur in a single moment. There are certainly kairos moments with God, through which the believer might take

³⁹ Henry and others, *Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible*, 1809.

significant steps forward along their journey with the Lord. However, the normal mode of growth is a process over a period of time through the day to day living of life. This truth contradicts the nature of the quick-fix society in which postmoderns live. Paul's metamorphosis began with a powerful encounter with God, but that was only the beginning of his journey of complete transformation. One could argue that Paul's experience with God began with his early exposure with the law.

Along one's path there may be dry seasons where there seems to be no connection with God, but faith, obedience, and perseverance are the keys to becoming a Christlike disciple. During these times, all sojourners, like Paul, must "press on toward the mark to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus" (Phil. 3:14). Growth in Christ requires consistent discipline on the part of the believer. A strong relationship can only develop as Christians make themselves available to God and allow Him to do a new work in their hearts.

The Christian journey is often a long and arduous journey with many trials and tribulations. The necessary discipline and commitments are often not easily maintained alone. Paul, John Wesley and Dietrich Bonhoeffer experienced this reality and as a result were all strong proponents of believers living life together in Christian community. A majority of Paul's Christian life and writings were spent trying to help other believers to walk together toward Christ. The Millennials should derive much enthusiasm from Paul's letters. The writings are rich with encouragement to love one another in community, which affirms an important characteristic of this generation.

God is willing to do wonderful things in and through the faithful Christian servant. Brother Paul, who considered himself the least of the apostles, serves as a role

model to all who would follow his example and live for Christ. Paul, in his letter to Titus, reminds him of the fact that “the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men. It teaches us to say ‘No’ to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age, while we wait for the blessed hope—the glorious appearing of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us to redeem us from all wickedness and to purify for himself a people that are his very own, eager to do what is good” (Ti. 2:11-14).

Paul’s whole identity was determined by living for Christ, because of Christ, through Christ, by Christ, and with Christ. Paul was transformed from the inside out, because he fully submitted his life to Christ. This serves as a wonderful example of the work Christ desires to do in each heart. As the disciple dies to self and surrenders all to God and His will, they will be changed. The Lord will be faithful to transform the seeker into His image and bring each one to a place where they can proclaim with Paul, “To me to live is Christ and to die is gain” (Phil. 1:21). Then, like Paul, from this place of a surrendered heart and a transformed life, the Christian servant can go out and share the love of God with all those around them.

Conclusions

Within each person there is a desire for something more, a desire for meaning and purpose. This “something” is a desire for a relationship with the transcendent God. This relationship is what all of humankind, beginning with Adam and Eve, were created for and will continually long for until each sojourner finds fulfillment and rests in God. The journey of life, to fill the void in the seeker’s heart, has led the postmodern generation, in

particular, to look for meaning and purpose through all kinds of external and materialistic means. However, many are choosing to look inward and desire to walk with God and to know Him more deeply.

As the Millennials approach this journey with Christ, Biblical examples of sisters and brothers, who have walked before them, will be an important source of strength and truth regarding God's character and unfailing love. A journey with Christ toward holiness in the instant gratification society of today is about "a long obedience in the same direction" as Eugene Peterson titled his classic book.⁴⁰ The journeys of Caleb, Terah and Paul each serve as testimonies of the faithfulness of God and provisions available to those who would follow Christ along the path of wholeness. As the loving Father, God's desire is the same as it was with Adam. He longs to walk intimately and be a friend to His children bringing peace, love, joy, and purpose to each disciple of Christ. Though this is what the postmoderns are longing for, God will not ever force His best upon the seeker. It is only as disciples makes themselves open and available to God that the Lord can and will do a mighty work in and through each life. As the term journey implies, following God is an all encompassing, lifelong endeavor, and not merely encapsulating a season or portion of the follower's life.

The pursuit of holiness requires a circumcized, fully committed heart to God, and a courageous spirit, like Caleb's. He discounted the cost and willingly pressed on along the path toward God. Even when no one else would walk with him or trust in God's provision Caleb stayed the course. The postmodern whose heart is centered on God and

⁴⁰ Eugene H. Peterson, *A Long Obedience in the Same Direction: Discipleship in an Instant Society* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000).

seeking Him daily will have all that is necessary to overcome all trials and stay the course toward completeness in Christ.

In this technologically filled age, there are numerous distractions that vie for a disciple's time, attention and allegiance. The Millennial sojourner must never grow weary, bored, or distracted from the goal of living in an intimate relationship with God, like Terah and fall short of Canaan. Christ calls each one His beloved. The life He desires for each follower is far richer, purer, and sweeter than anything this world can offer. Millennials who have affirmed this truth and have been touched by the fullness of God's love can readily sing out with their postmodern brothers and sisters of Caedmon's Call, "this world has nothing for me and this world has everything. All that I could want and nothing that I need."⁴¹

God's grace and mercy are the same today as they were for the earliest Christians. He is still able to transform all who would follow Him into dynamic saints and servants of Christ. This type of change does not occur with a half hearted commitment or only allowing God to take control of a particular aspect of a disciples' life. Like Paul, any who follow and serve Christ today, must die to self and fully receive God's grace and love. Then faithfully continue down the path of service to others that Christ opens for each believer. Those who remain will proclaim, like Paul, "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race and I have kept the faith" (2 Tim. 4:7). The faithful believer who continues along the journey with Christ, will daily walk with God along the paths of their life. The disciple cultivates a deep and abiding relationship with the loving Father along

⁴¹ Call Caedmon's, *Caedmon's Call* (Word).

the way. In this way the Christian's relationship with God restores the intimate fellowship for which each person was originally created.

CHAPTER FOUR

JOHN WESLEY'S METHODOLOGY FOR A POSTMODERN WORLD

Introduction

After even a cursory examination of Wesley's philosophy of ministry, methodology, and the Methodists' strong commitment to spiritual growth derived from sharing life together in community, one must wonder if John Wesley was not developing his initiatives to reach the postmodern Millennial generation of today. Was Wesley considerably ahead of his time, or are the needs and concerns of the postmodern generation comparable to those of the eighteenth century English masses? Wesley's focus seems to have been directed right at the needs and characteristics of the Millennial generation, especially in the emphasis on service to others, openness to discovering truth through different means, strong commitment to relationships, living together in community, learning from their peers, and a high value in the experience of the Christian faith. This chapter will describe Wesley's methodologies and how each one connects with the postmodern disciple. The movement John Wesley established literally changed the world and if Christian leaders of today are faithful to his teachings and methodology, the world would once again be impacted for Christ.

Spiritual Formation and the Daily Christian Life

For John Wesley, the Christian life begins with a surrendered heart to God. He believed that one's utter abandonment to God and His purposes would naturally impact all facets of the disciple's life. In all the believer's comings and goings, interactions,

work, and play he or she should reflect Christ. For this to be a reality, Wesley maintained that believers should be committed to knowing God more deeply and walking the road to perfection. Thus, Wesley was committed to making all of his life available to God, as well as utilizing classical spiritual disciplines to connect with Christ. Regarding seeking God more fully, Dr. Steve Harper of Asbury Theological Seminary believes Wesley would say that “God does not call you to a devotional time. God calls you to a devotional life.”¹

Consistent with his theology of holiness, Wesley was not overly worried about consistent right living and right choices; he was more concerned with the purity of intention. Wesley believed a pure heart would result in a holy life and a keen desire to serve others. This desire would be driven by living out Jesus’ greatest commandment found in Mt 22, “love the lord God with all your heart, soul and mind; and love your neighbor as yourself” (Mt. 22:37-39). For Wesley, this was not an either/or situation. It was clearly both/and. If believers were to grow as Christians, they would continually seek to know and love God more fully and unfailingly care for sisters and brothers in need. There was no dichotomy in Wesley’s theology. His methodology was an inclusive spiritual formation paradigm for knowing God more deeply and serving others like Jesus. This focus on the love of God and love of neighbor produced a “religion of the heart” which helped establish a proper identity and appropriate service in the lives of fellow Methodists and for all followers of Christ.

¹ Steve Harper, *Devotional Life in the Wesleyan Tradition. A Workbook*, Pathways in Spiritual Growth (Nashville, TN: Upper Room Books, 1995), 10.

To make the presence of God a reality in one's life and promote this Christlike lifestyle, Wesley emphasized works of piety and works of mercy.² Works of piety, which are referred to as the "institutional means of grace" included: prayer, scripture study, the Lord's Supper, corporate worship, and fasting. These were intended to help the believer grow in his or her personal walk with God. Wesley was careful to participate in communion on a weekly basis to maximize his receiving of God's grace. He fasted after the evening meal every Thursday until the afternoon meal on Friday. The purpose of the fast was not to mortify the flesh, but to elevate the soul. Wesley was concerned about simplistic living and fasting was one way of weaning the soul from materialism, but more importantly, it provided an opportunity to commune with God in a deeper way.

The works of mercy, identified as the "prudential means of grace," focused the individual's attention away from her or himself, and on serving others. The prudential means of grace were designed to meet others at their points of need, which might include: doing good, visiting the sick and prisoners, feeding and clothing people, earning, saving, giving away all one can, and opposition to slavery. For Wesley, to expect growth in personal and social holiness apart from these appointed means constituted nothing less than a species of fanaticism.³ Together these works of piety and works of mercy formed the heart of the Wesleyan structure for spiritual growth. Wesley viewed these as the "ordinary channels of conveying (God's) grace into the souls of men" and conforming them into the image of Christ.⁴ Wesley was so convinced that an abiding relationship

² John Wesley, *The Works of John Wesley*, ed. Thomas Jackson (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Publishing, 1996), vol. 8, 322-24.

³ Theological Seminary Asbury, *Christian Formation Plan* (Asbury Theological Seminary, 2005, accessed May 2005); available from <http://www.asburyseminary.edu/current/christianformation.htm>.

⁴ Wesley, vol. 5, 187.

with God was the most important aspect of a servant leader's life that after revival broke out in Everton, he would reflect in his journal. "In most of the instruments whom God employed. These were plain, artless men, simple of heart, but without any remarkable gifts; men who (almost literally) knew nothing save Jesus Christ, and him crucified."⁵

For John Wesley the love of God was at the heart of all experiential aspects of spiritual formation. He did not solely desire to know that sins were forgiven, but believed the Christian experience brought about a corresponding degree of peace and joy. In the sermon, "*The Almost Christian*," Wesley describes the love of God this way, "such a love... engrosses the whole heart, takes up all the affections...fills the entire capacity of the soul ... employs the utmost extent of all its faculties."⁶ Wesley's focus on the aspect of God as "Loving Father" influenced all other aspects of Wesleyan theology. There is no better way of getting to know someone on a deeper level than spending time together communicating with one another. Wesley would advocate the same truth in a personal relationship with the Lord.

If the seeker is to know Him more intimately, believers must spend quiet time in prayer, listening, communing, and preparing their hearts to receive the blessings from God. Wesley believed that "prayer being the breath of every soul which is truly born of God. And by this new kind of spiritual respiration, spiritual life is not only sustained, but increased day by day."⁷ As such, Wesley urged daily communion with God through scheduled private family and public times of prayer. Throughout his life, Wesley

⁵ Ibid., vol. 3, 472.

⁶ Ibid., vol. 5, 21.

⁷ Ibid., vol. 5, 226.

maintained fixed times of personal prayer early in the morning and later in the evening. He often challenged his followers to do likewise. “O begin, fix some part of every day for private exercises, whether you like it or no, read and pray daily. It is for your life; there is no other way; else you will be a trifler all your days.”⁸ Ever the Methodist, Wesley utilized weekly patterns of prayer, as well as being in an attitude of prayer throughout the day. To assist him in drawing near to God, Wesley would often use the prayers of other sojourners like Jeremy Taylor, William Law, and *The Book of Common Prayer*. To Wesley prayer was “the grand means of drawing near to God.”⁹ John Wesley’s life was so consumed with prayer it caused Dr. Harper to summarize his life this way, “He lived to pray and prayed to live.”¹⁰

The second work of piety Wesley considered central to holy living was the study of Scripture. Wesley was committed to the study of the Word and believed every page was integral in developing a full understanding of God. Though Wesley was an exhaustive reader and maintained an extensive library, he considered himself a “Bible-bigot”¹¹ and “*homo unis libri...*”¹² “a man of one book.”¹³ His passion for the Scripture could be heard throughout his writings. For example, in the preface to his standard

⁸ John Wesley, *The Letters of the Rev. John Wesley*, ed. John Telford (London, England: The Epworth Press, 1931), vol. 4, 103.

⁹ Ibid., vol. 4, 90.

¹⁰ Harper, 19.

¹¹ Wesley, *The Works of John Wesley*, vol. 3, 251.

¹² Ibid., vol. 3, 213.

¹³ Ibid., vol. 11, 373.

sermons, he wrote: “O give me the book! At any price give me the book of God. Here is knowledge enough for me.”¹⁴

One of the primary issues that pushed John Wesley away from the Church of England was the matter of helping the parishioners grow in their relationship with God. Wesley felt that the whole Bible was not preached and that the leadership did not hold the Scripture up as final authority. It was Wesley’s commitment to the primacy of the Word and his desire to be “*sola scriptura*” (by Scripture alone) in all things that began the fissure between him and the Church of England. Originally, the Oxford Methodist had been zealous for the Church of England. The members of the “holy club” believed the Anglican Church was “nearer the scriptural and primitive plan, than any other national church upon earth.”¹⁵ However, Wesley later no longer regarded the Church of England as the only church honored by God or insisted upon in Scripture. Wesley believed it was through the studying of Scripture alone that one can find a complete picture of who God is and His desire for humankind.

Wesley encouraged his followers to:

spend as much as you can of the rest of the day, either in repeating what you have heard, or in reading the Scripture, or in private prayer, or talking of the things of God. Let his love be ever before your eyes. Let his praise be ever in your mouth. You have lived many years in folly and sin; now, live one day unto the Lord.¹⁶

He taught that there should be a constant and routine studying of the Bible. As believers begin his or her searching of the Word, he or she should start and end each time with

¹⁴ Ibid., vol. 5, 3.

¹⁵ Ibid., vol. 7, 429.

¹⁶ Ibid., vol. 11, 166.

prayer petitioning the Spirit to promote better understanding. The Scriptures were to be read in a slow reverent and meditative way in a manner following the tradition of *Lectio Divina*.¹⁷ This method can be seen in Wesley's overview of his personal time with the Bible. "Here then I am, far from the busy ways of men. I sit down alone; only God is here. In his presence I open, I read his Book; for this end, to find the way to Heaven."¹⁸

Wesley was careful to print all his sermons to serve as tools for inspiration and instruction. In *Shaped by the Word*, Dr. Robert Mulholland explains how Wesley's method of reading Scripture brought the written Word into the living Word. This style of reading becomes more formational instead of being simply informational. A formational approach to reading the Bible results in a more relational response, as opposed to a solely functional response.¹⁹ In the "*Preface to the Explanatory Notes upon the Old Testament*," Wesley explains his personal method of approaching the Word and the six steps he utilizes for studying the Bible devotionally:

How to read devotionally:

1. set apart some time, if possible, every morning and evening to read the Scripture.
2. read a chapter out of the Old and one out of the New Testament, if possible. If that cannot be done, read one chapter, or part of one.
3. read the Scripture with the single purpose of knowing the whole will of God, and with a fixed determination to do that will.
4. in order to know the will of God, there should be a constant eye to the analogy of faith; the connection and harmony there is between those grand, fundamental doctrines –original sin, justification by faith, the new birth, inward and outward holiness.
5. serious and earnest prayer should be made before approaching the oracles of God, seeing that "Scripture can only be understood through

¹⁷ Ibid., vol. 8, 314.

¹⁸ Ibid., vol. 5, 3.

¹⁹ M. Robert Mulholland, *Shaped by the Word: The Power of Scripture in Spiritual Formation* (Nashville, TN: Upper Room Books, 2000), 55-60.

the same spirit whereby it was given.” Prayer should be offered at the close in order that what is read might be written upon the heart.

6. there should be periods of self-examination during the reading of the Scripture, with both heart and life being scrutinized. And whatever light is given “should be used to the uttermost, and that immediately. Let there be no delay. Whatever you resolve, begin to execute the first moment you can. So shall you find this word to be indeed the power of God unto present and external salvation.”²⁰

Implications for Postmodern Ministry

The present postmodern generation is regarded as highly spiritual and young people are drawn to all things mystical. Postmoderns possess a passion for connecting with something that is much larger than themselves. Service to others is a high priority and a sense of altruism is quite prevalent among this generation. They are just as likely to serve at a soup kitchen as they are to hang out with others. The best times would be in finding opportunities to serve together with their friends. They live in a world of “simultaneity,” as Leonard Sweet terms the ability to connect two seemingly contradictory beliefs.²¹ Millennials have been raised to view Christianity as a life full of either/or absolutes. They question if there are absolutes and are apt to wonder why two opposite ideas cannot be both true and right. This definitely plays into their highly tolerant nature and desire to not offend others who might hold a quite different belief system. All these characteristics would resonate with John Wesley and his theology of ministry. Therefore, these perspectives are wonderful places to meet young seekers of faith.

²⁰ John Wesley, *Explanatory Notes on the Old Testament* (1755, accessed May 2006); available from http://wesley.nnu.edu/john_wesley/notes/otpreface.htm.

²¹ Leonard Sweet, "Strategic Vision for the Church," (George Fox University, Portland, OR: 2004).

Wesley believed that purity of intention would lead people to right living and help them find God in new and deeper ways. Today, Christian leaders must allow postmoderns to struggle with their faith and respond to their tough questions. Campus ministers must be careful to not simply cut loose postmoderns who are willing to believe in ways that outwardly seem incongruent with mainstream Christianity. Spiritual leaders and guides must be willing to walk with these seekers along their journey of discovery of who they are in Christ and what that means for their life. Spiritual directors must find points of entry and help the postmodern disciple to continue down the pathway of growth in Christ. These young people are quite willing to listen and learn from others who have walked ahead of them in the faith. This reality fits well with Wesley, since this type of interaction and growth is exactly what took place in the Methodist class meetings. Wesley models this type of intimate investment in others through his willingness to exhaustibly correspond with sojourners through notes and personal letters. Wesley's letters provided some of the most formational instruction into what it means to live a holy life from a Wesleyan perspective. Wesley's letters and journals should be "must reads" for all who desire to seek God and guide others toward holiness.

Two characteristics of the postmodern generation would seem to lead them right to Wesley's thoughts on the Christian life. The first characteristic being, Christianity and one's personal relationship with God is much bigger than just Jesus and the seeker. Though the disciple's walk with God is a highly personal relationship, it also involves their current community. As well as, "a cloud of witnesses" representing a long tradition of faithful saints beginning with the early church and the desert mothers and fathers. Wesley's relationship with Christ was significantly influenced by his parents, Moravian

Friends, and the writings of Macarius, Thomas a Kempis, William Law, and Jeremy Taylor. Wesley had a particular affinity for recapturing the faith of the first century church. He believed that what the first Christians knew and felt of Christ could be experienced by the Methodists of his day. Wesley did not believe there were many contemporary Christian role models in his England. He felt the early church members were “burning and shining lights,” which shined in a dark place and truly reflected what it meant to be a Christian.²²

Millennials want to be connected to something larger than themselves. The reality from whence the Christian faith came would serve as a strong anchor in their quest to develop a faithful Christian life. Instead of just recommending the newest pop spiritual writers or commercially trendy books that have been popular over the last few years, leaders should encourage postmoderns to read some of the classic writers whose work has stood the test of time. Christian leaders would be wise to follow Wesley’s instruction to his preachers that they each spend time reading the foundational Christian works in his Christian library selections. Campus ministers must point young seekers toward the enduring works and biographies of the mystics, desert saints and even the *Works, Letters, and Journal of John Wesley*. Reading these journeys of the faithful would help today’s postmoderns realize that many who have gone before them struggled through similar experiences, questions and doubts, and yet their faith in Jesus Christ remained firm.

The other characteristic of the postmodern generation that connects with Wesleyan methodology is in the area of caring for and serving others. The Millennials have a passion for serving the poorest of the poor throughout the world. Postmoderns

²² Wesley, *The Works of John Wesley*, vol. 10, 500.

would resonate with Wesley's call to reach out with the love of Christ. For Wesley, to be Christlike is to be about meeting the needs of others on a daily basis. Wesley would say that a disciple could not possess a deep faith in Christ, if that faith did not impact how a believer lived his or her everyday life.

The Millennials' propensity to separate their faith from every other aspect of their lives would be disturbing to John Wesley. Campus ministers and student development professionals anguish over the fact that many students are testifying to wonderful deep and growing personal relationships with God. However, these same students outward, everyday lives do not attest to Christ's love being fully present in their hearts. Wesley strongly believed that if all facets of a Christian's life were permeated with God's love, then the believer's words and actions would be those of Christ, if He were present. If believers have surrendered their hearts to Jesus, then Christians' decisions and choices should look quite different from the secular world.

What we have discovered at Asbury College is that this is not always true. I have sat in small groups, Bible studies, and prayer meetings with college students and have been "blown away" by the profoundness of the conversation, prayers, and commitments of students. I have left these occasions so excited about the depth and vibrancy of the students' faith in Christ, thinking 'man, these students have it together.' However, in the next moment, I would experience the same students making incredibly poor and selfish choices or verbally tearing apart someone else. I wondered, was I just somewhere else or are these the same students who were just ministering to my heart through their words and prayers? There seems to be a disconnect at times between what young disciples of Christ believe, testify to, and how this affects (or fails to affect) their everyday life. This

apparent contradiction is consistent with the postmoderns' ability to hold two divergent ideas together. Wesley would walk with these young people through their inconsistencies and situate them in a place where they could see others living out their faith through all facets of their daily life. His belief and intention would be to continue to disciple these postmoderns. As these seekers are introduced to historic models of faith, make themselves available to God daily through spiritual disciplines, and learn from mentors, role models and friends, genuine transformation would occur. This transformational experience would produce an inward and outward reflection of Christ in the follower's life, which will draw others toward Jesus.

Community and Relationships

Many of Wesley's ideas about God, faith and ministry can be traced to lessons learned in the kitchen of his home. From early in his childhood, his godly parents, especially his mother, Susanna, were influential in shaping John's views of God and his thinking on the use of small groups.²³ Susanna was a master educator and considered self-will the root of all sin. One key tenet of Methodism is clearly evident in the educational philosophy of Susanna: the management of the human will.²⁴ For her, teaching children to obey and honor their parents was the first lesson they needed to learn. To this end, she invested much time and effort in each child. Each of the ten children received love and a strictly regimented six hours of home schooling a day. Additionally, she met weekly with each child one on one for spiritual investment and

²³ Robert Tuttle, *John Wesley: His Life and Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Pub. House, 1978), 42-49.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 43.

growth updates. These times were significant for all the Wesley children and John remembered them throughout his life. Though John Wesley later founded Methodism, Susanna was responsible for developing this methodical nature in him. From early childhood she taught her children that doing God's will was the highest good. Susanna's pulpit was her kitchen, and the community classes she held in the kitchen drew upwards of two hundred hungry souls. John Wesley described his mother as “a preacher of righteousness.” Her focus on holy living, strict personal discipline, and awareness of individual needs became the cornerstones of the Methodist movement.²⁵

Some of Wesley's first experiences in living and serving in community came while serving at Oxford University as a tutor. Wesley was responsible for a small study group, which included his brother, Charles. John readily became the leader of the group and brought a new sense of discipline and purpose. He led this group in times of prayer, fasting, confession, and service to the poor. The group's disciplined adherence to John's leadings and zeal to more deeply know God brought about scorn and several nicknames from fellow students. The two most recognized labels were the "the holy club" and "the Methodists," both of which appropriately seemed to lay the foundation for later ministry focus.²⁶

An emphasis on community was an integral aspect of Wesley's evangelistic endeavors. Each time open-air field preaching occurred and people responded. These “awakened souls” were encouraged to attend a society meeting for instruction and

²⁵ Rebecca Lamar Harmon, *Susanna: Mother of the Wesleys* (New York: Abingdon Press, 1968), 80.

²⁶ D. Michael Henderson, *John Wesley's Class Meeting: A Model for Making Disciples* (Nappanee, IN: Evangel Pub. House, 1997), 43.

introduction into Christian community. Societies were open to all who were interested in “fleeing the wrath to come.” Wesley’s conviction was that spiritual accountability best occurred in a disciplined and personal fashion with a few other seekers. Here, in these small group settings, discipleship and evangelism occurred relationally, not programmatically. More lives were brought into the kingdom through friendship evangelism than any other outreach and revival services. The even smaller “bands” were made up of five or six members meeting together to participate in an intimate spiritual check-up. Those who were further along in their personal walk were again separated into same sex select societies for more intense instruction and searching. These societies, bands and select-societies were initially at the heart of Wesley’s theology of ministry and assimilation of the masses into the Methodist system of spiritual instruction. However, it was the onset of class meetings that really fostered the spiritual renewal movement.

Accountability was central for Wesley, but he would later acknowledge that at the heart of authentic community is the development of trust and rapport within the small group. Without these essentials in place, open sharing and straightforward accountability cannot take place. Wesley strongly believed it was the responsibility of all believers to hold one another accountable for spiritual growth and confessing failures in personal walks. The purpose of this accountability was cultivation of holy lives. For Wesley the small group meeting was essential and was in part a response to the need for community in his own spiritual journey. He affirmed that such groups were begun “in obedience of the command of God by St. James.”²⁷ This command was to “confess your faults one to another, and pray for one another that we may be healed,” which were based on Ja. 5:16,

²⁷ Wesley, *The Works of John Wesley*, vol. 1, 92.

“confess your sins one to another.” In each class meeting participants would respond to a series of questions, which served as a spiritual check-up.²⁸

1. What known sins have you committed since our last meeting?
2. What temptation have you met with?
3. How were you delivered?
4. What have you thought, said, or done, of which you doubt whether it be sin or not?
5. Have you nothing you desire to keep secret?

This was the beginning of the more extensive rules he would later develop for the Methodist Societies.

The class meetings began as a means to reduce the debt of the Bristol Society. However, Wesley quickly realized the potential within this format for fellowship and spiritual growth. Actually, the class meetings served as a powerful evangelism tool. As others in the group saw how their Christian brothers and sisters lived out their faith on a daily basis, they examined their own life to see what was missing. This examination led many directly to Jesus and His love.

The original class meeting plan involved group leaders meeting individually with each of the approximately twelve class members to collect a penny from those who could contribute. More importantly, these interactions provided the leader the opportunity to see where each member was spiritually and make an account for how well they followed God during the subsequent week. The consistent questions helped the leaders keep the sharing focused on the here-and-now and not issues from the past. This added to the commonality of experience and assisted in bonding the group together.

Wesley viewed the class meeting as emulating the “Koinonia” experienced in the New Testament, where the marks of the Christian faith were forgiveness, acceptance, and

²⁸ Ibid., vol. 8, 272.

learning to love one another in community. The class meeting proved to be successful because it provided a safe and secure atmosphere, which allowed thousands of individuals to openly share on a weekly basis. This warmth and fellowship addressed a significant need in group members' lives, especially of "common" folk, who relished the fact that someone cared about them.

Wesley knew that salvation was not an individual enterprise. He exhorted his followers to, "Suffer not one thought of separating from your brethren, whether their opinions agree with yours or not. Do not dream that any man sins in not believing you, in not taking your word; or that this or that opinion is essential to the work, and both must stand or fall together."²⁹ It was in community that individuals had the opportunity to realize they were all on the spiritual journey together and needed one another to successfully navigate life. Wesley realized this himself. Thankfully he saw fit to share his need for true community with the world and establish a wonderful means of grace to help thousands find wholeness in God. This was at the core of Wesley's class meetings. Each week members came and shared victories, failures, and personal needs with the group. Iron truly sharpened iron in these small meetings and lives were changed forever for the Kingdom. What a privilege it must have been to walk and shepherd friends toward Christ. How blessed is the believer, if by God's grace, the disciple has the opportunity to be there when a brother or sister takes significant step of faith.

John Wesley's commitment to the necessity of meeting together was highlighted in his letter to Elizabeth Ritchie, "at all times it is of use to have a friend to whom you

²⁹ Ibid., vol. 11, 433.

can pour out your heart without any disguise or reserve.”³⁰ Wesley believed and constantly reminded his followers that they “could not keep warm alone.”³¹ The impact of the class meetings was readily apparent. Many members connected so well with their class they maintained memberships for decades and often considered the other group members their closest friends. Numerous class members would rather endure much hardship in traveling to the weekly meeting than miss their precious time together. Leslie Church described the class meeting “as a ‘gift of God’ to a needy people who grew in grace because they gathered in eager and expectant fellowship.”³² For Church, “it was not the uniformity of procedure that mattered most, but rather the sharing of experience and the readiness to accept the guidance of God whenever and however it was given to their ready minds and hearts.”³³ It was in the class meeting that people found much needed fellowship, connection with a larger body, self worth and unconditional love. As Duke professor, Paul Chilcote, asserts, “Christianity for the Wesleys was not so much a religion as it was a *relationship*. It begins with God’s offer of relationship with us, but it is then extended through fellowship with the community of faith.”³⁴

These class meetings became the nucleus of the Methodist movement. The excitement over which caused Wesley to proclaim, “this is the thing, the very thing we

³⁰ Wesley, *The Letters of the Rev. John Wesley*, vol. 6, 239.

³¹ Wesley Tracy, "John Wesley Spiritual Director: Spiritual Guidance in John Wesley's Letters," *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 1 & 2 (1988).

³² Leslie Church, *The Early Methodist People* (London: Epworth Press, 1949), 160.

³³ *Ibid.*, 160.

³⁴ Paul Wesley Chilcote, *Recapturing the Wesleys' Vision: An Introduction to the Faith of John and Charles Wesley* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2004), 20.

have wanted for so long.”³⁵ He realized that there had to be more than strict personal discipline and accountability to encourage growth. Wesley believed there must be an equal amount of support and encouragement, if growth was to occur. Now, instead of the group meetings resembling an inquisition, the class meetings more resembled the warm fellowship and discipleship making of the early church. Wesley recognized this and clearly summarized this truth in his journal entry of May 25, 1742: “This was the origin of our classes at London, for which I can never sufficiently praise God, the unspeakable usefulness of the institution having been ever since more and more manifest.”³⁶ His belief throughout was that growth would occur as individuals would bear one another’s burdens and care for one another. It was in the class meetings that this sharing and caring could most effectively happen.

The class meeting filled the gap between the larger impersonal society meetings and the more intense band meetings. It maintained a disciplined nature according to Wesley’s rules, but did so in a more nurturing environment. These class meetings were made up of people from neighborhoods and small towns who were faithfully committed to their class. As bonds were built and connections realized, the group members often would gather outside of their weekly meeting. Ever the visionary, John Wesley realized that community does not just happen. If the class meetings were to realize their full potential, members needed additional opportunities to gather and fellowship together in order to deepen relationships within the communities. To address this need, Wesley established additional monthly “love feast” and “watch night” services. Each provided an

³⁵ Wesley, *The Works of John Wesley*, vol. 8, 252.

³⁶ John Wesley, *The Journal of John Wesley*, ed. Nehemiah Curnock (London, England: R. H. Kelly, 1916), vol. 1, 364.

opportunity for the whole of the society to join together, worship, and hear how God had been moving in their midst. The enthusiasm toward the class meetings can be heard in Wesley's words in his journal as he surmises their value:

It can scarce be conceived what advantages have been reaped from this little prudential regulation. Many now happily experience that Christian fellowship of which they had not so much as an idea before. They began to 'bear one another's burdens,' and naturally to "care for each other." And they had daily a more intimate acquaintance with, so they had a more endearing affection for, each other. And "speaking the truth in love, they grew into Him in all things, who is the head, even Christ; from whom the whole body, fitly joined together, and compacted by that which every joint supplied, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, increased unto the edifying itself in love."³⁷

Although, the whole of the Methodist system of ministry was wide reaching and historic, the simple class meetings proved to be the key mechanism and most valuable aspect. Wesley, again, affirmed the significance these class meetings played in the growth of the Methodist movement as he reflected in his journal; "I have found by experience that one of these has learned more from one half hour's close discourse [in class meeting] than from ten years of public preaching."³⁸ George Whitefield, probably the finest Methodist evangelist, also acknowledged the power of these meetings as he lamented on his ministry in a correspondence with John Pool: "My brother Wesley acted wisely-the souls that were awakened under his ministry he joined in class, and thus preserved the fruits of his labor. This I neglected and my people are a rope of sand."³⁹

Wesley would not be a supporter of the monastic lifestyle. He firmly believed that only in community can individuals find the support and encouragement necessary to deal

³⁷ Wesley, *The Works of John Wesley*, vol. 8, 254.

³⁸ Ibid., vol. 8, 303.

³⁹ Henderson, *John Wesley's Class Meeting: A Model for Making Disciples*, 30.

with spiritual issues and trials. The strength to go deeper with God, the opportunity to rightly care for others, and the accountability necessary to keep hearts and minds focused on Christ happens best within a small group experience.

I have been privileged to watch with much pride many residence life staff members who have served under me firmly grasp the necessity of “care-fronting” others. These young men and women realized that if they were to truly care for those who God had called them to shepherd for a time, then holding them accountable for behaviors was a must. Their love for these fellow travelers outweighed the typical excessive tolerance of the postmoderns. It was out of compassion and an earnest desire to see their sisters and brothers grow that these student leaders sought to bring accountability and genuine love to their relationships with others. These students served as a wonderful model of living out authentic community for all their fellow postmoderns to follow.

The renowned Christian leader, Dwight L. Moody, identified the class meetings as “the best institutions for training converts the world ever saw,”⁴⁰ and Wesley’s initiative is still quite relevant for today. It deserves serious consideration as ministries are developed to work with the college students. For this present generation, living life together in community is a high value. This reality provides a wonderful opportunity to enter into conversations with postmoderns. It creates the opportunity to share the truth of Christian community, which is established and modeled after the Trinity.

Before the beginning of time, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, the Three-in-One, existed together and loved in perfect community. The truth and example of the Trinity are integral to an understanding of Christian theology and Christian community for this

⁴⁰ Charles Goodell, *The Drill Master of Methodism*, (New York: Eaton and Mains, 1902), 15;

current generation. As disciples enter into genuine Christian community believers have the opportunity to support, encourage, challenge, and hold one another accountable. This communal investment would serve as a catalyst for growth, and affirm the fact that genuine discipleship best occurs in community and relationships with others.

Implications for Postmodern Ministry

If the Christian community is to win the Millennials to Jesus and grow strong disciples, then churches and campus ministries would be prudent to follow after Wesley's example and take advantage of the desire of the postmodern generation to openly relate to and learn from one another. John Wesley saw for himself and others that this connection and sense of community was at the heart of the eternal work that was taking place within the class meetings.

John Wesley's commitment to living "*Life Together*,"⁴¹ as Dietrich Bonhoeffer shares in his classic work, is paramount to the postmodern life. For this generation, caring, living, and journeying together with other sisters and brothers is greatly valued. Living, learning, and growing from relationships are integral aspects of the Millennial generation. The problem is that these young people often do not know how to do this in real life. Millennials are much more adept at sharing and connecting through internet sites such as myspace.com and Facebook.com. Here participants, especially young adults, seem to have little problem openly corresponding and sharing about personal issues. Translating Wesley's class meetings into a system for today would definitely resemble some type of small group meetings, but incorporating a virtual component might prove to

⁴¹ Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Life Together* (New York, NY: Harper, 1954).

be a highly effective resource. Since the relational commitments of internet interactions are quite different from face-to-face gatherings, a paradigm where both the virtual and personal interactions are incorporated would seem to be the best fit for today.

Brian McLaren, who has been one of the significant voices of what it means to minister in a postmodern world, recently admonished the Ivy Jungle campus ministry conference participants that, “we need to stop considering community a commodity and realize it only occurs through commitment to disciplines.”⁴² This is a message which needs to be affirmed and promoted on all Christian college campuses, if campus ministries are to connect with the postmodern generation. At Asbury College the belief is that community is derived from each member’s willingness to give up some of their personal rights and freedoms. The college further believes that the gifts and blessings received in living life together far outweigh anything one might give up. To accurately reflect and fruitfully serve within their community, each staff and student must be constantly seeking God in his or her personal life. This affirms what former chaplain of the Senate, Lloyd John Ogilvie, states, “that nothing can happen through you that is not first happening in you.”

Wesley believed that sharing struggles and successes in one’s daily walk with God is an essential component of growth. Since postmoderns are prone to listen and learn from each other, this type of small group ministry seems to be geared directly toward them. Young seekers would most likely be drawn to programs of ministry that involve significant interaction and sharing with their peers. These meetings could be quite different in format and procedure, based on the particular needs of the group. Effective

⁴² Brian McLaren, “Postmodern Ministry,” in *Ivy Jungle Campus Ministry Conference* (Atlanta, GA: 2004).

groups can be organized around: accountability, pornographic addictions, prayer meetings, reading groups, and service teams. Each small group centers around a different apparent need or interest, but at the core of each group is an opportunity to openly share, affirm, confess, confront, and love one another.

There is a desire to know and be fully known amongst the young people of this generation. However, these postmodern seekers have not been provided with healthy examples or tools necessary to develop this in their own lives. The current Christian world and its leaders have not accurately demonstrated what it means to live in Christian community, where the needs of others are placed above your personal rights. All Christian college staff and faculty must commit to living out the community Bonhoeffer described in *Life Together*.⁴³ Adult role models must serve as healthy examples of community, both individually and corporately. Leaders should personally exhibit godly and transparent lives before others. The entire faculty and staff should serve as a model of authentic community, as they work, share, care, and lead together. Christian leaders must be careful to not allow false community of blind acceptance to be viewed as acceptable. Instead, the leadership must be willing to confront poor choices and wrong thinking in love. The Christian college campus setting has the opportunity and the privilege of providing the genuine concern and love necessary to build a nurturing environment. If this type of caring environment is valued, then young adults will feel safe enough to question, supported enough to challenge, encouraged enough to strive toward holiness, and loved enough to be picked up when they fall. This caring environment resembles Wesley's model of loving one another into the Kingdom through the small class meeting.

⁴³ Bonhoeffer.

As such, is one that should be integrated into all campus ministry settings today. It is in celebrating life together that we can proclaim with Bonhoeffer, “how inexhaustible are the riches that open up for those, who by God’s will are privileged to live in the daily fellowship of life with other Christians!”⁴⁴ Robert Weber, author of *The Younger Evangelicals*, has also observed this appreciation for true Christian community, the Wesleyan ideas regarding the catholic spirit, and the younger evangelicals’ commitment not to allow this unifying spirit to be based on relativism. He shares a quote from the *Regeneration Quarterly*, a publication produced by a wide range of young evangelical thinkers, to identify a member of the Christian community in the 21st century as one who knows how:

to value, and praise God for, all the advantages he enjoys, with regard to the knowledge of the things of God, the true manner of worshipping Him, and above all his union with a congregation fearing God and working righteousness: one who retaining these blessings with the strictest care, keeping them as the apple of his eye, at the same time loves – as friends, as brethren in the Lord, as members of Christ and children of God, as joint partakers now of the present kingdom of God, and fellow heirs of his eternal kingdom – all of whatever opinion, or worship, or congregation, who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, who love God and man; who rejoicing to please, and fearing to offend God, are careful to abstain from evil, and zealous of good works. He is the man of a truly catholic spirit.⁴⁵

Flexibility in Ministry

Meeting the People Where They Are Connected to the Church of England

The Methodist tradition of spiritual formation provides a window into ministry with the postmodern generation. Keenly sensitive to needs of the individual, Wesley’s

⁴⁴ Ibid., 20.

⁴⁵ *Regeneration Quarterly* 1 no. 2 (1995): 4.

methodology provided a detailed and organized paradigm for personal growth in community and a foundation for service and care for others. John Wesley did not believe that the Gospel or the Truth was reserved for those within the Church of England or those who performed the right deeds. His belief was that God's grace could work in every heart through faith alone. This required bringing the Word out to the "common people" and sharing it in such a way as to be readily understood and applied to needy hearts. Wesley's openness to other models of ministry and his pastoral care framework would both be effective tools for ministering in a postmodern world. For postmoderns, relationships and community are of utmost importance. Biblical truths are more "caught, than taught." If the church is to connect with this generation, leaders must be willing to meet the Millennials where they are and in a manner that will be well received. This was the same thing John Wesley realized as he ministered in the 18th century with those outside the 'normal' church. His quandary was how to best bring the Gospel to the people and help them comprehend its Truth on their terms.

Wesley has been referred to as the "great borrower," in that he was open to truth wherever he found it. Consequently, he was quite open to borrowing from Roman Catholics and the early dissenters. In order to not ostracize followers, Wesley did not require membership in the established Church or adherence to the Anglican creed. However, at the same time, Wesley continued to strongly defend the ministry of the Church of England, and often preached on the subject as seen in the text of his sermon, *The Lord of Righteousness*: "will any one dare to affirm that all mystics, (Quakers, Presbyterians, independents) and all members of the church of England who are not clear in their opinions or expressions, are void of all christian experience? However confused

their ideas may be, however improper their language, may there not be many of them whose heart is right toward God, and who effectually know the Lord of righteousness.”⁴⁶

This message was apparently directed toward the Methodists who held the belief that they should sever all ties with the Church of England and form their own denomination.

Wesley was committed to staying connected to the Church of England and was adamant that where the people’s needs could be met within the current system, that should be done. However, where needs could not be addressed within the current system, new innovative means of ministering to needs must be established. The Church of England was not a warm and open place for those outside the upper class. Wesley knew the “lesser” people were longing for the Gospel message, fellowship, and discipleship. He realized if reaching the working class of England was to happen, it would best occur with the support, encouragement and care of others within a smaller more intimate group where individuals could be ministered to on a personal basis.

Wesley was careful to maintain that the Methodist movement was a “church within a church” and fully believed that whenever possible the Methodist were to function within the Anglican system. To this end, Methodists did not hold services or meetings that would conflict with Church of England service times. It was only when the Methodist followers in the Americas were being neglected and not able to partake of all the means of grace (specifically Holy Communion since there were not ordained pastors there to serve over the sacraments) that Wesley chose to step out and ordain some Methodist pastors so that they could preside over this means of grace. Though he was stepping outside of the umbrella of the church he strongly maintained that his separation

⁴⁶ Wesley, *The Works of John Wesley*, vol. 5, 243.

was on a limited basis, as seen in his letter written to Barnabas Thomas, March 25, 1785: “I am now as firmly attached to the Church of England as I ever was since you knew me. I know myself to be as real a Christian bishop as the Archbishop of Canterbury. Yet I was always resolved, and am still, never to act as such except in case of necessity. Such a case does not exist in England. In America it did exist.”⁴⁷

Field Preaching

Wesley was quite aware that the majority of the masses in England would not feel comfortable in the high church services of England. Most of these people would not even step foot into a church sanctuary for fear of being ridiculed and unwanted by the wealthy aristocratic members. To meet the needs of the working class Wesley would have to employ a different kind of strategy. It was Wesley’s associate, George Whitefield, who promoted the idea of open air field preaching. Whitefield had already experienced some positive response to his preaching efforts, but Wesley was not quick to disregard Anglican protocol or to recognize the value or need for field preaching. Wesley preferred preaching in the warmth and comfort of a raised church pulpit. However, his desire to meet the masses where they were and in a format where the lower class people would feel comfortable led him to preach out in the cold and mud of the English countryside (If huddling outside in the English mud is considered comfortable!). His commitment to this approach even led him to preach from atop his father’s tombstone at the Old Rectory in Epworth, the Wesleys’ childhood home church. Nothing could attest to his support for this type of ministry more than his own words in his journal: “what marvel the devil does

⁴⁷ Wesley, *The Letters of the Rev. John Wesley*, vol. 7, 262.

not love field preaching! Neither do I; I love a commodious room, a soft cushion, a handsome pulpit. But where is my zeal, if I do not trample all these underfoot in order to save one more soul?”⁴⁸

It was Wesley’s desire that every person had an opportunity to hear the spoken Word. Although, many of these field meetings were attended by thousands. His commitment for all to hear the Word required Wesley to often preach multiple times in one day. He would preach at five in the morning in order to speak to the workers as they went off to work in the factories and mines and then again later in the day to reach an entirely different audience. To further draw in the crowd to the service, Charles Wesley would utilize familiar musical tunes and rewrite the lyrics to create a spiritual piece that the makeshift congregation could readily sing. Wesley was willing to employ whatever means necessary to reach the common person with the Gospel message.

Society Meetings

Wesley intended for all society meetings be open to all people, not just a select few who were actively striving to know God. As the rules and guidelines were developed this premise was whole-heartedly endorsed. This commitment is outlined in the United Society Rule (2): the society was open to “a company of men having the form, and seeking the power, of godliness; united, in order to pray together, to receive the work of exhortation, and to watch over one another in love, that they may help each other work out their salvation.”⁴⁹ The only requirement for admission into a society was “a desire to

⁴⁸ Wesley, *The Works of John Wesley*, vol. 2, 491.

⁴⁹Ibid., vol. 8, 269.

flee from the wrath to come and to be saved from their sins” and then “to assist each other in doing so.”⁵⁰

The society meetings were where all members of the congregation gathered. Seating in these meetings was on a first come-first served basis, which immediately began to break down class distinctions. In the original Methodist Foundery Society members were evaluated for full membership through a trial period. After a three-month probation period potential members were brought before the entire group to determine their fitness for membership. The sole determinant for membership was based on the willingness of the probationary member to cooperate with the group. Participants were not expected to join the Methodist church, but only commit to their respective society.

Another simple yet significantly profound initiative demonstrates Wesley’s desire to ensure the early Methodists were continually growing and his willingness to do whatever he could to spur followers toward Christ. To avoid the society meetings and classes from becoming old and stagnant, change was common. This simple act helped keep the meetings fresh and alive. Changes might be as simple as changing the order of worship or procedure, while also varying content. Though constant change does not seem to fit the Methodists’ methodical nature, it was done quite intentionally and with purpose. Wesley’s concern was reaching the lost and he was willing to do whatever was necessary even if it was contrary to his nature. Wesley supports this idea in his letter to an obvious critic of the continual change in his correspondence with Vincent Perronet:

With regard to these prudential helps we are continually changing one thing after another. (This) is not a weakness or fault, as you imagine, but a peculiar advantage which we enjoy. By this means we declare them all to be merely prudential, not essential, not of divine institution. We prevent,

⁵⁰ Ibid., vol. 8, 270.

so far as in us lies, their growing formal or dead. We are always open to instruction; willing to be wiser every day than we were before, and to change whatever we can change for the better.⁵¹

Openness to Other Thoughts

John Wesley's theology could be seen as an amalgamation of what he perceived to be the best of what other thinkers and denominations brought to Christianity. He felt free to tap into Catholic, Lutheran, Moravian, and Calvinistic ideas. His relationship with the Moravians, especially Peter Bohler, strongly influenced his understanding of the nature of faith and ministry methodology. This openness to others and unwillingness to condemn others for their beliefs was another indication of Wesley's desire to walk with followers on the journey toward God, not condemn them for wrong thinking. Wesley was inclined to allow others to be where they were in their relationship with Christ and was not interested in right thinking just because it was what one was supposed to do. This disposition and desire for a deeper commitment can be seen in the text of "*A Plain Account of People Called Methodists*":

First, that orthodoxy, or right opinions, is, at best, but a very slender part of religion, if it can be allowed to be any part of it at all that neither does religion consist in negatives, in bare harmlessness of any kind; nor merely in externals, in doing good, or using the means of grace, in works of piety (so called) or of charity; that is nothing short of or different from 'the mind that was in Christ;' the image of God stamped upon the heart inward righteousness, attended with the peace of God; and joy in the Holy Ghost.⁵²

One must wonder how much influence Wesley's long journey toward Aldersgate Street played in his willingness to be patient with seekers as they attempted to find faith.

⁵¹ Wesley, *The Letters of the Rev. John Wesley*, vol. 2, 298.

⁵² Wesley, *The Works of John Wesley*, vol. 8, 249.

He seemed quite willing to allow them to work out their own salvation, and even if that entailed having only a piece of the whole of an abiding relationship with Christ. Wesley would not be willing to toss those persons aside, but instead walk beside them through their struggles until they too can get to the place of trusting in Christ alone for their salvation. This openness to others has continually been a mark of the Methodist movement, and the phrase, “as to all opinions which do not strike at the root of Christianity, we think and let think,” is often quoted, as Wesleyan followers today endeavor to follow his convictions.⁵³

Implications for Postmodern Ministry

Christian students are discovering that being led by the Spirit is a moment by moment choice. Each new interaction, decision or situation provides an opportunity for the individual to choose Christ and then experience God’s faithfulness at work in tangible ways. On a daily basis these postmodern students struggle between choosing to live nihilistic lives of personal relative truth or submitting to the seeming triumphalism of what it means to be a part of a more traditional Christian college community. God has done mighty and wonderful things through these institutions, but rich traditions and heritage cannot be allowed to minimize the work of the Holy Spirit. God will draw people unto Himself if the staff and administration are careful to create a healthy spiritual environment and space for the Spirit to move. Individually and corporately campus ministers must trust that the Holy Spirit will work as each staff person commits to

⁵³ United Methodist Church (U.S.). *The Book of Discipline of the United Methodist Church, 1980* (Nashville, TN: United Methodist Pub. House, 1980).

seeking God and are willing to patiently wait. Then, as Henry Blackaby teaches in *Experiencing God*, one will see where Christ is working and join in.⁵⁴

At Christian colleges disciples should be exposed to an environment that fosters spiritual growth. Each school should intentionally create an environment where disciples have the opportunity to go deeper with God. Institutions, especially student development departments, should model and advocate the belief that all students need more time to reflect. Staff and faculty must work together to make it a priority to help these postmodern students to create more “space” to be still and quiet. Instead of allowing our students to fall into the American and higher education fallacy that insists we must “use (up) our time well,”⁵⁵ thus filling each day with endless busyness. Campus ministry should promote quiet contemplation and as, Parker Palmer notes, “abandon the notion that ‘nothing is happening’ when it is silent, to see how much more clarity a silence often brings.”⁵⁶

Though Asbury College possesses a rich Wesleyan heritage and strong holiness doctrine, we cannot solely rely on what has worked in the past to meet our students of today. Asbury is a culture unto itself. We almost pride ourselves in how God has moved in our midst and how privileged we are in living with fellow believers. Nevertheless, we need to be careful not to minimize the ongoing work of the Spirit. We must not narrow our beliefs and trust that God will utilize many different means of grace to bring about

⁵⁴ Henry T. Blackaby and Richard Blackaby, *Experiencing God Day-by-Day: The Devotional and Journal* (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1997), 71.

⁵⁵ Sharon Daloz Parks, *The Critical Years: The Young Adult Search for a Faith to Live By* (San Francisco, CA: Harper & Row, 1986), 146.

⁵⁶ Parker J. Palmer, *To Know as We Are Known: Education as a Spiritual Journey* (San Francisco, CA: Harper, 1993), 80.

spiritual growth. God is so much more creative than to move in the same way twice. If we are to be *pneumanauts*, as Leonard Sweet termed a “sailor of the Spirit,”⁵⁷ we must continually slow down and make space for the Spirit to move. We must continually fight against the temptation to be inwardly focused on protecting our traditions and thus close ourselves and God into a box. Instead, we must maintain an others-focus and be about “preparing students to make a difference in their world,” as our student development mission statement proclaims.

Young people today are seeking truth and are willing to discover it through whatever means necessary. Is there any better time to walk alongside a young sojourner as they struggle through the important issues of identity, vocation, and meaning of life, than during their days surrounded by the supportive Christian community existing on a Christian college campus? These four years are filled with opportunities to gain insight into the students’ value in the world, who(se) they are, and God’s call upon their life. It is not enough that we teach, empower, and challenge these students for four years. We must help them make sense of it all; integrate the new skills, knowledge, attitudes, and beliefs into their lives after undergraduate study; and, ultimately, discover the Truth. Then we can proclaim with them Jesus’ promise in John 8: “If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free” (Jn. 8:32).

⁵⁷ Sweet.

Peer Ministry

The early Methodist church took seriously the Biblical notion of the priesthood of all believers. The Wesleys possessed a high view of all people and asked all society members to give back and serve others in some capacity. To further foster growth and assign leadership, he assigned responsibilities to individuals in several areas, including “stewards” of the financial matters, “sick visitors,” and “lay assistants”⁵⁸ to lead the small groups. The early Methodist church utilized hundreds of these mentors. Wesley referred to them as “nursing fathers,”⁵⁹ and all served as God’s usher sharing spiritual guidance with whom they were paired. This priesthood was especially lived out within the class meetings where all members cared for and nurtured each other toward wholeness and God. This was particularly true of the lives of the many women and men who served as leaders for the class meetings.⁶⁰

These leaders were essential to the success of the class meeting system and the whole of the Methodist movement. Leaders met with their small group weekly for accountability, instruction, and support. John Wesley realized the importance of quality leadership. As such, beginning with the Foundery Society, all leaders were approved and appointed by the Wesleys and once these leaders were in place the Wesleys continued to invest in them on a regular basis. The enormous amount of letters published within the Works of Wesley exhibit John and Charles’ commitment to correspond with and mentor

⁵⁸ Wesley, *The Works of John Wesley*, vol. 8, 261.

⁵⁹ Ibid., vol. 12, 273.

⁶⁰ Ibid., vol. 8, 270.

these leaders. This extensive letter writing campaign was to ensure class leaders were growing in Christ.

John Wesley quickly recognized that quality leadership in the societies, classes, and bands was going to be one of the dominant catalysts for spiritual growth. Michael Henderson sums up the qualities of a class meeting leader as he writes, “It took no special training or talent to be a class leader; anyone could do it.” However, “it did demand faithfulness, honesty and concern for people.”⁶¹ I often share the adage, “you cannot lead where you have not trod.” John Wesley understood this belief for himself and those who served as leaders of the various Methodist ministries. Each of the class meetings began with the leader sharing personally how they had struggled and grown over the past week. This vulnerability and genuineness created the safe environment that allowed the other members of the group to openly respond and share as well when their turn came up. Having enough qualified and willing followers to serve as leaders was a serious concern for the early Methodists. Here Wesley’s commitment to personal investment in the lives of those around him should serve as a model for all desiring to raise up leaders. John Wesley, ever the innovator, disciplinarian, and optimist, believed that all people could grow and experience God in new and powerful ways. Then the disciple would go out and serve in some type of capacity. Wesley affirmed the potential and power of those who by the grace of God have the privilege of leading others toward Christ, when he lovingly stated, “Yet such leaders as they are, it is plain God has blessed their labor. It may be hoped they will all be better than they are, both by experience and observation, and by the advices given them by the minister every Tuesday night, and the prayer offered up for

⁶¹ Henderson, *John Wesley's Class Meeting: A Model for Making Disciples*, 101.

them.”⁶² The heart of the leadership was to build community in and outside of the class meeting. Class leaders did not just meet with the group members once a week and send them on their way. The leaders were careful to maintain a connection with their fellow class members throughout the week, continuing to care for and engage them throughout their daily life. These mentors invested significant time with their sisters and brothers because they cared deeply about them and desired to see them grow towards Christ.

The driving force behind much of the growth and development of the class meetings was the class leader or lay-assistant, which again was part of the genius of John Wesley. Wesley wanted committed, sensitive, and caring individuals to serve as class leaders, a majority of which were women like Elizabeth Ritchie, Ann Bolton and Mary Bosanquet. Wesley was quick to affirm and utilize Jesus' model of community development and discipleship in raising up leaders where Christ invested in a few faithful followers and sent them out to serve others. Without quality leadership the class meetings would have simply been business meetings where groups of individuals met together to answer a few questions. Wesley knew this truth and quickly established a set of guidelines for the class leaders. Anyone who was to serve as a band or class leader was automatically inserted into the next higher meeting. These placements ensured the leaders were constantly being fed and challenged in their own personal journey with Christ. Then servants could care for others out of the abundance of their personal relationship with God. To maintain discipline Wesley further developed detailed principles for the leaders to follow:

It is the business of the leader to see each person in class once a week at least, in order

⁶² Tracy, "John Wesley Spiritual Director: Spiritual Guidance in John Wesley's Letters."

To inquire how their souls prosper
 To advise, reprove, comfort or exhort, as occasion may require
 To collect what they are willing to give toward the relief of the poor
 To meet with the minister and the stewards of the Society in order:
 To inform the minister of any that are sick, or any that are disorderly and
 will not be reproved.⁶³

Henry Longden, an early Methodist leader, rightly articulated what a class leader should look like in his response to the question, what makes a good class leader? “A class leader ought to be a father in Christ; a man of sound and deep experience; well acquainted with the workings of the human heart, and the devices of Satan.”⁶⁴ These leaders were sisters and brothers who were rightly related to God and were willing to share their journey with their friends in their small group, so that all might come to know Him more deeply.

Implications for Postmodern Ministry

Postmodern students respond well and are most challenged by each other. Organizing small groups that resemble Wesley’s class meetings would immediately bear fruit within campus ministry contexts. The key to this and any other student led endeavor is ensuring that the leadership has been invested in and prepared to lead. Campus ministers should not simply assume that because students outwardly demonstrate a committed life to Christ that they possess the necessary tools and gifts to be a successful leader. It would be unwise for the Christian leader to cover their ears, eyes, and mouths and simply trust the Holy Spirit to work. College staff and faculty must be willing to first

⁶³ Wesley, *The Works of John Wesley*, vol. 8, 253.

⁶⁴ Church, 166.

and foremost model what it means to be a servant leader⁶⁵ and members of a healthy Christian community. As noted earlier, with this generation “more will be caught, than taught.” This is true as postmoderns students are apt to learn as much from each other as from those in leadership positions. Sadly, Christendom has not provided many quality examples of healthy leadership during our students’ lifetime. Thus, campus leaders cannot expect their students to know how to effectively live a surrendered life to God and sacrificially serve others, let alone guide others in how to do so. Campus leadership must be prepared to spend significant time investing and teaching students how to make themselves available to God, surrender some of their own rights and privileges for the sake of the community, serve sacrificially, and unconditionally care.

Students that have participated in such programs have had much fruit borne within and through their life. Examples of this type of intentional investment would be the Residence Life programs at most Christian colleges where the RAs (Resident Assistants) participate in significant training and investment programs. In their roles as RA, students have the opportunity to live and minister with their sisters and brothers on a daily basis much like the class meeting leaders of the early Methodists. Their daily lives serve as an example for those they wish to lead, and as such these student leaders are forced to make serious decisions which affect their Christian life. These servant leaders

⁶⁵ *Servant Leader*-Robert Greenleaf the leading authority and originator of the term servant leadership defines a servant leader this way, “it begins with the natural feeling that one wants to serve, to serve *first*. Then conscious choice brings one to aspire to lead. The difference manifests itself in the care taken by servant-first to make sure the other people’s highest priority needs are being served. The best test, and difficult to administer, is : do those served grow as persons; do they, while being served, become healthier, wiser, freer, more autonomous, more likely themselves to become servants.” For a more complete examination of servant leadership see: Greenleaf, Robert. *The Servant as a Leader*. Indianapolis, IN: Robert Greenleaf Center, 1991.

must have a solid understanding of what they believe and be able to articulate why they believe it.

For nine years I had the privilege of living with the young men of Johnson Hall at Asbury College leading the ten student leaders in the residence life program. I had the opportunity to watch God marvelously work in these young men's lives. Then observe with joy as these young leaders served others out of the abundance of their personal walk with Jesus. I know lives were significantly ministered to because these young men reflected Jesus to all of us who interacted with them on a daily basis.

Service to Others

John Wesley was committed to living a complete Christian life, which required loving God with all your heart, soul and mind and loving your neighbor as yourself. Wesley did not believe there could be a disconnect between loving God and loving your neighbor. This commandment was written on every human heart. Once again this was not an either/or situation for Wesley. This commandment was both/and. There was no manner of loving God who one could not see, if believers did not love and serve their neighbors who they could see. Wesley preached in *An Earnest Appeal* that "loving God with all our heart, soul, and strength, as having first loved us, as the fountain of all the good that we have received, and of all we ever hope to enjoy; and loving every soul which God hath made, every man on earth, as our own soul" and that loving your neighbor is "the never failing remedy for all the evils of a disordered world."⁶⁶

⁶⁶ Wesley, *The Works of John Wesley*, vol. 8, 474.

This conviction was strongly lived-out through the numerous social service activities employed by the Methodist people. Wesley took to heart the African proverb, “empty bellies have no ears,” especially with the poorest of the poor. He emphatically stated in the preface to the 1739 hymnbook, “the Gospel of Christ knows no religion, but social; no holiness, but *social holiness*.”⁶⁷ This meant living, serving, and loving one another together. Wesley believed one could not minister to the heart without first taking care of outward needs. To this end Methodists were careful to build schools, homes, and even loan agencies and employment offices to help meet the needs of the less fortunate in English society. Wesley viewed each hurting soul through the eyes of the loving Heavenly Father and intended that each realize their value to God. Wesley’s belief was that Christians should do everything possible to treat each individual as the son and daughter of God that they were. All of John Wesley’s beliefs on caring for others can be summed up in Jesus’ simple words, which were the focus of Wesley’s sermon *God’s Love for the Fallen Man*, “if God so loved us, we ought to love one another” (1 Jn. 4:11).

When a class did not possess the means to help the poor physically, members were still to look upon the needy with love, dignity, and respect. As seen in the steward rules for class meetings, “If you can not relieve, do not grieve the poor. Give them soft words if nothing else; abstain from either sour looks or harsh words. Let them be glad to come, even though they should go empty away. Put yourself in the place of every poor man, and deal with him just as God would deal with you.”⁶⁸ Wesley’s commitment to this value was demonstrated through his expectation that leaders would eat whenever

⁶⁷ Ibid., vol. 14, 321.

⁶⁸ Ibid., vol. 13, 516.

possible at the poorhouses alongside the hungry and down-trodden of the city. In this way leaders could participate in the plight of the poor as described in Wesley's journal, "diet with the poor, on the same food, at the same table; and we rejoice herein as a comfortable earnest of our eating bread together in our Father's kingdom."⁶⁹

Service and caring for others was at the heart of Wesley's ministry and exhortation to his followers. If there was an opportunity to care for another, Wesley taught that Christians should not let anything come between them serving others. Wesley believed even "good" things should be dropped for the sake of helping others. If someone is in need, even reading, hearing, prayer, are to be omitted, or to be postponed, "at charity's almighty call; when we are called to relieve the distress of our neighbor, whether in body or soul," Wesley proclaimed in his sermon, *On Zeal*.⁷⁰ The extent of the service offered by John Wesley and the early Methodists was wide spread. It ranged from Wesley himself providing medical assistance to those in need, to each participant in the class meetings giving as much as they could toward the relief of the poor.⁷¹ Wesley's perspective can most readily be seen in his famous decree from the sermon, *The Use of Money*, as he challenged each follower of Christ to "gain all you can; save all you can; give all you can."⁷²

⁶⁹ Ibid., vol. 8, 265.

⁷⁰ Ibid., vol. 7, 61.

⁷¹ Ibid., vol. 1, 309.

⁷² Ibid., vol. 6, 125-136.

Implications for Postmodern Ministry

In our ultra-materialistic, self-serving world, caring for others more than oneself and donating possessions for the sake of the poor has been a hard value to promote. However, for the current postmodern generation, there is a renewed sense of altruism and compassion for those less fortunate. This reality is consistent with highly valuing others and a commitment to reach out and serve others. Accordingly, the number of students participating in community service has steadily risen over the last decade as communicated by college ministry professionals and reported in the Asbury College Co-Curricular Survey. At Asbury, the percentage of students reporting to have served in some capacity during the semester has risen from thirty-five percent in 1994 up to seventy-two percent in 2005.⁷³ John Wesley would be proud of these statistics, but also be quick to ask “what else might we do?”

Conclusions

The ministry and methodology John Wesley utilized is exactly what the Millennial generation is longing for today. How interesting that John Wesley established these programs of outreach and discipleship well over two hundred years ago. His vision was to meet people where they were and present the Word in terms that could be understood by the common folk of England. The Millennials do not want to be put into a box and are quite open to discovering truth from a variety of settings and initiatives. They would be thankful the early Methodists were willing to meet them where they were and allow them to grow toward God at their own pace.

⁷³ Mark Troyer, *Asbury College Co-Curricular Survey* (Wilmore, KY: Asbury College, 2005).

Wesley knew that believers could not grow apart from interacting with others who were on the same journey. He was quick to bring people together in societies, class meetings and bands. It was the participation in these groups, particularly the class meetings, that fostered the growth of thousands during the Methodist revival. For the postmodern students of today, relationships and celebrating life together in community are highly valued. These students would gravitate toward growing together in class meetings, especially where they can openly share the joys and hurts of life with one another.

Wesley promoted the belief that those Christians who were a little further along the path to God could and should help lead others on their journey. This peer ministry is exactly what the Millennials are comfortable with and enjoy. Postmodern college students are tightly connected and learn best from each other. They want to see leaders live out significant walks with Christ before them. These young adults aspire to emulate their brothers and sisters as they corporately journey with God. Wesley strongly held to the belief that all persons were of value and Christians should actively participate in acts of service to care for the needs of the disadvantaged. This Millennial generation care deeply for others. Since communication technology has made the world so much smaller, they are concerned about the poor and needy all around the world. These students are not satisfied with just knowing about the suffering of those less fortunate; they want to do something to alleviate their despair, especially if they can do this together with others.

Finally, Wesley was committed to developing a significant relationship with God, through a strong devotional life. He was committed to utilizing several means of receiving God's grace, particularly the disciplines of prayer and Scripture study.

Currently, there is a strong resurgence in the “ancient future” disciplines. Students today are attracted to rediscovering the classical spiritual disciplines and applying them to their Christian lives. The Millennial sojourners want to know God more deeply and experience a personal relationship with Christ. The experiential nature of the early Methodist devotional life would be quite attractive to the postmodern seekers.

It seems quite amazing that Wesley’s theology and methodology, developed some two hundred years ago, would connect so well with the current generation of seekers. Christian leaders should be encouraged if they are careful to look to Wesley’s principles for guidance. As Adam Hamilton, a United Methodist pastor, declares, “I am convinced that the Methodist approach, with its emphasis both on the evangelical and social spirit, is perfectly situated, [for today] if we remember what it is we believe.”⁷⁴

⁷⁴ Corrie Curter, "Using Wesley's Old Playbook," *Christianity Today*, December 4 2000.

CHAPTER FIVE

SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINES FOR THE POSTMODERN GENERATION

Introduction

With the increased interest in spirituality among the postmodern generation has come a renewed vigor to participate in spiritual disciplines. Since most of these classical disciplines have been long overlooked by the modern church, there is not much recent history of churches advocating their practice. American society does not lend itself to the slowing down and stilling of oneself necessary to build a life-changing relationship with God. In today's instant gratification culture, people are not interested in being restricted or waiting on what he or she wants. This reality has resulted in the development of an almost drive-thru mentality toward spiritual growth. The quick-fix attitude is why Dr. Dan Brunner of George Fox University views "American consumerism as the greatest enemy of the spiritual life."¹ Responding to the present spiritual state, Eugene Peterson writes, "Everyone is in a hurry (they) want short cuts. They are impatient for results. The Christian life cannot mature under such conditions and in such ways."²

Beginning with the desert mothers and fathers believers have utilized the classical spiritual disciplines to connect with God and receive His love. Thankfully, over the last couple of decades writers like Richard Foster, Ruth Barton, Dallas Willard,

¹ Dan Brunner, "Spiritual Formation in the Church," (George Fox University, Portland, OR: 2005).

² Eugene H. Peterson, *A Long Obedience in the Same Direction: Discipleship in an Instant Society* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000), 11-12.

understanding and necessity for utilizing spiritual disciplines as a means of growth and transformation into Christlikeness. This chapter will discuss the basic understanding and purpose of spiritual disciplines for spiritual growth. Then six particular disciplines, which seem to address specific spiritual life issues of the postmodern generation, will be more fully reviewed. These disciplines are simplicity, solitude, contemplative prayer, scripture reading, community and service.

The Nature of the Spiritual Disciplines

In Dr. Robert Mulholland's *Invitation to a Journey*, spiritual formation is defined as, "the process of being conformed to the image of Christ for the sake of others."¹ The sojourners transformation into Christlikeness is a process that occurs over time. The spiritual journey is not an experience of discovering God "out there." Instead Mulholland believes "it is a journey of learning to yield ourselves to God and discovering where God will take us."² Adele Calhoun contends that the Christians' role "is to offer ourselves lovingly and obediently to God. God then works within us doing what he alone can do."³ The seeker's task is to "keep company" with God, as Eugene Peterson paraphrases Matthew. "Keep company with me and you will learn to live freely and lightly" (Matt. 11:30, *The Message*). The spiritual life is a lifelong journey where each Christian continues to seek God "until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the

¹ M. Robert Mulholland, *Invitation to a Journey: A Road Map for Spiritual Formation* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1993), 15.

² Ibid., 32.

³ Adele Ahlberg Calhoun, *Spiritual Disciplines Handbook: Practices That Transform Us* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2005), 19.

Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ” (Eph. 4:15).

The spiritual disciplines are intentional practices, relationships, and experiences that provide space for God to work in the disciple’s life.⁴ They are loving acts of obedience to God. These practices are not things Christians “do” in order to gain salvation, favor or grow in Christ. This type of mindset would lead to a mentality of works righteousness. There is nothing the Christian can do to cause God to love them any more or less. His love for each individual is infinite and unconditional.⁵ The spiritual life is more about whom one is “being,” as opposed to what one is “doing.” An even more accurate summation would be about who God is “being” in the disciple. Transformation into Christlikeness involves relinquishing control of one’s will and life to allow God to remold it into a reflection of the Son.

Spiritual disciplines help the seeker to open herself or himself to God and draw near to God. Dallas Willard describes the disciplines as “activities of mind and body purposely undertaken, to bring our personality and total being into effective cooperation with the divine order. They enable us more and more to live in a power that is, strictly speaking, beyond us, deriving from the spiritual realm itself, as we “yield ourselves to God.”⁶ Paul exhorts the faithful to “draw near to God and He will draw near to you” (James 4:8). Willard further explains that disciplines are “activities undertaken to make us capable of receiving more of his life and power without harm to ourselves and

⁴ Ibid., 17.

⁵ See Jn. 3:16, 1 Jn. 3:1, Rom. 5:8

⁶ Dallas Willard, *The Spirit of the Disciplines: Understanding How God Changes Lives* (San Francisco, CA: Harper, 1990), 68.

others.”⁷ The spiritual disciplines move the disciple away from what is comfortable, this upsetting is essential for spiritual growth. It is typically the practices that the disciple does not enjoy or is not “good” at that produce the most growth. This place of obedience and rawness often brings about a sensitivity and openness within the believer.

It is as the Christian is open and submitted to God that the areas of greatest need and weakness are illuminated. Once identified the Lord can minister to the seeker’s heart and draw each disciple into a deeper relationship with Him. This is where transformation takes place. Foster supports this working as he suggests, “the disciplines set us before God in such a way that we can be transformed and conformed to the way of Christ.”⁸ However, this also is usually the area of most resistance from disciples, especially in America. It is frightening to relinquish control, be completely open, naked, and patiently wait upon and trust God to minister to one’s heart. It is a faith that trusts God fully, which produces the willingness to submit to Christ’s leading. Utilizing spiritual disciplines in one’s life is not something the disciple does as a part of their Christian walk. It must become a way of life. Spiritual growth is a process and a journey. God is not interested in sacrifices or believers achieving a goal. He is interested in who the Christian is becoming. For those who will commit to this lifelong process of shaping one’s inner life, God will gracefully continue to conform them to His image and wholeness in Christ. Thus, fulfilling His promise of Jer. 29:13-14, “When you come looking for me, you’ll find me. Yes, when you get serious about finding me and want it more than anything else, I’ll make sure you won’t be disappointed.” --GOD’S Decree-- “I’ll turn things around for you.

⁷ Ibid., 56.

⁸ Richard Foster, *Celebration of Discipline: The Path to Spiritual Growth* (San Francisco, CA: Harper & Row, 1978), 184.

I'll bring you back from all the countries into which I drove you"—GOD's Decree—
 “bring you home to the place from which I sent you off into exile. You can count on it”
 (Jer. 29:13, *The Message*).

Six Specific Spiritual Disciplines for the Postmodern Generation

Simplicity

Historical Perspectives on Simplicity

“Do not store up for yourself treasures on earth where moths and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourself treasures in Heaven....For where your treasure is there will your heart be also” (Matt. 6:19-21).

”But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you” (Matt. 6:33).

“Live simply, so others can simply live” Mahatma Gandhi

As noted earlier in this work there is a great sense of entitlement and busyness among the postmodern generation. Young people are taught that there is no reason they cannot have anything and everything they want. Life for young people is about fitting in as much stuff as one can into a single day, week, or month. Affluence in America has fed into the false estimation of need, entitlement, and self sufficiency. A postmodern motto for today might be, “If there is something I want, I should be able to go out and get it the way I want it.” This appetite for the newest, most fashionable, and latest fad has produced a consumer generation. Corporate America, of course, promotes this hunger with an ever increasing range of choices to meet each consumer’s individual taste. Businesses, like Starbucks, are tapping into this individualism by providing a wide array of drinks from

which to choose. A customer cannot go into a Starbucks and simply order a cup of coffee. If they did that their postmodern friend behind the counter would not know what to do. When ordering, the customer must identify a long list of choices and preferences that sound almost code like. My wife's favorite order is a "grande vanilla latte with whip." Starbucks has even produced a booklet to help the consumer know how to order exactly what they want, "*Make it your drink.*"⁹ Dallas Willard notes the negative impact the abundance of options has had on today's culture. "Young people identify life with consuming...and not just consuming stuff you might buy in a store, but consuming all the stuff that is offered to them."¹⁰

Choosing to restrict oneself in any fashion is counter-cultural for American youth. There is a strong societal pressure that rebukes the individual for selling themselves short or for lack of ambition. The reality is many young people today are not choosing for themselves, but rather submitting themselves to fallacies of need and want, which are pulling them away from God's best. As two Asbury College students put it, "Young people need to see that true happiness cannot be found in the things of this world, because things of this world are fleeting and will always leave them wanting for more. Simplicity would teach people where happiness and contentment come from. A simplistic person receives their joy from the Lord, not their possessions. Because they know their

⁹ Starbucks Coffee Company, *Make It Your Drink* (USA: White Wave, Inc, 2005).

¹⁰ Eric Hurtgen, *Stepping into Community: An Interview with Dallas Willard* (Relevant Magazine, 2005, accessed September 2005); available from http://www.relevantmagazine.com/god_article.php?id=6964.

possessions will lose their glimmer and value, but they know that the joy of the Lord will last forever.”¹¹

A life of simplicity is a life of simple purpose: living out of a deep and abiding relationship with God (the center). Simplicity begins with an “inward focus and unity.”¹² It is choosing to “seek first the Kingdom of God,” which brings a singleness of purpose toward God. “Jesus wants us to set all things aside and simply follow him, without caring about any possessions of this world.”¹³ The discipline of simplicity assists the disciple to refocus on the center (Jesus Christ). Life in the center produces contentment, which allows the disciple to faithfully trust the Lord for all provisions. This contentment seizes the Christian who trusts God to provide for all their needs, allowing the believer to “let go” and no longer strive to attain the things of the world. Simplicity frees the Christian to put all things in their place, which helps the postmodern seeker to “loosen inordinate attachments to owning and having (things).”¹⁴ For Foster, simplifying is a “twofold process of inner and outward workings in the Christians life. It is freedom from striving, gathering, and desiring more. Slowing down to make more room for God. Choosing to not accumulate things, so the follower can learn to trust God for all things.”¹⁵

¹¹ Matthew Bell and Matthew Botner, "The Discipline of Simplicity," (Asbury College, Wilmore, KY, 2005).

¹² Foster, 80.

¹³ Ibid., 83.

¹⁴ Calhoun, 74.

¹⁵ Richard Foster, *Freedom of Simplicity: Finding Harmony in a Complex World* (San Francisco, CA: Harper, 2005), 117.

As Adele Calhoun surmises the desire of living a life of simplicity is “to uncomplicate and untangle my life, so I can concentrate on what really matters.”¹⁶ A life of simplicity reminds the Christian that, as Thomas Kelly infers, “life is meant to be lived from a Center, a divine Center. Each one of us can live such a life of amazing power and peace and serenity, of integration and confidence and simplified multiplicity, on one condition—that is, *if we really want it.*”¹⁷ This kind of life helps the believer to recognize that all possessions are gifts from God and not entitlements. When viewed as gifts from God, possessions can be enjoyed instead of coveted. Living a simplistic life does not mean choosing to live a life of poverty for the ascetic value of having nothing. It is choosing to put God above all things: material possessions, relationships, and one’s own desires. This single-minded life brings about contentment, peace, and harmony. Leading the seeker to readily realize, He is all he or she needs. Quaker saint, John Woolman, articulates the spirit of the desire to live out a simplistic life in the divine center when he says:

my heart was deeply concerned that in [the] future I might in all things keep steadily to the pure truth, and live and walk in the plainness and simplicity of a sincere follower of Christ. . . . And here luxury and covetousness, with the numerous oppressions and other evils attending them, appeared very afflicting to me. My concern was that I might attend with singleness of heart to the voice of the true Shepherd and be so supported as to remain unmoved at the faces of men.¹⁸

Nothing else mattered to Woolman apart from knowing God in His fullness.

¹⁶ Calhoun, 74.

¹⁷ Thomas R. Kelly, *A Testament of Devotion* (San Francisco, CA: Harper, 1996), 93.

¹⁸ John Woolman, *The Journal of John Woolman, and a Plea for the Poor* (New York, NY: Corinth Books, 1961), 272.

There are numerous ascetics who chose to give up the things of this world to focus on God alone. The desert fathers renounced things in order to have a single eye of simplicity toward God.¹⁹ Saint Anthony and Francis of Assisi both surrendered all their riches to seek God first and serve others.²⁰ Henri Nouwen chose to leave the academic world to live a more simplistic life with the residents of handicapped community.²¹ Mother Teresa's quiet life of service impacted the world. Her service was always an outgrowth of her simple desire to know God more deeply. As exemplified in her words from *The Simple Path*, "prayer makes the heart large enough until it can contain the gift of Himself."²² Each of these sojourners modeled living life from the center and experienced simplicity, as defined by Richard Foster, "an inward reality that results in an outward lifestyle."²³ Those who live a life of simplicity will humbly affirm Paul's words in Philippians 4:

Actually, I don't have a sense of needing anything personally. I've learned by now to be quite content whatever my circumstances. I'm just as happy with little as with much, with much as with little. I've found the recipe for being happy whether full or hungry, hands full or hands empty. Whatever I have, wherever I am, I can make it through anything in the One who makes me who I am (Phil. 4:11-12, *The Message*).

For a list of simplistic practices, resources, and principles see Appendix B.

¹⁹ Foster, *Freedom of Simplicity: Finding Harmony in a Complex World*, 7.

²⁰ Willard, *The Spirit of the Disciplines: Understanding How God Changes Lives*, 201.

²¹ See *In the Name of Jesus*

²² Teresa of Avila, *Meditations from a Simple Path* (New York, NY: Ballantine Books, 1996), 23.

²³ Foster, *Freedom of Simplicity: Finding Harmony in a Complex World*, 8.

Solitude and Silence

Historical Perspectives on Solitude and Silence

“Jesus often withdrew to lonely places and prayed” (Lk. 5:16).

“For God alone my soul waits in silence” (Ps. 62:1).

“Silence is more powerful than noise”... Frank Laubach, *Prayer*

“I have written to you so that you may know that it is by silence that the saints grew, that it was because of silence that the power of God dwelt in them and the mysteries of God were known to them.”

The Desert Father Ammonas *Letter xii, P. O. xi, 606*

The American culture is filled with a cacophony of constant noise. Silence is a counter-cultural experience for the postmoderns. Senses have been so dulled by all the clamor that it is easy to become unaware of its existence. Flipping the television on is almost habitual when someone arrives home, even if they have no intention of watching it. Often, the TV is on to create the comforting “white noise.” Waterproof radios now ensure individuals are not separated from their music or the world of information during those few minutes in the shower. Students across the country cannot even walk across campus in quiet. Instead, many can be seen with earbuds dangling from their heads as their iPod’s drown out the world. Adele Calhoun summarizes the current cultural outlook when she writes, “silence challenges our cultural addiction to amusement, words, music, advertising, noise, alarms, and voices. Silence asks for patience and waiting. And both silence and waiting make us uncomfortable. They seem so unproductive. We can’t tell if we are *doing* anything in them. So when we come upon silence, we fill it.”²⁴

²⁴ Calhoun, 108.

For many believers, spending time seeking God in quiet prayer and solitude seems like such as unproductive activity and a waste of valuable time. However, Susan Muto of the Epiphany Academy has a contrary belief as she contends, “silence is not to be shunned as empty space but to be befriended as fertile ground for intimacy with God.”²⁵ Muto further defines the function of times of silence, “noise fragments us, while silence gives us unique perspective of the whole.”²⁶ The discipline of silence might be the most powerful Christian practice and the one most feared. Campus ministry staff must make it a priority to help the postmodern generation create more “space” to be still and quiet instead of allowing our students to fall into the American and higher education fallacy that insists we must “use (up) our time well,” thus filling each day with endless busyness and distractions.²⁷ Institutions need to promote quiet contemplation and as Parker Palmer notes, “abandon the notion that ‘nothing is happening’ when it is silent, to see how much more clarity a silence often brings.”²⁸

For the Christian tradition silence represents the solitude of the early Christians desert experience. Desert fathers and mothers left the noise of the cities in order to hear and experience God more clearly in the quiet of the desert. It was in the quietness of a solitary place where Abba Arsenius prayed, “lead me in the way of salvation” and Abba Arsenius heard these words; “Arsenius, flee, be silent, pray always for these are the

²⁵ Susan Annette Muto, *Pathways of Spiritual Living* (Pittsburgh, PA: Epiphany Books, 2004), 54.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 56.

²⁷ Sharon Daloz Parks, *The Critical Years: The Young Adult Search for a Faith to Live By* (San Francisco, CA: Harper & Row, 1986), 146.

²⁸ Parker J. Palmer, *To Know as We Are Known: Education as a Spiritual Journey* (San Francisco, CA: Harper, 1993), 80.

source of sinlessness.”²⁹ In order to preserve their solitude the desert mothers and fathers pressed deeper into the wilderness to flee pilgrims seeking counsel. Abba Agathon was so zealous that he lived with a rock in his mouth for three years until he learned silence.³⁰ The Syrian monk Isaac of Nineveh summed up the necessity for silence on the spiritual journey as he writes:

Many are avidly seeking but they alone find who remain in continual silence. . . Every man who delights in a multiple of words, even though he says admirable things, is empty within. If you love truth, be a lover of silence. Silence like the sunlight will illuminate you in God and will deliver you from the phantoms of ignorance. Silence will unite you to God himself.³¹

Although silence has long been an important aspect of the Christian tradition many believers remain afraid of the silence. Dr. Mulholland has deduced that there is an aversion to silence because “silence is bringing ourselves to a point of relinquishing to God our control of our relationship with God. Silence is a reversal of the whole possessing, controlling, grasping dynamic of trying to maintain control of our own existence.”³² Silence brings about a “helpless” feeling, which is contrary to all that American culture teaches. One cannot control silence and the corresponding vulnerability. Silence should not be feared. Quiet and openness allow God to speak to hearts. It is in the weaker moments that the seekers more fully rely on God and lean on Him for all things. Silence and relinquishing control should be embraced by believers as wonderful opportunities to commune with God. “Silence is a time to rest in God. Lean

²⁹ Benedicta Ward, *The Sayings of the Desert Fathers: The Alphabetical Collection* (London, England: Mowbrays, 1975), 6.

³⁰ Ibid., 19.

³¹ Thomas Merton, *Contemplative Prayer* (New York, NY: Herder and Herder, 1969), 33.

³² Mulholland, *Invitation to a Journey: A Road Map for Spiritual Formation*, 137.

into God, trusting that being with him in silence will loosen your rootedness in the world and plant you by streams of living water.”³³ This discipline helps to teach one of the essential lessons the postmodern Christian must learn. When the noise is removed he or she can “be still and know He is God” (Ps. 46:10). Sadly institutions and churches continue to fill schedules with endless programs filled with noise and activity.

Being still and silent is not something the seeker does to experience more of God. The times of solitude and silence are to be viewed as opportunities “to free the self from the addiction to and distraction of noise, so I can be totally present to the Lord.”³⁴ The discipline of silence is all about giving God the full gift of oneself. Making space for God to speak and lavish His love on the disciple. Catholic monk, Thomas Keating, in his work, *Open Mind, Open Heart*, teaches that “interior silence is the perfect seed bed for divine love to take root.”³⁵ The longer the seeker remains in silence the more the inner noise dissipates. This stillness brings peace, harmony, and quietness. From this serene place the capacity to be open and listen to God’s still small voice grows. The more often the disciple can practice being silent before God the easier it becomes to settle the heart to God’s language, which is silence.³⁶ Leaving the distraction of life behind and seeking out quiet places was Jesus’ habit. “Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house and went off to a solitary place, where He prayed” (Mk. 1:35). It is as the disciple frees himself or herself from the distractions of the world by

³³ Calhoun, 109.

³⁴ Ibid., 107.

³⁵ Thomas Keating, *Open Mind, Open Heart: The Contemplative Dimension of the Gospel* (Rockport, MA: Element, 1992), 44.

³⁶ Ibid., 35.

listening and waiting in silence that he or she can hear God's loving voice calling them "His Beloved."³⁷ This is a word that the postmodern generation and all children of God desperately need to hear.

For a list of solitude practices, resources, and principles see Appendix B.

Contemplative Prayer

Historical Perspectives on Contemplative Prayer

"Contemplation is essentially a waiting in silence and expectancy"
Thomas Merton, *Contemplative Prayer*

"Blessing is promised to those who listen, but the listening that leads to blessing is a daily matter of waiting on the Lord as our Master and Provider" (Prov. 8:34).

"Prayer is nothing but the application of the heart to God, and the internal exercise of love." Madame Guyon, *A Short and Easy Method of Prayer*

"Prayer is the chief exercise of faith." John Calvin

The discipline of contemplative prayer requires time, patience, openness, and trust in God. The deterrents that inhibit solitude, silence, and simplicity are the ones that hinder a life of contemplative prayer in the postmodern believer. For multi-tasking postmoderns, simplicity and silence can be considered the most important aspects of the spiritual life. Both are focused on removing worldly distractions and reorienting the individual toward the center. Surrendering the will, complete vulnerability, and patiently waiting upon God are all contradictions to the American lifestyle of today. As the seeker consistently partakes in the disciplines of silence and simplicity moving into a life of

³⁷ Henri Nouwen, "Moving from Solitude, to Community, to Ministry," *Leadership* XVI, no. 2 (1995).

contemplative prayer will be a natural component of his or her spiritual journey.

Contemplative prayer provides the space necessary for intimate communion with God.

As Dr. Mulholland explains in *Invitation to a Journey*, “Prayer is the outgrowth of both silence and solitude. In silence we let go of our manipulative control. In solitude we face up to what we are in the depths of our being. Prayer then becomes the offering of who we are to God: the giving of that broken, unclean, grasping, manipulative self to God for the work of God’s grace in our lives.”³⁸ Abiding in contemplative prayer with God allows the postmodern to separate herself or himself from the commotion and enticements of the hedonistic world. The solitaire will discover the greatest spiritual experience in the stillness and divine interaction; the love of God.

Margaret Therkelsen refers to the interaction between the seeker and God in prayer as *The Love Exchange*. “When quietly centered and nakedly open to God the prayer can freely receive His unconditional love and passion.”³⁹ Contemplative prayer has been an integral aspect of the spiritual journey throughout Christian history. Saints of the early church like John of the Cross, Teresa Avila, the unknown English author of *The Cloud of the Unknowing*, and St. Benedict have described the nature of the mystical union that occurs in prayer. Teresa of Avila, in *Interior Castle*, reminds seekers to relinquish control and surrender oneself fully to Him in prayer. “We should rather abandon our souls into the hands of God, leaving Him to do as He chooses with us, as far as possible forgetting all self-interest and resigning ourselves entirely to His will.”⁴⁰

³⁸ Mulholland, *Invitation to a Journey: A Road Map for Spiritual Formation*, 140.

³⁹ Margaret Therkelsen, *The Love Exchange: An Adventure in Prayer* (Wilmore, KY: Bristol Books, 1990), 47.

⁴⁰ Teresa of Avila, *The Interior Castle*, *The Classics of Western Spirituality* (New York, NY: Paulist Press, 1979), Ch. 3.

The exercise of contemplative prayer has been described as silent prayer, breathe prayer, centering prayer, prayer of the heart, prayer of presence, and Quaker centering down. Each of these descriptions refer to the fact that “prayer is much less about technique and much more about the beyond-words intimacy that is developed in our relationship with God.”⁴¹ This type of prayer is about simply coming before Jesus with no ambitions, pretense, or desire aside from remaining in Him. Trappist monk, Thomas Merton, who wrote extensively on the contemplative life describes God’s loving action that occurs as one settles into Him in prayer. “Monastic prayer, especially meditation and contemplative prayer, is not so much a way to find God as a way of resting in Him who we have found, who loves us, who is near to us, who comes to us to draw us to himself.”⁴² When the seeker has blocked out the world, slowed down enough to hear, and has let go of all restraints she or he can finally respond to God like Samuel, “speak Lord, your servant is listening” (1 Sam. 3:10).

There is no formula for learning to open oneself up and wait on God in contemplative prayer, except that seekers must always “be content to be a beginner.”⁴³ The most seasoned prayer will testify he or she does not enter and remain in God’s presence easily. To foster this practice into the believer’s spiritual journey, the seeker must be intentional and deliberate about setting up blocks of time to commit to emptying oneself and resting in God. The author of the *Cloud of Unknowing* provides a good overview of the process of slowing down:

⁴¹ R. Ruth Barton, *Sacred Rhythms: Arranging Our Lives for Spiritual Transformation* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2006), 67.

⁴² Merton, *Contemplative Prayer*, 32.

⁴³ Ibid., 43.

This is what you are to do: lift your heart up to the Lord, with a gentle stirring of love desiring him for his own sake and not for his gifts. Center all your attention and desire on him and let this be the sole concern of your mind and heart. Do all in your power to forget everything else, keeping your thoughts and desires free from involvement with any of God's creatures or their affairs whether in general or in particular. Perhaps this will seem like an irresponsible attitude, but I tell you, let them all be; pay no attention to them.⁴⁴

The practice of quieting oneself is so unfamiliar to most believers that silent prayer is often a frustrating endeavor. Most contemplatives recommend longer periods of silent prayer once or twice a day. Beginners should be content with being still for only a couple of minutes at first. It is important to not beat oneself up for the lack of success in remaining single-focused on God. When errant thoughts creep in the believer must gently try to draw her or himself back to the center. Mantras, single words or passages of Scripture can all be used to assist in this reorienting back to God. The most important component of these times of prayer is remaining in God's presence as a love offering to Him. Those who consistently practice contemplative prayer will find as Richard Foster terms it, "the heart's true home," as he illustrates:

For too long we have been in a far country: a country of noise and hurry and crowds, a country of climb and push and shove, a country of frustration and fear and intimidation. And he welcomes us home: home to serenity and peace and joy, home to friendship and fellowship and openness, home to intimacy and acceptance and affirmation.⁴⁵

For a list of contemplative prayer practices and principles see Appendix B.

⁴⁴ William Johnston, *The Cloud of Unknowing and the Book of Privy Counseling* (New York, NY: Image Books/Doubleday, 2005), Ch. 3, 40.

⁴⁵ Richard Foster, *Prayer: Finding the Heart's True Home* (San Francisco, CA: Harper, 1992), 1.

Scripture Reading (*Lectio Divina*)

Historical Perspectives on Scripture Reading

“Idleness is the soul’s enemy, so therefore at determined times the brothers ought to be occupied with the manual labor, and again at determined times in *lectio divina*.” Rule of St. Benedict 48:1⁴⁶

“Reading is like bringing solid food to the mouth; meditation is the chewing of it; while prayer is the tasting of it; and, in contemplation, we take delight in the sweetness we have found.” Guigo the Carthusian, *The Ladder of Four Rungs*.⁴⁷

“Open my eyes so that I might see wonderful things in your law” (Ps. 119:18).

In the postmodern world students are taught to dissect all things to discover the inner workings and truth. Most students read through books to simply find answers or skim the text to get done as soon as possible. In reflective reading the disciple must once again slow her or himself down and allow God to minister to the seeker through the Word. When most books are read quickly and analytically, the idea of slowly reading a passage word by word seems cumbersome and impractical to someone that has been taught you are what you can produce. This type of hit-and-run reading is consistent with the postmodern attitude of possessing the ability to master all things and leaves no room for the mystery of the Word.

Believers who desire to grow in their relationship with Christ must approach Scripture quite differently, as Dr. Susan Muto explains. “Times set aside for meditation

⁴⁶ Saint Benedict, *Holy Rule of Saint Benedict* (accessed October 2005); available from <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/benedict/rule.html>.

⁴⁷ Brother Guigo II, *Letter of Dom Guigo the Carthusian to Brother Gervase, About the Contemplative Life* (1150, accessed June 2005); available from <http://www.umilta.net/ladder.html>.

and reflective reading invite us gradually to let go of all that preoccupies our clockwork minds so that we can relax in the presence of the Transcendent.”⁴⁸ Henri Nouwen’s essay on *Reflection* written almost twenty years ago seems all the more suited for today:

...the word ‘school’, which comes from the word ‘*schola*’ (meaning: free time), reminds us that schools were originally meant to interrupt a busy existence and create some space to contemplate the mysteries of life. Today they have become the arena for a hectic race to accomplish as much as possible, and to acquire in a short period the necessary tools to survive the great battle of human life. Books written to be savored slowly are read hastily to fulfill a requirement, paintings made to be seen with a contemplative eye are taken in as part of a necessary art appreciation course, and music composed to be enjoyed at leisure is listened to in order to identify a period or style. Thus colleges and universities meant to be places for quiet learning have become places of fierce competition, in which the rewards go to those who produce the most and best.⁴⁹

Dr. Robert Mulholland builds on Nouwen’s argument in his book *Shaped by the Word: the Power of Scripture in Spiritual Formation* as he writes: “In today’s society “there is no silence, space or time provided to allow the Lord to speak through the Word to minister to the reader. Informational reading seeks to quickly analyze as much text as possible and master the passage for the sake of knowledge.” Christians “need to learn to read scripture formationally as opposed to informationally.”⁵⁰

Lectio Divina (Divine or Sacred Reading) began as desert fathers and mothers moved away from the noise in search of a place of deep, inner quiet to meditate on the Word and more readily commune with God. “What is above all important for the Fathers

⁴⁸ Muto, *Pathways of Spiritual Living*, 88.

⁴⁹ Henri Nouwen, *Lifesigns: Intimacy, Fecundity and Ecstasy in Christian Perspective* (New York, NY: Doubleday, 1986), 49-50.

⁵⁰ M. Robert Mulholland, *Shaped by the Word: The Power of Scripture in Spiritual Formation* (Nashville, TN: Upper Room Books, 2000), 49-53.

of the Desert, is not to read the Bible, but to live it.”⁵¹ Reflective reading was an integral part of the Saint Benedict’s Rule. The typical Benedictine monastic day included several hours of *lectio divina*. His insistence can be heard as Benedict instructed “let us open our eyes to the light that comes from God, and our ears to the voice from the heavens that every day calls out this charge.”⁵² Gregory the Great at the end of the Sixth Century referred to contemplation as “the fruit of reflection on the word of God in scripture and at the same time a gift of God.”⁵³ Guigo II, a French Carthusian monk, identified the four elements or “four rungs” of *Lectio Divina*, in his twelfth century monastic letter to a Brother Gervase regarding the contemplative life. Guigo viewed each element as steps “by which we may well climb to Heaven.” The four steps are: reading (*lectio*), meditating (*mediatio*), praying (*oratio*), and contemplation (*contemplatio*).⁵⁴

In the discipline of *lectio divina* the disciple reads through a passage of Scripture slowly and meditatively. The reader literally allows the words to flow over her or him. This type of reading is to draw the reader into God’s presence through the Word. During this time there is no other goal for the seeker than being fully present to God through reading the Word. The reader engages the Word as an offering of self to God as they shift from a grasping to a receiving mode. *Lectio* is formational reading, as opposed to

⁵¹ Armand Veilleux, *Lectio Divina as School of Prayer among the Fathers of the Desert*

(1995, accessed 2005); available from <http://users.skynet.be/scourmont/Armand/wri/lectio-eng.htm>.

⁵² Joan Chittister, *The Rule of Benedict: Insights for the Ages*, The Crossroad Spiritual Legacy Series (New York, NY: Crossroad, 1992), 22.

⁵³ Keating, *Open Mind, Open Heart: The Contemplative Dimension of the Gospel*, 20.

⁵⁴ Guigo II, (accessed).

informational reading.⁵⁵ Dr. Adrian van Kaam, who Brennan Manning regards as the greatest thinker regarding spiritual formation today, describes the spiritual growth processes within *lectio divina* this way:

Formative reading implies, moreover, my willingness to change my current self in light of the formative insight scripture may radiate to me. The word as formative has the power to transform me. It can give rise to a new self in Christ, permeating all dimensions of my life. The word as formative can lift me beyond the stirring of my ego and vital life so that I may discover my graced life form in the Eternal Word.⁵⁶

The discipline of *lectio divina* helps the reader understand that the Scripture is more than just black ink on white paper. It is the living and breathing Word of God, “the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes” (Rom. 1:16). As such, meditating on the Word, moving into His presence and allowing the Lord to minister to the believer, as He will, are paramount exercises for disciples desiring to grow. Mulholland espouses the essentialness of this discipline in *The Deeper Journey*. “If we are to engage the deep journey to Christlikeness, if we are going to become more consistent in the integration of our personal and public intimacy with God, we must commit ourselves to a daily office.”⁵⁷ The motive behind approaching the Word, not the frequency or method, is most important. The reader must come to the reading humbly, expectantly, and prepared to receive and God will meet them there.

For a list of *lectio divina* practices and resources see Appendix B.

⁵⁵ M. Robert Mulholland, “Research in Spiritual Formation,” (Asbury Theological Seminary, Wilmore, KY, 2004).

⁵⁶ As quoted in Mulholland, *Shaped by the Word: The Power of Scripture in Spiritual Formation*, 63.

⁵⁷ M. Robert Mulholland, *The Deeper Journey: The Spirituality of Discovering Your True Self* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2005), 158.

Community

Historical Perspectives on Community

“we need to stop considering community a commodity and realize it only occurs through commitment to disciplines.” Brian McClaren

“Community as discipline is the effort to create a free and empty space among people where together we can practice true obedience... To create space for God among us requires the constant recognition of the Spirit of God in each other.” Henri Nouwen, *Making All Things New*

“I shall at once have done with independence and shall seek fellowship. The life of Christ in me will gravitate to the life of Christ in others. I can no longer take an individual line.” Watchmen Nee, *The Normal Christian Life*

“The community of believers was one heart and one mind. None of them claimed anything on his own, rather everything was held in common” (Acts 4:32).

Postmoderns are committed to community as this generation defines it. The high values of tolerance, inclusiveness, and commitment to relationships have brought about an environment where a sense of community should thrive. The issue stems from the nature of this so-called community. The values promoted are all noble and ones all leaders would readily endorse. However, it is in how these values are interpreted and the extent at which they are played out that draw concern. Young adults of today have rarely seen healthy Christian community demonstrated for them. They are left to distinguish and create it for themselves with no models or understanding of how to do so. What is produced, as discussed earlier, is a “pseudo-community” where the highest good is inclusion and peace at all cost. While important community functions like confronting poor choices and genuinely coming alongside struggling friends as concerned Christian sisters and brothers, are not viewed as an important aspect of community. Community at

its core is meant to be a source of support, encouragement, and accountability along the seeker's journey with God. It was through community that the early monastics sought God together. The Wesleyan revival was fueled by the community that was found in the class meetings. Authentic Christian community will be at the heart of helping the postmodern generation lay a strong spiritual foundation and continue a lifelong journey with Christ. Longtime campus minister, Jimmy Long, exhorts all those who would work with students that "a vibrant Christian community can provide a critical dimension in reaching the emerging postmodern world with the gospel and in caring for new Christians after they have made a commitment to the gospel."⁵⁸

The importance of Christian community can be seen through Jesus' actions as he began His public ministry. Jesus immediately calls out the disciples "come follow me," gathers them to Himself, and forms a community. The fellowship, support, and encouragement were as much for Jesus, as for the twelve.⁵⁹ Jesus' message was that the Kingdom of Heaven was at hand and He modeled an important component of this Kingdom through community. St. Benedict has been viewed as the founder of the monastic movement. He seemed to understand the power and need for community if his followers were to grow in Christ. "The stronger each member of the community is in this search for knowing what is right and striving to do it, the better off the community will be."⁶⁰ To ensure a healthy community developed individually and corporately, Benedict attributed much of his *Rule* to how the monks were to live together in community. As

⁵⁸ Jimmy Long, *Emerging Hope: A Strategy for Reaching the Postmodern Generations* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2004), 77.

⁵⁹ See Luke 6:12

⁶⁰ Benedict, *Holy Rule of Saint Benedict* (accessed), Ch. 3.

Stewart Columba, in *Prayer and Community: The Benedictine Tradition* infers, “running throughout the book (the *Rule*) is the theme of community. For him (Benedict) community was not simply the place where one seeks God, but its vital means.”⁶¹ More recently, Dietrich Bonhoeffer’s work, *Life Together*, which he wrote from a German prison camp, has been regarded as an essential work on the eternal value and attributes of living in community. Bonhoeffer’s words are a challenge and inspiration to all those who seek a communal life with other believers. “How inexhaustible are the riches that open up for those, who by God’s will are privileged to live in the daily fellowship of life with other Christians!”⁶²

Life in Christian community is about creating a safe and supportive place, where members can be stretched and grow. This community reflects the Trinity and the Kingdom as the Three-in-One exist in perfect community. The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit relating together is a wonderful example of living together. The Kingdom is made up of Christ’s followers who choose to deny him or herself and surrender to God’s will. “Then he said to them all: “If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me” (Lk. 9:23). As Dallas Willard reminds believers, “they (spiritual disciplines) are much more effective if they can be practiced in community, and you can’t really practice them without community.”⁶³ The Christian life is best lived with others supporting, encouraging, guiding, and holding the believer accountable. Community is thus the gathering together of seekers to spur one another on

⁶¹ Columba Stewart, *Prayer and Community: The Benedictine Tradition* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1998), 169.

⁶² Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Life Together* (New York, NY: Harper, 1954), 20.

⁶³ Dallas Willard, "Spiritual Disciplines in a Postmodern World," *Radix*, Spring 2000.

toward wholeness in Christ. In authentic Christian community disciples sacrifice some of their own personal rights, freedoms, and desires for the sake of others and the whole body. This submission is not an act of martyrdom, a ploy to get something in return or even an act of appreciation for others in the community. The disciple's surrendering of their will is a means to opening him or herself up to God and being fully receptive of His will. In this yielding the believer is imitating Christ's emptying Himself (kenosis) and coming to earth.⁶⁴ Christ's submission to the Father was later affirmed in the garden as Jesus prayed, "not my will, but yours" (Lk. 22:42).

Humans were created and intended for life in community.⁶⁵ Reflecting a Christlike lifestyle is difficult alone. Many aspects of the Christian life can only be grasped within the context of life together with other sojourning believers. The community of God serves as a model, source of strength, hope, and love for all others both within and outside the community. Warm, trusting, and open relationships, built through consistent fellowship, celebration, service, and hardships of life, serve as catalysts for spiritual growth.

Growth occurs as believers interact and are influenced by others within the community. For this reason, each member of a group must be pressing on in their personal walk with Christ. Like an iron chain, a team is no stronger than its weakest link. However, because a body has many parts, when one is weak or struggling, the others can stand in the gap for the individual and help pick them up living out Paul's vision of the Christian body in 1 Corinthians 12. "Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of

⁶⁴ The term "kenosis" comes from the Greek word for "emptied" in Philippians 2:7, "but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men."

⁶⁵ See Chapter 3 for full discussion.

you is a part of it” (1 Cor. 12:27). Each member of a group has the opportunity to be Jesus to their fellow travelers. Once again, the adage “more is caught, than taught” finds its personification in Christian community. Dr. Gilbert Bilezikian, author of *Community 101*, conveys the absolute necessity of community. “The making of community cannot be a side issue or an optional matter for Christians. It is as important to God as one’s individual salvation. Without community, there is no Christianity. Perfect community is to be formed at the intersection of the two segments of the cross, where those who are reconciled with God can be reconciled together. Community is central to God’s purposes for humankind.”⁶⁶ It is the community of faith surrounding the disciple that provides the support structure which allows the classical spiritual disciplines to foster growth along the seeker’s journey.

See Suggestions for practicing and developing community in Appendix B.

Service

Historical Perspectives on Service

“Whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant” (Matt. 20:26).

“For even the son of man did not come to be served, but to serve and to give his life as ransom for others” (Mk. 10:45).

“Here we enter a fellowship. Sometimes we agree to differ; always we will resolve to love and unite to serve.” E. Stanley Jones

“God does not ask us to do great things, just small things with great compassion.” Mother Teresa

⁶⁶ Gilbert G. Bilezikian, *Community 101: Reclaiming the Church as Community of Oneness* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1997), 35.

The postmodern generation of today has been viewed by many as the generation that has the first real chance to touch the entire world. The Millennial's optimistic attitude and sense of altruism causes college students to want to serve others and believe they can make the world a better place. Although there seems to be a wonderful spirit of care and concern for others within the postmoderns, this has not always translated into action steps. Somehow there seems to be a disconnect with thought, ideas, and words within this generation of young people. The renewed commitment to know God more deeply should be influencing more followers to want to serve others. However, the second aspect of the greatest commandment has not been fully lived out by postmodern students. "Love your neighbor as yourself" (Mk. 12:31). Many students seem content to compartmentalize their faith into one single portion of their busy and full lives. Millennials have no problem participating in an inspiring worship service, Bible study or prayer groups, but fail to integrate Christ's love into all facets of his or her life. The compartmentalization of postmodern believer's faith has resulted in minimal infusion of their faith into all other areas of life. Thus, the postmoderns' Christian walk has not been translated into caring more for others than oneself, deeds of service or compassion for the hurting. If Christ's love was permeating all areas of students' lives, they could not help but be out in the world caring for the less fortunate and sharing the love of God.

In an age of plenty, it will be through the discipline of service that some of the greatest insights about God and self are discovered. For an affluent generation, there are lessons about God and the Christian life that can only be experienced through humble, non self-seeking service to others.⁶⁷ The discipline of service is an outward sign of an

⁶⁷ For an in depth discussion on this issue see. David G. Myers, *The American Paradox: Spiritual Hunger in an Age of Plenty* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2000).

inward reality. As the believer participates in the other formative disciplines and is transformed into Christlikeness “being” the servant must share out of the bounty of their relationship with God. The more of God’s love the disciple experiences, the more His love washes over the individual, the more the seeker is compelled to share God’s love “doing.”

Service to others has been a testament of the Christian life beginning with the church of Acts 4:

All the believers were one in heart and mind. No one claimed that any of his possessions was his own, but they shared everything they had. With great power the apostles continued to testify to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and much grace was upon them all. There were no needy persons among them. For from time to time those who owned lands or houses sold them, brought the money from the sales and put it at the apostles' feet, and it was distributed to anyone as he had need (Acts 4: 32-35).

Many saints have been compelled to go out and model wonderful deeds of service. In the first century church, women of the church would walk around the city each night gathering up female babies that had been left on corners.⁶⁸ Francis of Assisi gave away all his possessions to better focus on God and tirelessly minister with others.⁶⁹ Brother Lawrence considered all things as service unto the Lord, whether washing dishes or serving others.⁷⁰ As stated earlier, John Wesley contended that “the Gospel of Christ knows no religion, but social; no holiness, but *social holiness*.”⁷¹ Mother Teresa of

⁶⁸ Dan Brunner, "Spiritual Formation in the Church," (George Fox University, Portland, OR: 2005).

⁶⁹ Donald E. Demaray, ed., *The Little Flowers of St. Francis* (New York, NY: Alba House, 1992), 1.

⁷⁰ Brother Lawrence and Donald E. Demaray, *The Practice of the Presence of God* (New York: Alba House, 1997), 18.

⁷¹ John Wesley, *The Works of John Wesley*, ed. Thomas Jackson (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Publishing, 1996), vol. 14, 321.

Calcutta prayed with her life and acts of love among the poorest of the poor. Her remarks at the National Prayer Breakfast speak loudly of her commitment to love and serve others:

It is not enough for us to say: 'I love God', but I also have to love my neighbor. St. John says that you are a liar if you say you love God and you don't love your neighbor. How can you love God whom you do not see, if you do not love your neighbor whom you see, whom you touch, with whom you live? And so it is very important for us to realize that love, to be true, has to hurt. I must be willing to give whatever it takes not to harm other people and, in fact, to do good to them. This requires that I be willing to give until it hurts. Otherwise, there is no true love in me and I bring injustice, not peace, to those around me.⁷²

Don Richardson, missionary, anthropologist, and author of *Peace Child* and *Eternity in Their Hearts*, speaking to an assembly of college students at Asbury College exhorted, "many Christians are waiting on a call, while Jesus is waiting on an answer."⁷³ All believers are called to serve others through the gifts each has been given. This service should be an outflow of the abundant love of God residing within the disciple's heart. Mulholland speaks of the need for the Christian's faith impacting their world, as he states "a genuinely Christian spirituality is not only rooted in a vital, growing relationship with God at the heart of one's being but also incarnated in the reality of the social, economic and political context in which one lives. Such spirituality is relevant, revolutionary, transforming."⁷⁴ The seeker gives her or himself fully to the Lord, and then God uses the disciple to express His love to the world. One's doing is a natural outflow of an inner life of being, which has been transformed through spiritual disciplines. The believer's life is

⁷² Mother Teresa, "National Prayer Breakfast," (Washington, D. C.: 1994).

⁷³ Don Richardson, in *Great Commission Congress* (Asbury College, Wilmore, KY: 1997).

⁷⁴ Mulholland, *Invitation to a Journey: A Road Map for Spiritual Formation*, 161.

the tool the Lord uses to share His love and grace with the world around them. “The Christian discipline of service is the way the world discovers the love of God. We are the way God blesses the earth.”⁷⁵ Pope Benedict XVI built on this truth in his first encyclical letter presented on Christmas Day 2005; “*Deus Caritas Est*” God is Love. “God’s love is both vertical and horizontal as seen in the cross. Vertically, the cross restores our ability to love and be loved by a holy God. Horizontally, the cross extends out to all, as we share His divine love in practice.”⁷⁶

For a list of service suggestions and resources see Appendix B.

Conclusions

Spiritual formation is the process of being conformed to the image of God for the sake of others.⁷⁷ The spiritual journey is a process of relinquishing control over all facets of one’s life to the Lord. Thus, the spiritual journey is a pathway to developing a love relationship with the Heavenly Father. This relationship is not built upon anything the disciple does. Instead, it is founded in who the seeker is becoming. It is not a doing oriented functional relationship; it is a being love relationship that shapes the believer. Spiritual growth is not technique or program driven. It is God driven, as the disciple opens his or her life to the Lord. The spiritual disciplines are means of grace, which the believer offers to God, for God to use as He will to shape and mold the Christian. The disciplines are acts of loving obedience to God.

⁷⁵ Calhoun, *Spiritual Disciplines Handbook: Practices That Transform Us*, 145.

⁷⁶ Pope Benedict XVI, *Deus Caritas Est* (2005, accessed January 2006); available from http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/encyclicals/documents/hf_ben-xvi_enc_20051225_deus-caritas-est_en.html.

⁷⁷ Mulholland, *Invitation to a Journey: A Road Map for Spiritual Formation*, 15.

The idea of submission is foreign to the postmodern generation. It is contrary to most American culture mottos and attitudes promoting self-reliance, self-promotion, and self-care. This is why maintaining a disciplined life of spiritual disciplines is so difficult alone. Living a Kingdom life is the opposite of all that has been ingrained in the Millennials since they were young. Christian community serves as resource, teacher, and crucible to all who desire to be stretched in their faith. The believer grows through the interaction, accountability, and affirmation of the other members of their community. Community is essential for fruitful individual and corporate growth to take place. Bonhoeffer affirms this truth, as he shares “let him who cannot be alone beware of community. Let him who is not in community beware of being alone.”⁷⁸ It seems counter productive to desire to experience silence, solitude, contemplative prayer, and simplicity in the bonds of community. However, the reality is apart from the stimulus and reinforcement of the community, the disciple will not possess the ability to exercise these disciplines.

Seeking God alone, as the Center is the single act that will promote spiritual growth. The spiritual disciplines are catalysts that assist the believer to cease from striving and fall into God’s eagerly waiting arms. Through a life of simplicity, silence, contemplative prayer, *lectio*, and service, seekers create space for God to move in their lives. The disciplines call the believer home, home to an intimate and abiding relationship with God. No one who has experienced the fullness of this relationship can contain it within themselves. They are compelled to share it with those around them. Henri Nouwen has aptly described this cycle of Christian being in his article, *Moving from Solitude, to*

⁷⁸ Bonhoeffer, *Life Together*, 20.

Community, to Ministry. With the excitement of a parent watching their child open Christmas presents knowing what is inside the package, Nouwen writes: "If we create space in which God can speak and act, something surprising will happen."⁷⁹ Let the journey and the excitement begin.

⁷⁹ Nouwen, "Moving from Solitude, to Community, to Ministry."

CHAPTER SIX

A FOUR YEAR CURRICULUM FOR SPIRITUAL FORMATION

Introduction

The necessity of an intentional program to minister with the Millennial generation has been discussed throughout this work. This chapter will describe the components of a model designed to promote spiritual maturity during a student's four years of college. A formal four-year curriculum will be detailed noting how each year plays an important role in the college student: knowing Christ, maturing in Christ, serving Christ and sharing Christ. Within each year there are essential tasks and focuses that provide the foundation for the next stage of growth and enable the student to mature in his or her faith. This growth process begins with building a strong sense of community with those around the new students during the freshman year. It culminates with seniors giving back to the nurturing community, before being sent out on a lifelong journey of service with God. Working through an intentional program designed to create space for time with God, provide experiences fostering intimacy with God, and service with others would stimulate the student's transformation into Christlikeness.

Six particular spiritual disciplines have been identified in this work as being central to effectively ministering to the needs of the postmodern generation. A second model for creating an environment for spiritual growth utilizing practices within each of these disciplines will be presented. This model will serve as a complementary program integrating spiritual disciplines into the school calendar. Implementing these practices into a four-year curriculum will provide students with a program for spiritual growth.

A Spiritual Formation Program for the Postmodern Generation

Spiritual formation entails intentionally slowing down and creating space for God to work in the seeker's heart. Transformation into the image of Christ occurs as disciples desire to know Him more deeply and are open to the work of the Holy Spirit. This takes place as one participates in community with other sojourners and implements a daily schedule of spiritual disciplines. These practices are intended to thin the veil between the seeker and God and create space for Him to work in his or her heart. How God relates to each seeker might look different for various people, but it requires utilizing diverse spiritual disciplines. God is in control of the disciple's transformation into Christlikeness. The Lord chooses the method, tool, or experience to meet each person. The Christian's responsibility is to humbly seek Him, make space available for God to move and then be careful to not get in the way and allow whatever God intends to happen to happen.

As the disciple abides in Christ, she or he must come with an open heart, empty hands, and wait for God to meet him or her as He will. To this end Matthew provides the charge to all believers, "seek ye first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things will be added unto you" (Mt. 6:33). The believer does not seek the Lord to receive rewards and gifts, instead, seeks God only to know Him more fully and allow the Lord to lavish His love upon the Christian. As sojourners are diligent in their quest to know God more deeply, they will discover the gift of a warm, intimate and open relationship with the King of Kings.

Spiritual disciplines bring the disciple to the place of knowing God more deeply, being able to communicate with God more succinctly, listen more intently to His guidance, and quiet the seeker so he or she can receive Christ's love more fully. One can

not know and love another person without first having spent numerous hours in various levels of conversation. The same is true of a personal relationship with God. If a believer is to reflect God more clearly, the disciple must know Him more intimately. This comes through faithful obedience and intimate time spent together giving and receiving from the Lord. Spending time daily in prayer communicating and quietly listening to the Father allows the Christian to know Him better and hear the subtleties of His voice. In the American, fast-paced, over-committed, and constantly striving-for-more-world, maintaining times of set apartness is often difficult because postmodern Christians have so many people, activities, and responsibilities contending for their time and energies. This has produced haggard, busy, and overwhelmed disciples in desperate need of giving something up. The spiritual disciplines, which are too often pushed aside, are actually the best means for connecting to God and discovering all that one needs to live a genuine and fulfilled life.

Moving to the Center through maintaining a daily life of spiritual disciplines is not solely for the purpose of achieving something in the end. These practices are acts of love toward God. Spiritual disciplines should be joyful responses to the love, mercy and grace which has been bestowed upon each believer. Christians cannot expect to receive much from the Book without having first developed a deep relationship with the Author. Thank God, the Word has become Flesh and provides a means of knowing Him, through the incarnate Word. Through disciplines like *Lectio Divina*, the Word becomes a portal for the seeker to enter into God's presence and commune with Him. God knew it would be difficult for the Christian to live out a surrendered and committed life to Him without

opportunities to be drawn up into His presence. This is the very thing the spiritual disciplines do for the disciple and why they are essential tools for the spiritual journey.

An important aspect of spiritual formation is living life together. John Wesley continually promoted the idea that there could be no holiness apart from social holiness. Christ's love, compassion, and care are best experienced in the context of other people. To know God more deeply is to experience Him in and through other people. An important aspect of spiritual formation is learning to lose oneself for the sake of others. This may be one's family, the other people on his or her team or those whom Christ calls the believer to serve. Growing together in community requires a willingness to let go of personal agendas, selfish desires, and humbly relinquishing personal control all for the sake of others. It also includes encouraging others to be all that Christ is making them to be and fostering their contribution to the community.

All Christians are called to love their neighbor as themselves and to learn to live life together in Christian community. One cannot say they love God and not love their neighbor. These two truths are both necessary if the believer is to grow in Christ and accurately reflect God's image. Life together provides the opportunity for others to hold the disciple accountable, support the disciple, encourage the disciple, and challenge the disciple. Interacting, sharing, and living through the peaks and valleys of life allows believers to give and receive from others. All servant leaders who desire to live within community, especially campus ministers who work closely with students, should be familiar with Bonhoeffer's *Life Together*. Bonhoeffer accurately articulates the impact of community living on the individual. It truly is an amazing blessing and privilege to be surrounded by others along one's journey with Christ.

Community is what humans were created for and is modeled in the Trinity.

Father, Son and Holy Spirit relating together is a wonderful example of living together.

When one is alone, community is innately desired. This desire is one aspect of being created in the image of God. It is a gift that believers should not take for granted. Far too often Christians do not realize the blessed privilege of gathering as a church and fellowship with other believers. Many Christians settle for connecting with others on a superficial level and do not engage in deeper relationships and commitments. The seeker who does not bring all of who she or he is to the group robs the community. These people choose to self-protect through selfishly guarding one's thoughts, needs and desires. They have not realized that being open and vulnerable with others brings more growth and freedom. Spiritual growth occurs as members of a community are open and transparent with God and others.

Living in community is a sense of caring about others more than caring about oneself. This Biblical principle can be heard in Luke, as Eugene Peterson paraphrases Lk. 17:33, "If you grasp and cling to life on your terms, you'll lose it, but if you let that life go, you'll get life on God's terms" (Lk. 17:33 *The Message*). It is not a loss to give up some personal rights and freedoms for the privilege of living together with others. The reality is that the spiritual insights one receives from living in community typically far outweigh any right one might give up. Living in community with others should be a daily practice, not just a weekend retreat or trip.

Although living a life of surrender is the ultimate desire of all believers. Campus ministry staff and other Christian leaders have often been found lacking as role models. Only succeeding to live out these selfless growth oriented principles to varying degrees at

various times. Many individuals choose self protection rather than being real in interactions with colleagues and students. Of course, college students see right through this and are quick to call leaders on it. Postmodern seekers desperately want people to be genuine and transparent with them and resent when others are not. Sadly, at times, Christian college staff and faculty have not done well in modeling authentic community for students. Leaders are often more worried about looking good professionally or getting their piece of the pie. As a result, many little islands are created across campuses, that one can lord over and control, which certainly does not promote or model this life-giving community.

Community begins with a believer's personal relationship with Christ. The choices the sojourner makes and her or his relationship with God all affect what the seeker brings to the community. For this reason, the disciple's Christian walk must be vibrant and growing. This is where the other aspects of *Life Together*¹ and spiritual formation are so important.

It is through utilizing the classical spiritual disciplines that Christians college students can open his or herself to God and grow. As Millennial believers participate in simplicity, solitude, prayer, waiting on God, daily scripture reading, and community service with others, his or her relationship with the Lord deepens. The problem comes with being committed to and consistent in these disciplines. This failure occurs for several reasons: laziness, fear of being alone, lack of desire, being too busy, or caught up with doing other "good" things. As stated earlier, nothing can happen through the sojourner that is not first happening in her or him. Disciples can only give to others and

¹ Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Life Together* (New York, NY: Harper, 1954).

the community, as much as each one has received from God. This is the cyclical nature of spiritual formation, which Christ modeled and Henri Nouwen so aptly discusses in "Moving from Solitude to Community to Ministry."² Jesus first went alone to the mountainside to commune with the Father, then gathered His disciples around Him, and finally went out together to do ministry. The postmoderns would find the source of life following Jesus' example. Making the spiritual disciplines an integral aspect of the believer's journey provides the tools, space, and context for a lifelong journey of transformation into Christlikeness. If Christian colleges are going to assist postmoderns in building a strong foundation with Christ and possess the necessary resources for a lifelong journey with God, it is imperative to develop an intentional spiritual formation curriculum of classical spiritual disciplines which fosters growth and meets the needs of the postmodern generation.

Note: Instituting a spiritual formation curriculum into the Asbury College community will be used as a model Christian college context for the basic curriculum and how the program can be implemented. It is believed that this curriculum can easily be adapted to all Christian college settings.

² Henri Nouwen, "Moving from Solitude, to Community, to Ministry," *Leadership* XVI, no. 2 (1995).

A Model for Spiritual Formation Curriculum in Campus Ministry Setting

“So naturally, we proclaim Christ! We warn everyone we meet, and teach everyone we can, all that we know about Him, so that, if possible, we may bring every person up to his or her full maturity in Christ Jesus. That is what I am working at all the time, with all the strength that God gives me” (Col. 1:28-29 Phillips).

MEMBERSHIP	MATURITY	MINISTRY	MISSION
Great Commandment		Great Commission	
General Education		Major / Minors Courses	
Freshman Year	Sophomore Year	Junior Year	Senior Year
Knowing Christ	Growing in Christ	Serving Christ	Sharing Christ
Discovering: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Asbury• Self• New friends• Community living• Life in Christ	Discovering: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Self in Community• Gifts• Small groups	Discovering: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ministry• Expression of gifts• Servant's heart	Discovering: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Life Mission Statement• Desire to model leadership to other students• Vision to see every person's need to know Jesus
Membership Covenant: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Transition group• Floor/Unit activities• Living integrity• Introduction to College Course	Maturity Covenant: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Go-to-grow• Attend Lead-On workshops• Sophomore Retreat• Transition group leader• Boundary workshop• MBTI/Gifts Inventory	Ministry Covenant: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Train as leader• Resident Assistant• Chaplain• Outreach team• Student Government• Greater good of the community	Mission Covenant: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Lead community service• Final resume preparation• Vocational commitment• Occupation identification• Transition out of college• Commencement
Chapel	Sense of Community	Weekly Worship	
Spiritual Emphasis weeks	Campus wide retreats	Orientation	
Weekly Worship	Weekly Prayer groups	Cross cultural experience	
Missions conference	Outreach programs	Discipleship groups	
Leadership retreat	Leadership workshops	Faculty/Staff mentoring	
Foundation Building Experiences held each year			
MAGNIFY CHRIST			

Overview and Purpose of the Model

This model represents a matrix for a four-year curriculum of spiritual formation for a Christian College campus. The intention of this program is to foster consistent spiritual growth through the college journey. The college years are foundational for cultivating and maintaining a vibrant lifelong walk with the Lord. Christian colleges desire to minister to both the head and the heart. The academic academy provides a rigorous schedule of majors and classes to ensure students have reached a degree of educational competency upon graduation. However, few institutions integrate an intentional program to foster the spiritual component of students' lives. Christian colleges typically address the spiritual dimension of students through scheduling chapel services, organizing small groups, promoting service opportunities and exhibiting strong community. However, most institutions do not offer an intentional spiritual formation curriculum for students directed toward educating the heart and preparing the graduate for a lifelong journey with Christ.³

The purpose of this spiritual formation program is to assist students in building a strong spiritual foundation during their college years and to develop the necessary daily practices for a lifelong journey with God. Spiritual maturity will be cultivated through guiding students into entering an authentic Christian community, providing the resources and tools, and organizing pertinent experiences to foster spiritual growth. In this way, the college will be creating space for God to move as He will. This program will require a strong sense of personal commitment and initiative from students. For this reason, students will choose to participate in the spiritual formation curriculum on a yearly basis.

³ Abilene Christian and Trinity Western University are two examples of institutions with intentional spiritual formation programs

In implementing such a program it is crucial to remember that all spiritual growth comes from God and the work of the Holy Spirit. Works and acts do not produce growth. The spiritual disciplines and experiences recommended are intended to create the environment and space for the Lord to move. The believer participates in this type of spiritual discipline program as a loving act of obedience and gift to God. Student disciples bring themselves humbly to a quiet place to expectantly wait on God. Waiting on God is not a passive experience. Students wait actively on God to “work out His good pleasure” (Phil. 1:6). The impetus is on the Lord to minister to hearts and conform lives to His image as He wills.

The four-year curriculum begins with helping incoming freshman join all facets of the community. It ends with sending out spiritually mature graduates for a lifetime of service with God. The intention of the program is to cultivate a more comprehensive theology of and participation in Christian membership, maturity, ministry, and mission. In this model there is a rhythm of joining, growing, serving, and sending out to the world.

Before students can fully participate in all aspects of a Christian college community and become a contributing member he or she must have a clear vision of the values, traditions and beliefs of the institution. Secondly, healthy devoted members of a community must possess an appreciation of who they are in Christ and how lovingly God views them. Understanding this reality helps foster personal spiritual growth in the believer, which can then be shared with others in the group. Growth requires a desire to be challenged and stretched. If student disciples are to be tested in this way they must experience a sense of connection and rapport with those around them.

As noted earlier in this work, living in community provides the essential factors required for growth, as well as, the forum where growth can take place (see Chapter 5, pp. 148-152). A strong sense of community will be at the core of any healthy spiritual formation curriculum. Weekly chapel meetings, where the entire Christian college community comes together, serve as the heart and life-source of the community. A sense of community and the chapel program will serve as the source of much challenge and support that encourages spiritual growth. These two aspects of the Christian college experience must be carefully nurtured and guarded by the leadership. Coming together to worship and to hear the spoken Word through the chapel program meet specific needs of the postmoderns and have a significant impact on their overall experience of college. This impact is evidenced in the fact that Christian college alumni typically place the community experience and joining together with other students and staff in weekly chapels near the top of the list of the things they miss most about college.

Entering into community and gaining an accurate perspective of God's view of people will be the foundational building blocks used throughout the student's college career. These two tasks serve as the core of the freshman year spiritual formation curriculum. From this place of new enlightenment and relationships, students can now begin to develop the requisite tools for a deeper walk with Christ and more fully discover the gifts, talents and desires God has bestowed upon the student. This exploration requires a healthy understanding of self, serving, leading others, and the means of grace available for more fully experiencing the Lord.

The sophomore year will be a time of spiritual grounding and introspection to help the students grasp the uniqueness of God's creativity within him or her. This focus

will help students recognize who they are in Christ and how He has uniquely prepared them for ministry within the Kingdom. As students mature and grow in their personal relationship with God a further degree of appreciation will be reached. This awareness will involve several different facets of understanding. First, students will begin to identify with the idea that Christian service must flow out of who the servants are being in Christ. This discernment will be integral to students' understanding of and desire to participate in the spiritual disciplines. Recognizing that "apart from Him we can do nothing" (Jn. 15:5) will be an important lesson all future Christian leaders must fully comprehend. The necessity of living and serving out of an abiding relationship with God should serve as an impetus to build a stronger relationship with Christ. Christian maturity comes as students learn to fully abide in Him. Another important aspect of students' self-discovery is to begin to identify the unique skills and gifts God has blessed them with and how these might be used within the Kingdom. This type of examination often involves an intense time of reflection and self-evaluation. Maintaining strong and growing relationships will be a vital source of strength and encouragement during these days. Sharing, walking, and working side-by-side with others will provide the opportunity for students to express new insights about their personal relationship with God and share about their Christian experience in the context of the community of believers.

The third year of the curriculum will build upon the lessons of the first two years. The student disciple will continue to develop the disciplines and practices necessary for a life of ministry. This preparation will entail more specific service opportunities to exercise their new understanding, skills, and awareness the disciple gained during the first two years of college. This service could be in areas of campus leadership, local

ministry, or outreach to the world. Acts of service with others can function as the crucible for further exploration and growth. Inevitably, student servant leaders testify to the reality that she or he benefited and received much more from their service than those they served. Once again, living and acting in community provides the vehicle for growth. Evelyn Underhill reinforces the necessity of the servant leaders consistently abiding in Christ, as the student disciple attempts to grow and serve, as she asserts, “We can only give what we have received, we can only receive in order to give.”⁴

The final year for the student will be a time of solidifying the importance of a surrendered heart and life of service to God. Ownership of a deep and personal faith in Christ and the ability to readily integrate faith into all aspects of one’s life will be the key hallmarks of a fruitful Christian college education. The belief in and recognition of the necessity of serving others is a natural overflow of the student’s relationship with God. In this way the student lives out both aspects of Jesus’ greatest commandment. This life of service begins with giving back to the community that nurtured the student during their first three years of school. These seniors serve as wonderful roles models as the student leaders share their lives and new insights garnered from their new awakenings and fresh walk with Christ.

The adage “you can not lead, where you have not trod” seems appropriate for a student’s final year of college. During this time they will make foundational commitments affecting a lifetime of journeying with God. These commitments evolve as each student increasingly surrenders the self to God. It will be out of the intimacy of a personal relationship with God that students can more succinctly identify the Lord’s will

⁴ Evelyn Underhill, *Light of Christ Addresses Given at the House of Retreat Pleshey in May, 1932* (London, England: Lonmans, 1945), 62.

for their life. The students' vocation will be to know God deeply and serve others unselfishly. The means of fulfilling their vocation will be the occupation the students choose.

Assisting students to arrive at a place of oneness with God is the ultimate function of a spiritual formation curriculum. This work is an important function and hope of all Christian institutions. As Dr. Paul Rader, former president of Asbury College, remarked in chapel, "We are not only preparing students to make a living, we are preparing them to make a life." If Christian colleges implement an intentional model for spiritual formation, such as the one suggested, the institution will be creating the environment for students to meet God. Through these divine encounters, students will possess the tools that are necessary to follow Christ for a lifetime. This four-year journey of self awareness and transformation will help lead students to their place of service in God's Kingdom, arriving at God's will for their life, which Fredrick Buechner describes as, "the place where your deepest gladness meets the world's deepest need."⁵ Thus fulfilling Christ's greatest commandment, "love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul and strength and love your neighbor as yourself" (Mk. 12:30, 31).

⁵As quoted in Parker J. Palmer, *Let Your Life Speak: Listening for the Voice of Vocation* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2000), 16.

Spiritual Formation (SF) Curriculum

Freshman Year	SF100 Focus: Knowing Christ
Sophomore Year	SF200 Focus: Growing in Christ
Junior Year	SF300 Focus: Serving Christ
Senior Year	SF400 Focus: Sharing Christ

SF 100 Course: Knowing Christ *Freshman Year*

A. Focus: Knowing Christ and Membership

1. Introduce students to idea of community and draw all into community.
2. Help students to understand the nature of the local community (institution).
3. Help students understand who they are and who they are in Christ.
4. Provide students with the spiritual discipline tools and environment for spiritual growth.

B. Overview: The freshman year will be a time to make connections with other students, staff, faculty, the larger institution and the spiritual tradition guiding the respective school. Building relationships with those around the freshman is an important component of becoming a member of a strong community. To connect with the larger community of the institution will require the student to develop a better understanding of the college's spiritual traditions, heritage and make-up. The final focus of this initiative will help the student more clearly ascertain God's view of each individual.

This Course will meet weekly for 1.5 hours. Each section will be made up of 8-10 freshman students, a staff/faculty advisor and one peer leader (junior/senior). Each class can be divided into two smaller groups for accountability, support and encouragement.

C. Resources:

1. Ortberg, John. *The Life You Always Wanted*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1997
2. Foster, Richard. *Streams of Living Water*. San Francisco, CA: Harper, 1998

3. Nouwen, Henri. "Moving from Solitude, to Community, to Ministry." *Leadership* VI, no. 2 (1995).
4. Hughes, John Wesley. "*Why I founded Asbury College.*" Wilmore, KY: Asbury College Publication,
5. Handout: "*Who does God say that I am?*" Document containing scripture references regarding God's view of humankind.
6. *Asbury College Handbook*. Wilmore, KY: Asbury College, 2006
7. Bible

D. Objectives:

1. Becoming part of larger movement of God (cloud of witnesses). An important aspect of growing in the local community is an understanding of the heritage, traditions and journey of the institution. The individual commits to participate in all aspects of the community.
 - Membership covenant
 - Understanding Christian heritage of Asbury College (local institution)
 - Understanding of spirituality and spiritual traditions
 - What does it mean to be in the Wesleyan-Arminian tradition?
2. Learning to live in community. Before one can live in community the student must have an overview of what this means, looks like and asks of the individual.
 - What is genuine Christian community?
 - Making new friends (transition group)
 - Sacrificing some personal rights and privileges (floor/unit/roommate)
3. Better understanding of self. In order to fully participate in a healthy community the individual must be growing in their personal relationship with God. An important aspect of this growth will be a full understanding of God's view of the individual.
 - Who does God say that I am?
4. Knowing Christ.
 - What it means to be in a surrendered and growing relationship with Christ.
 - Perspectives of the spirituality and life of a believer
 - What are various aspects of the Christian life

E. Curriculum themes

1. Asbury College heritage (fall)
2. Perspectives of spirituality from the life of Jesus
3. Who does God say that I am?
4. Different spiritual traditions
5. Creating community

F. Expected Outcomes

1. 80% of the freshman participants in spiritual formation will report experiencing a strong sense of community and significant relationships with others.
2. 65% of the freshman participants in spiritual formation will report they are an active member of the local community.
3. 65% of the freshman participants in spiritual formation curriculum will report they possess a better understanding of the individual's role within a community.
4. 65% of the freshman participants in spiritual formation will report they possess a better understanding of who they are in Christ.
5. 55% of the freshman participants in spiritual formation will report that they utilize spiritual disciplines within their daily devotional times.

SF200 Course: Growing in Christ *Sophomore Year*

A. Focus: Growing in Christ and Maturity

1. Help students to begin to identify unique giftedness
2. Help students to identify specific leadership skills
3. Help students to understand necessity of incorporating spiritual disciplines into daily walk
4. Help students to understand their unique role as a member of the local community

B. Overview: The sophomore year will be a time to develop a better understanding of spiritual disciplines, self identity, community, and service. Understanding the necessity for incorporating the spiritual disciplines into the student's life will be an important aspect of maturing in Christ. Students will be encouraged to integrate new lessons into their relationships and service to others.

The idea that each member of a community has something valuable to add to the whole will be a key idea. Building upon this truth, the student will be encouraged to build and maintain a vibrant devotional life so they can fruitfully serve others.

The course will meet weekly for 1.5 hours. It will be made up of 8-10 sophomores or second year SF curriculum students and a staff/faculty advisor. Each class can be divided into two smaller groups for accountability, support, and encouragement.

C. Resources

1. Willard, Dallas. *The Spirit of the Disciplines: Understanding How God Changes Lives*. San Francisco, CA: Harper, 1990.
2. Mulholland, M. Robert. *Invitation to a Journey: A Road Map for Spiritual Formation*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1993.
3. Nouwen, Henri. "Moving from Solitude, to Community, to Ministry." *Leadership* XVI, no. 2 (1995).
4. Bible

D. Objectives:

1. Develop an understanding of the necessity to be continually growing in Christ. If a believer is committed to making space for God to move in their life, they will need to incorporate spiritual disciplines into their daily life. The nature, history, and practice of classical spiritual disciplines will be discussed and promoted.
 - Spiritual disciplines workshop
 - Participation in weekly accountability group
2. Discovering an individual's unique giftedness. God has created each individual in His image and yet, unique. Identifying personal giftedness will allow the student to begin to examine more critically questions like: future vocation, God's will, and the student's contribution to the local community and the world.
 - Gifts inventory
 - MBTI inventory
3. Discovering the individual's role within the particular community and Christian community. Build on the introduction into community developed during the freshman year. The student will gain insight into their role in and the necessity of participating in a local community of believers.
 - Participation in floor functions
 - Attendance at floor prayer meetings
 - Participation with mission organization's student centers

4. Begin to utilize giftedness in service. Discussion will include the necessity of all believers serving within their local community and throughout the world. God has called all believers to “love their neighbor as themselves,” this means each Christian should be sharing God’s love through acts of service.

- Participation in weekend ministry team.
- Choose an area of service according to the student’s gifts, such as: RA (Resident Assistant), TAG (Transition and Guidance) or some other leader position for a freshman small group.
- Begin to develop an understanding of vocation and how this fits into God’s will for the individual.

E. Curriculum Themes:

1. Overview of the different Christian traditions. For example, what does it mean to be a Calvinist?
2. Identifying leadership giftedness in students
3. Overview of different biblical practices and spiritual disciplines to be addressed with postmodern college students.(nature of spiritual formation)
4. What does it mean to live in community?
5. Covenant together to seek God

F. Expected Outcomes:

1. 65% of sophomore participants in the spiritual formation curriculum will report they possess a better understanding of the workings, necessity for, and practices of spiritual disciplines within their journey with God.
2. 80% of sophomore participants in the spiritual formation curriculum will report they possess a deeper appreciation of community and their role in it.
3. 75% of sophomore participants in the spiritual formation curriculum will report they possess a better understanding of their unique giftedness and how this impacts their walk with God.
4. 65% of sophomore participants in the spiritual formation curriculum will report they possess a better understanding of vocation and occupation and how these correlate with their giftedness.
5. 75% of sophomore participants in the spiritual formation curriculum will participate in an ongoing accountability group with others.

6. 50% of sophomore participants in the spiritual formation curriculum will serve in some type of servant leadership capacity.
7. 60% of the sophomore participants in spiritual formation will report that they utilize spiritual disciplines within their daily devotional times.

SF300 Course: Serving Christ
Junior Year

A. Focus: Serving Christ and Ministry

1. Help students grow from their experience of serving others
2. Help students understand the need for personal growth if they are to fruitfully lead others.
3. Begin to practice spiritual disciplines consistently
4. Help students understand the nature of servant leadership
5. Help students to reflect upon what they are learning about self, God, and others through service experiences

B. Overview:

Stepping out in some type of servant leadership position will be at the center of junior year experience. Students will have opportunity to discuss and reflect on service opportunities. Students will participate in small group reflection to further ponder on experiences and make connections for future ministry. Service must flow out of a heart that is abandoned to God and a heart that overflows with God's love. This will only occur as students seek God daily.

The course will meet weekly for 1.5 hours. It will be made up of 8-10 junior or third year SF curriculum students, a staff/faculty advisor. Each class can be divided into two smaller groups for accountability, support and encouragement.

C. Resources

1. Nouwen, Henri. *In the Name of Jesus*. New York, NY: Crossroads, 1989.
2. Lawrence, Brother. Ed. Donald Demaray. *The Practice of the Presence*. New York, NY: Alba House, 1997.
3. Thrall, Bill, Bruce McNicol and Ken McElrath. *The Ascent of a Leader*. New York, NY: Jossey-Bass, 1999.
4. Bible

D. Objectives:

1. Develop a better understanding of servant leadership. How can a servant be a leader? Is this a paradox? The idea of leading from a surrendered heart will be the key focus of this year.
 - Serving in some ministry or organization
2. Utilize their unique giftedness to minister to others. God has given each student unique gifts, talents, and desires. Each person brings a different perspective to the community as students more succinctly identify and celebrate their talents as gifts from God. They are freer to use them to honor Him and serve others.
 - Serving in some ministry or organization
 - Participating in residence hall community
3. Develop a realization that our doing comes out of who we are being (who Christ is being in us). If the servant leader is to reflect Christ in all they do and say, there must be a consistent and intentional time set apart for seeking God. Often people will be impacted more by who the servant is, than what he or she does.
 - Spiritual formation workshops
 - Participating in chapel programs

E. Curriculum themes:

1. Servant leadership
2. Spiritual gifts
3. Service flows out of the believer being centered in Christ
4. Reflection

F. Expected Outcomes:

1. 75% of the junior participants in the spiritual formation curriculum will report possessing a solid understanding of what it means to be a servant leader
2. 65% of the junior participants in the spiritual formation curriculum will report they consistently served with some ministry or organization
3. 50% of the junior participants in the spiritual formation curriculum will report they possess a clearer understanding of God's will for their life and occupation
4. 65% of the junior participants in the spiritual formation curriculum will report they utilize spiritual disciplines within their daily devotional time.

SF400 Course: Sharing Christ
Senior Year

A. Focus: Sharing Christ and Mission

B. Overview: The senior year will be a time of assimilating all experiences, lessons and relationships. This integration will help the student build a strong foundation for a lifelong journey of service with God. The incorporation begins with giving back to the local community through serving those who are just now beginning the journey, which the seniors started three years earlier. The seniors will serve as important leaders and models to the underclassmen. The final year will be an important part of solidifying one's Christian commitment and envisioning where God would use the individual to touch the world. Understanding the difference between vocation (seeking God) and occupation (how we serve God in the world) will be an integral part of the senior year exploration. Celebration of God's faithfulness over the previous three years will also be included in this capstone experience.

The course will meet weekly for 1.5 half hours. It will be made up of 8-10 senior students and a staff/faculty advisor. Each class can be divided into two smaller groups for accountability, support and encouragement.

C. Resources

1. Palmer, Parker. *Let Your Life Speak: Listening for the Voice of Vocation*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2000.
2. Guinness, Os. *The Call: Finding and Fulfilling the Central Purpose of Your Life*. Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 1998.
3. Kelly, Thomas. *A Testament of Devotion*. New York, NY: Harper Collins, 1992.
4. Bible

D. Objectives:

1. To identify a specific occupational calling. Students will work with advisors, careers office and mentors to determine a path of service and prepare for future work.
 - Participate in capstone senior seminar
 - Participate in career workshops
2. To serve as a student leader within the community and give back to the community. Students will serve as valuable role models and sources of wisdom for underclassmen.

- Senior students will be encouraged to live in traditional residence halls with underclassmen to serve as models and resources.

3. To surrender their hearts and lives to the will and leading of God. A strong foundation for a lifelong journey with Christ must occur during the students' final year of college. Students who make this type of commitment will have a marker (altar) to refer back to in the years ahead.

- Participate in Senior chapel and retreat
- Participate in solitude retreat

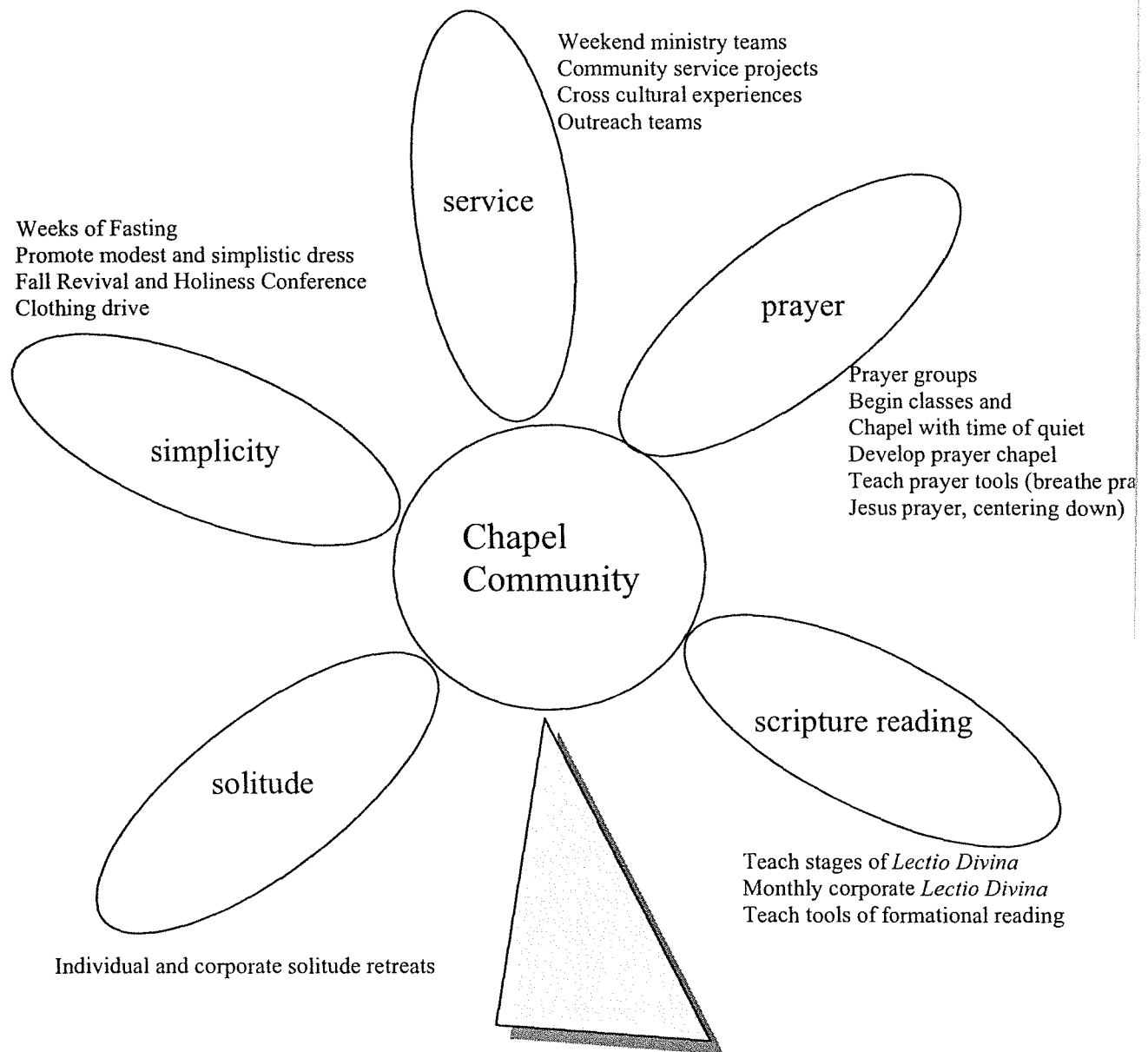
E. Curriculum Themes

1. What is the difference between vocation and occupation?
2. Expanding the individual's worldview
3. Reflection on the college journey
4. Solidifying a commitment to lifelong journey of service with Christ

F. Expected Outcomes

1. 90% of the senior class will report that they participated on a cross-cultural missions trip and a corresponding reflection group during college.
2. 60% of the senior spiritual formation curriculum participants will report that they served in some type of leadership capacity during their college career.
3. 80% of the senior spiritual formation curriculum participants will report that they gave back to the college community
4. 65% of the senior spiritual formation curriculum participants will report that they accurately define the difference between their vocation and their occupation of choice.
5. 65% of the senior spiritual formation curriculum participants will report that they integrate spiritual disciplines into their daily devotional life

SF Courses Instruction: The instructors for these courses will play a significant role in the desired outcome. As such, ideal instructors will be ones who maintain a significant devotional life incorporating the spiritual disciplines in their times alone with God. These individuals will serve as inspirational leaders, role-models, and counselors. The optimal integration of such a spiritual formation curriculum would be deeply ingrained in all aspects of academic college life. All faculty members will commit to implementing spiritual formation components into their academic discipline.



Creating an Environment for Spiritual Growth and Maturity
 (Building a strong and fertile foundation for a life long journey with God)

Overview of Creating an Environment for Spiritual Growth and Maturity Enrichment Opportunities

These opportunities illustrate how the spiritual disciplines could be utilized in conjunction with the spiritual formation curriculum. They are illustrated in the form of a flower representing opportunities to build strong roots and engage in activities that will help students blossom into strong believers. Each of the six disciplines identified contribute to the students overall spiritual formation as noted previously in this work. Each discipline serves as a significant branch that helps to build a strong foundation of spiritual growth and enables the student to blossom.

The chapel program and an overall sense of community serve as the core of such a program. It will be within the context of the chapel services that the students will hear the Word proclaimed, be instructed on various life issues, biblical themes, and theological matters, and hear other sojourners testify of God's work and provision in their lives. Chapel is a time when the entire community of faith can gather together to worship. This is an important component of the experience of community on a Christian college campus. This sense of community serves as the fulcrum and necessary support for most spiritual growth that will take place during a student's four years. This is why these two elements are placed in the center of the model for creating an environment for spiritual formation.

The five outreaching arms describe the other five central disciplines that have been identified as key for working with postmodern college students. It is as students have the opportunity to participate in simplicity, solitude, prayer, bible reading, and service that they will more fully blossom into the image of Christ. There are numerous

specific activities that can be implemented within each discipline. This list describes a few recommended initiatives for each respective discipline. These spiritual discipline activities, when implemented, will complement and build upon the instruction derived within the spiritual formation curriculum.

Focus on Spiritual Disciplines:

All the disciplines are necessary and should be addressed to some extent.

However, the spiritual disciplines of prayer, solitude, simplicity, service, bible reading, and community seem to be the ones most lacking in understanding and utilization in the postmodern generation.

General Initiatives and Practices

A. Prayer

- Listening for the voice of God
- Give and take in communication with God
- Thanksgiving and adoration of the Trinity

B. Solitude

- Retreats
- Daily times of quiet

C. Simplicity

- Living life of simplicity
- Fasting from the materialism of the day

D. Service

- Service projects
- Monthly small group service opportunities

E. Bible Reading

- *Lectio Divina*
- Emphasis on who Jesus Christ is
- Emphasis on who Jesus says that I am

F. Community

- Life together

Calendar Plans for Spiritual Disciplines

A. Simplicity

1. Fall Revival: Connecting to the Center
2. Week of fasting from technology, media, talking, food, etc.
3. 'Live simply, so that others might simply live' campaign
4. Promote modesty and simplicity in dress
5. Clothing drive at end of school year

B. Solitude and Silence

1. Teach the necessity of solitude during spiritual discipline course and how different traditions utilized this discipline
2. Solitude retreats – During the fall and spring semester of junior year hold solitude retreats.
 - a. Fall Retreat – group retreat where principles are presented and then participants have opportunity to be alone. Group will come back together to share about their experience.
 - b. Spring Retreat – individual retreat where students are provided with instructions and then spend the weekend in solitude.

C. Contemplative Prayer and Listening to God

1. Basic spiritual discipline courses will be taught each semester. In these workshops students can develop tools and skills for maintaining disciplines. During fall semester basic principles, practices and tools will be discussed. In the spring more specific perspectives and practices will be discussed.
2. Do it together – small groups made up of students who want to participate in discipline exercises. Groups commit to utilize daily times of contemplative prayer and participate in weekly small group meetings. The group meetings will provide accountability, encouragement, and opportunities to share individual experiences during times of prayer and how God speaks to them during the silence.
3. Weekly breathe prayers for participants to utilize daily (*Lord, teach me to rest in you.*)

4. Weekly fasts from technology, media and other distractions. Instead, focusing on listening to Jesus during these times.
5. Instructors begin each academic course with five minutes of quiet time

D. Scripture Reading

1. Teach the *Lectio Divina* method of scripture study. This is to promote reading scripture in small bites and allowing God to speak through the Word.
2. Monthly all-campus *Lectio Divina* service
3. Teach reading the Word in narrative form which will allow students to connect with the stories of scripture.
4. Challenge students to memorize scripture
5. Post scripture verses throughout residence halls

E. Community

1. Weekly chapel with entire community in attendance
2. Weekly small group meetings
3. Special services of worship and praise
4. Celebration activities as warranted (holidays, athletics, special events)
5. Modeled by staff and faculty

F. Service

1. Provide opportunities to serve others and fulfill the second aspect of the greatest commandment, "love others as you love yourself."
2. Place world map in each residence hall to provide students with the opportunity to connect with the rest of the world.
3. Recruit faculty and staff to help freshman move into residence halls to model the necessity of serving others.
4. First serve- During student orientation provides opportunities for new students to serve others within the local community.
5. Require students to participate in cross-cultural service experiences during breaks and a certain number of hours per year in order to graduate (workshop).

Conclusions

In chapter 1 we defined our problem for this study. How to effectively assist postmodern college students build a strong foundation and develop the tools necessary to maintain a lifelong journey with God. Part of the Christian colleges distinctive is the responsibility of nurturing students toward God and providing them with the skills and resources required to cultivate a vibrant walk with the Lord. It was surmised that this process would best occur within the framework of a spiritual formation curriculum that was based on the classical spiritual disciplines.

In the second chapter we described how the postmodern generation exhibits unique and distinctive characteristics. Many of the characteristics outwardly might seem negative to the Christian world. The lack of absolutes, excessive tolerance of other religions, sense of narcissism, and distrust in denominations and Christian leaders all contribute to a worrisome outlook of this generation from a Christian perspective. However, Christian leaders should find much hope and excitement when examining the postmodern generation as a whole. The postmoderns interest in spiritual things, desire to be connected to something larger than themselves, willingness to serve others, and especially the Millennial's commitment to relationships and community all foster an openness to and create the potential for knowing God more intimately. This is a wonderful time to be serving in campus ministry and shepherding college students toward Jesus. You have an audience that wants to grow in their faith, are readily influenced by their community, and are only lacking in someone to demonstrate to them how this Christian life is lived out on a daily basis. Possessing this type of holistic picture of these postmodern generation characteristics is important for all those who minister with

students. One must have this type of awareness before we begin to determine how to best minister to the postmodern generation.

In Chapter 3 we first looked at what it means to be created in the image of God and how this heritage influenced humankind's ability to follow God. What it means to walk and journey with God were then defined to serve as templates for the basis of a spiritual life. We were created for relationship with and to wholly walk with the Lord. This pursuit of holiness and walking uprightly with God is the heart of the Christian life. Although the postmoderns have not had many quality examples of Christians living out this type of surrendered life, the bible is filled with stories of faithful servants who completely followed God.

In the second half of this chapter we examined the lives of three individuals who journeyed with God and discovered several truths that could be applied to the Christian journey of postmodern college students. Caleb represented a life that was sold out to God's leading and provision. While many other Jews grumbled about God, demonstrated a lack of faith in His authority, and failed to trust God for the Promised Land, Caleb stood fast in his trust in God and in His ability to help Caleb conquer his enemies. For forty years Caleb fully trusted God and walked closely with Him. Caleb possessed an undivided heart and in the end received his just reward.

Terah represented someone who for whatever reason did not complete the journey with God to the Promised Land. Although the bible does not explicitly identify what caused Terah to settle in Haran, we considered several different ideas that may have influenced Terah not to continue his journey with the Lord. These theories centered around settling for much less than God's best.

Finally, we examined the life of Paul, who began as the chief persecutor of the early Christians and later became a pillar in the Christian movement. Paul's life models one of radical transformation and a life that was completely committed to God. Paul joyfully disregarded all else for the joy of living for and serving God. His commitment and exuberance impacted all facets of Paul's life. As such, his life of metamorphosis and Caleb's life of unfailing love and trust serve as wonderful models for postmodern believers as they journey with God.

In Chapter 4 we reviewed the ministry methodologies John Wesley employed in the late eighteenth century in England. What we discovered was that these same methodologies, especially the use of small group class meetings, would seem to fit well with the postmodern ministry of today. Finding support, challenge, and accountability from a small group of connected believers was a key catalyst for the growth that thousands experienced during the Methodist revival. These small groups were where friends, neighbors, and family came together to seek God. The genius of these small groups and some of the other Wesleyan outreach initiatives led thousands to open themselves up to God and go deeper in their personal relationship with Christ. This growth was not merely for the members of the small groups to keep to themselves. The Lord, as well as John Wesley, fully expected His followers to share with others out of the bounty of their personal relationship with God.

The postmodern generation would resonate with building relationships with others and forming community, especially in small groups. It is in small groups much like the Methodist class meetings that the postmoderns will have the opportunity to hear the testimonies of others, edify one another, and corporately grow in Christ. The

postmoderns are quick to share the abundance of their lives and faith with others. Now, because of modern technology and the numerous service opportunities, postmoderns can readily share compassion, love, and hope with others both locally and abroad. Wesley realized this type of service allowed all participants to fulfill both aspects of the greatest commandment, loving the Lord and loving others. If we are to effectively meet the postmoderns where they are, then incorporating initiatives comparable to those of John Wesley would seem to be wise.

In chapter 5 we examined the classical spiritual disciplines for a basic understanding of what these disciplines are and their role in spiritual formation. After this cursory review, we more specifically described six disciplines that were identified as particularly important to the spiritual growth of the postmodern generation. These were the disciplines of simplicity, solitude, contemplative prayer, bible reading, community, and service to others. All spiritual disciplines serve as a means of grace which disciples offer to God, for Him to use as He wills to conform the believer into His image.

The disciplines often serve as the catalyst for spiritual growth. These acts of love provide the format for believers to open themselves up to God and allow Him to minister to their heart. The six identified disciplines all oppose the culture of today. These six disciplines call the postmoderns to live lives of transformation. Seeking solitude helps believers to slow down, instead of trying to fit as much as one can into a day. Choosing to live a life of simplicity encourage the Christian to seek God as the center, instead of striving to find value in possessions and status. Contemplative prayer invites the disciple to be still and listen, instead of filling all the moments of a day with noise. *Lectio Divina* teaches sojourners to read the Word formationally, instead of solely reading the bible

informationally. Living in authentic community leads believers to selflessly open their lives to one another, instead of selfishly guarding all our thoughts and feelings. Service to others challenges disciples to serve and care more about others than ourselves, instead of continuously only looking out for oneself. These are Kingdom principles and ones that can be learned and practiced through implementing the spiritual disciplines in one's life. The Christian life is not merely about having a good devotional time. It is about living a life of devotion to Him.

In Chapter 6 we demonstrated what a four year program of spiritual formation might look like for in a Christian college setting. This program begins with drawing the new students into community through intentional small group interaction and connection with the historical witness of the institution. During the second year students are challenged to go-and-grow in their walk with God. This occurs as students identify specific gifts, talents, and preferences that make up who they are in Christ. This is a year of personal and spiritual maturity fostered by building spiritual disciplines into their daily lives. The third year of the program finds the juniors serving others through various organizations and servant leader positions. Through these service opportunities students begin to rightly fulfill the second half of Jesus' greatest commandment and love their neighbor as themselves. Students will readily find that as they serve others they grow themselves and move deeper in their relationship with Christ. The final senior year will be a time of ownership of their gifts, talents, and faith. Students will have a chance to give back to the community that nurtured them for the three previous years and build spiritual markers that will serve as the foundation for their continued journey with God.

A spiritual formation curriculum intentionally brings students to a small group where they can find unconditional love, support, and encouragement. It assists students in discovering the power of community in challenging them to grow. It helps students realize they are not on this journey alone. Other travelers have gone before, walk beside, and will come after them along these same paths. It teaches the students to create space for God to move in their lives and transform them as He may. It provides the disciples with experiences, lessons, and resources to draw upon as they continue to journey with God.

I believe Asbury College, and any Christian college campus that creates such an intentional environment of spiritual renewal and growth, will find an enthusiastically receptive audience in the postmodern generation. The college students who journey through such a four year curriculum will lay strong spiritual markers of significant experiences with God. They will know what it means to live and participate in an authentic Christian community. They will possess the spiritual foundation and necessary resources to continue on a lifelong journey with Christ. They will be prepared to make a difference in the world for Jesus Christ. In his "A Christian Critique of the University" Charles Malik wrote, "The university is a clear-cut fulcrum with which to move the world. If you move the university - and the students in it - you can move the world."⁶ I believe this type of spiritual formation curriculum would serve as creating the intentional environment and thus the fulcrum for God to move in the lives of students on our Christian college campuses. If God moves in our future Christian leader's lives then our campuses and the world will surely be moved.

⁶ Charles Malik, "A Christian Critique of the University," in *Pascal Lectures* (University of Waterloo, Ontario, Canada: 1981).

APPENDIX A

Methodist Class Meeting Questions

The following is a list of additional questions that might be posed to class members.¹

1. Have you the forgiveness of your sins?
2. Have you peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ?
3. Have you the witness of God's Spirit with your spirit, that you are a child of God?
4. Is the love of God shed abroad in your heart?
5. Has no sin, inward or outward, dominion over you?
6. Do you desire to be told of your faults?
7. Do you desire to be told of all your faults, and that plain and home?
8. Do you desire that every one of us should tell you, from time to time, whatsoever is in his heart concerning you?
9. Consider! Do you desire we should tell you whatsoever we think, whatsoever we fear, whatsoever we hear, concerning you?
10. Do you desire that, in doing this, we should come as close as possible, that we should cut to the quick, and search your heart to the bottom?
11. Is it your desire and design to be on this, and all other occasions, entirely open, so as to speak everything that is in your heart without exception, without disguise, and without reserve?

¹ John Wesley, *The Works of John Wesley*, ed. Thomas Jackson (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Publishing, 1996), vol. 8, 272-73.

APPENDIX B

Spiritual Discipline Practices

Simplicity

Simplistic practices include:

1. Assess the things and activities that keep life overly busy and complicated.
2. Work to simplify these things.
3. Set priorities that flow from loving God and seeking Him first.
4. Downsize possessions.
5. Cut back on shopping and discretionary spending.
6. Eat simple foods.
7. Enjoy simple pleasures that require no expense.
8. Remove distractions and preoccupation with things.
9. Week of fasting from various things: technology, TV, computer, video games, food.
10. Dress modestly, not having to keep up with the most recent trends and styles.

“Controlling principles” for the outward expression of simplicity from Richard Foster:

1. Buy things for their usefulness rather than their status.
2. Reject anything that is producing an addiction.
3. Develop a habit of giving things away.
4. Refuse to be propagandized by the custodians of modern gadgetry.
5. Learn to enjoy things without owning them.
6. Develop a deeper appreciation for creation.
7. Look with a healthy skepticism at all “buy now, pay later” schemes.

8. Obey Jesus' instructions about plain, honest speech.
9. Reject anything that breeds the oppression of others.
10. Shun anything that distracts you from seeking first the kingdom of God.²

Additional Resources:

1. Dawn, Marva. *Unfettered Hope: A Call to Faithful Living in an Affluent Society*. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2003.
2. Kelly, Thomas. *A Testament of Devotion*. New York, NY: Harper Collins, 1992.
3. Assisi, Francis. ed. Donald Demaray. *The Little Flowers*. New York, NY: Alba House, 1992.
4. Foster, Richard. *Freedom of Simplicity: Finding Harmony in a Complex World*. San Francisco, CA: Harper, 2005.
5. Teresa, Mother. *A Simple Path*. New York, NY: Ballantine, 1995.

Solitude and Silence

Silence and solitude practices include:

1. Intentionally choosing to drive without the radio on in the car.
2. Not turn the television or the radio on in room.
3. Exercise without music and attending to God.
4. Set aside times when you do not speak.
5. Participate in a silence retreat on yearly basis. This could be an individual or group retreat. In group retreats the only time when silence is broken is during times of reflection. If you choose to participate in a group retreat, be sure to set other times aside for silence. There are many monasteries which allow individuals to stay and participate in a silent retreat.
6. Find those breaks in the day (computer booting up, riding an elevator, etc).

² Richard Foster, *Celebration of Discipline: The Path to Spiritual Growth* (San Francisco, CA: Harper & Row, 1978), 90-95.

7. Set aside a particular “quiet place” and remove all distractions from this area: TV, radio, computer, iPod, etc. Only use this space to spend time quietly before God.
8. Go on a walk where you listen to God through your senses.

Additional Resources:

1. Robbins, Duffy and Maggie. *Enjoy the Silence*. El Cajon, CA: Zondervan, 2005.
2. Johnson, Jan. *Solitude & Silence*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2003
3. Merton, Thomas. *The Silent Life*. New York, NY: Farrar, 1957.
4. Nouwen, Henri. *The Way of the Heart*. San Francisco, CA: Harper, 1991.

Contemplative Prayer

Contemplative prayer practices include:

1. Sit in a comfortable chair with your eyes closed allow yourself to quietly settle. Let go of all thoughts and sensations. Begin to rest in God.
Take up a word or phrase. “Lord, your servant is listening.” This serves as the symbol of your intention to surrender to God’s presence. Gently settle on the word or phrase. Repeat it slowly and quietly rest in God. If foreign thoughts invade, gently repeat the phrase or word to draw yourself back to stillness. After the time of contemplative prayer (20 minutes is recommended, but beginners should start slowly) have a time of thanksgiving prayer to God.
2. Deep breathing: Breathe in slowly for a count of 4-7, then breathe out slowly, counting the same amount. When this becomes comfortable, hold the breath for an equal count before exhaling as you intentionally slow down your breathing.
3. Ignatian contemplation: A form of prayer used by Saint Ignatius simply put is visualizing the situation of a Biblical text with you in it. You might imagine yourself as one of the apostles listening to Jesus’ teaching, or as one of the Israelites gathering manna. What would Jesus say directly to you if you were there? What would you ask Jesus?
4. Labyrinths: Walk a labyrinth listening for God. As you make turns and journey to the center ask God to speak to you. The point of a labyrinth is to journey to the center of a spiral pattern traced on the ground and journey back out again. Think of a labyrinth as a short prayer walk.

5. The focus of this prayer is to make yourself available to God. Do not become dismayed if you do not hear a clear word from God. Your job is to obediently make room for Him to speak. It is up to the Lord what and when He will communicate.

Additional Resources:

1. Pennington, M. Basil. *Centering Prayer: Renewing an Ancient Christian Prayer Form*. New York, NY: Image Books, 1982.
2. Johnston, William. *The Cloud of Unknowing and the Book of Privy Counseling*. New York, NY: Image Books/Doubleday, 2005
3. Merton, Thomas. *Contemplative Prayer*. New York, NY: Herder and Herder, 1969.
4. Therkelsen, Margaret. *The Love Exchange: An Adventure in Prayer*. Wilmore, KY: Bristol Books, 1990.
5. Nouwen, Henri. *The Only Necessary Thing: Living a Prayerful Life*. New York, NY: Crossroads, 1999.

Scripture Reading (*Lectio Divina*)

Scripture reading practices include:

1. Choose a text of the Scriptures that you wish to pray. Many Christians use in their daily *Lectio Divina* one of the readings from the Eucharistic liturgy for the day; others prefer to slowly work through a particular book of the Bible. It makes no difference which text is chosen, as long as one has no set goal of “covering” a certain amount of text; the amount of text “covered” is in God's hands, not yours. The passage should not be too long. Psalms are a good source.
2. Place yourself in a comfortable position and allow yourself to become silent.
3. *Lectio* (reading). Turn to the text and read it slowly and gently. Reflectively savor each portion of the reading allowing it to sink into us. Allow the Word to flow over you, constantly listening for the “still, small voice” of a word or phrase.
4. *Meditatio* (reflection). Think about the text you have chosen and ruminate upon it, take from it what God wants to give you. Take the word or phrase into yourself. Slowly repeat it to yourself, allowing it to interact with your inner world of concerns, memories and ideas. Allow this inner pondering, this rumination, to invite you into dialogue with God. Sit with a sentence, phrase or word that emerges from the text, allow the Spirit to expand your listening capacity and to open you to its deeper meaning.

5. *Oratio* (response). Talk to God about what you read. Let your hearts speak to God. Interact with God as an intimate friend. Share with God what you have discovered in yourself during the experience of meditation. Allow yourself to be touched by God.
6. *Contemplatio* (rest). Rest in gratitude for God and His word. Simply rest in the Word of God. Listen at the deepest level of your being to God who speaks within us with a still small voice. As you listen you are gradually transformed from within. Begin to contemplate how you can apply the truths you discover to the rest of your life.
7. Pray a prayer of thanksgiving to the Lord for the time you spent together and the love imparted.
8. If you are practicing *Lectio Divina* in a group. You can have the group recite the Lord's Prayer to close the time together.

Additional Resources:

1. Jones, Tony. *Read, Think, Pray, Live*. Colorado Springs, CO: THINK, 2003
2. Muto, Susan A. and Adrian Van Kaam. *A Practical Guide to Spiritual Reading*. Petersham, MA: St. Bede's Publications, 1994.
3. Pennington, M. Basil. *Lectio Divina: Renewing the Ancient Practice of Praying the Scriptures*. New York, NY: Crossroads Publications, 1998.
4. Mulholland, Robert. *Shaped by the Word: The Power of Scripture in Spiritual Formation*. Nashville, TN: Upper Room Books, 2000.

Community

Community practices include:

1. Practice the New Testament "one anothers. These one another verses all refer to how community members are to relate to one another within the body of Christ. Such as, "This I command you, that you love one another" (Jn 15:17).
2. Model openness, vulnerability, and integrity.
3. Build warm/trusting relationships - this requires time/commitment/listening.
4. Actively get together with intentional conversations.
5. Choose to limit self: music, room decorations, movies, dress.
6. Model community within the leadership team.

7. Participate in small groups (accountability, study, prayer, and service).
8. Celebrate together through times of fellowship meals and gatherings.
9. Be willing to give and receive a word of accountability (confront poor choices).

Additional Resources:

1. Bonhoeffer, Dietrich. *Life Together*. New York, NY: Harper, 1954.
2. Stewart, Columba. *Prayer and Community: The Benedictine Tradition*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1998.
3. Myers, Joseph. *The Search to Belong*. Grand Rapids, MI: Youth Specialties, 2003.
4. Crabb, Larry. *Connecting: Healing Ourselves and Our Relationships*. Nashville, TN: Word, 1997.
6. Gould, Graham. *The Desert Fathers on Monastic Community*. New York, NY: Clarendon Press, 1993.

Service

Service practices include:

1. Flows out of a heart connected to God. Participate in spiritual disciplines and open yourself to God's leading in service.
2. Ensure you are serving out of a heart to please God, not to please other people.
3. Keep yourself open to serve anyone who you meet. Do not force yourself on someone, but do not refuse anyone any good deed. Intentionally ask others, "What can I do for you today?"
4. In prayer don't just ask God to minister to other's needs. Ask God how He might use you to care for others.
5. Participate in some type of cross-cultural service experience regularly.
6. Celebrate holidays like Thanksgiving, Christmas and birthdays caring for others instead of focusing on yourself.
7. Random acts of kindness with no expectations, except for loving on the other person.

8. Serve out of a heart of compassion. Look around you for someone who is marginalized or has a need that is not being met. Ask God how you might meet that person's need.
9. Take the initiative to do a job or meet a need. Do not wait until someone expresses a need.
10. Shun anything that distracts you from seeking first the kingdom of God.

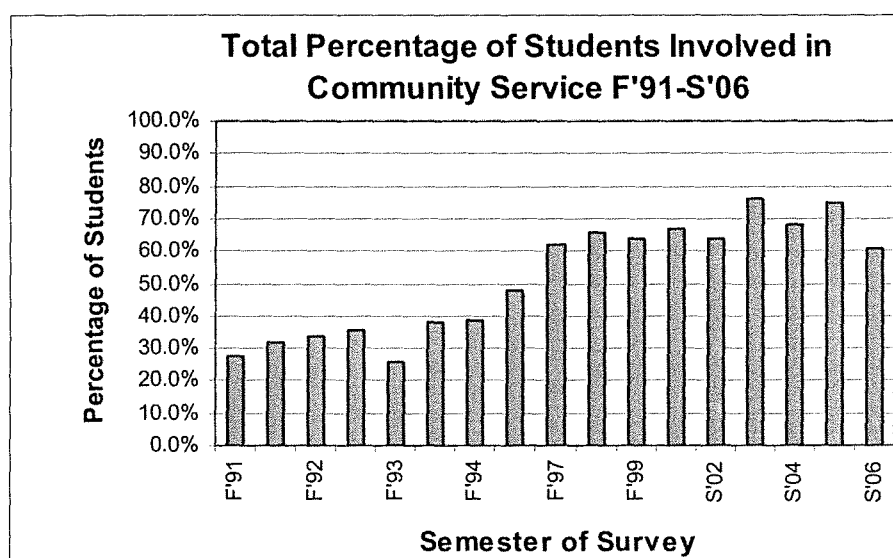
Additional Resources:

1. Day, Dorothy. *Loaves and Fishes*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1997.
2. Kelly, Thomas. *A Testament of Devotion*. New York, NY: Harper Collins, 1992.
3. Johnson, Jan. *Service and Secrecy*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2003.
4. Swindoll, Charles. *Improving Your Serve: the Art of Unselfish Living*. Waco, TX: Word Books, 1981.

APPENDIX C

2006 Co-Curricular Involvement Survey of Asbury College Students

Involvement surveys were given to students during the Fall and Spring Semesters beginning in the Fall of 1991. The most recent survey was completed in Spring 2006. The percentages indicate the number of students responding positively to the question: "I have participated in some type of community service occasionally or regularly during this semester."



The sharp rise in community service at Asbury College beginning in 1996 can be attributed to several factors. 1996 was the first year in which the school hired a full-time staff person to focus on community service. Correspondingly, beginning in 1997 the entire freshman class participated in a outreach event during orientation entitled First Serve. Other contributing factors include more accurate communication of participant numbers, organization of monthly Reach-Out events and a commitment by Residence Life staff members to engage their respective floors in community service activities.

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