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# Korean American Young Adults: Spiritual and Emotional Formation Through Art

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GEORGE FOX UNIVERSITY

KOREAN AMERICAN YOUNG ADULTS:  
SPIRITUAL AND EMOTIONAL FORMATION THROUGH ART

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO  
THE FACULTY OF PORTLAND SEMINARY  
IN CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE OF  
DOCTOR OF MINISTRY

BY  
HESED LEE

PORTLAND, OREGON

MARCH 2023



## CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL

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DMin Dissertation

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This is to certify that the DMin Dissertation of

Hesed Lee

has been approved by  
the Dissertation Committee on February 16, 2023  
for the degree of Doctor of Ministry in Leadership and Spiritual Formation.

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## ABSTRACT

It is a well-known phenomenon in America that many young adults are disengaged from the Church, at the same time they are battling internal emotional conflicts while trying to understand their faith journey. Even though most of them grew up in the Church, participated in church programs, and learned about God, they are anxious, lonely, and struggling to discover their spiritual identity. What then, what are we missing? After conducting an anonymous online survey with Korean American young adults and gathering narrative research from Korean American young adults as well as Asian American English Ministry pastors, this paper explores the spiritual and emotional challenges of Korean American Christian young adults.

This paper asks the question, “How can Korean American young adults in the Korean American immigrant church explore, reflect, and process their past life experiences in a creative way, while also growing in their God-given identity, self-worth, and spiritual faith. This paper proposes using art as a formative spiritual practice and the art-making process as one method to create the space necessary for Korean American young adults to experience spiritual formation. It explores both historical and theological understandings of art as well as psychological research on how art impacts the brain. Lastly, it explores art as spiritual formation and offers a four-part ART workshop that enables both individuals and groups to explore their inner world, integrate their faith, and their life journey in a tangible way.

## SECTION 1: THE PROBLEM

### **Introduction**

Recently, Barna Group did an extensive online survey researching the spiritual and emotional condition of Millennials born between 1984 and 1998 in the United States. They reported that 64% of young adults between the ages of 18 and 35 are “church dropouts”<sup>1</sup> and 28% of young adults struggle with anxiety, including decision making, the fear of failing, a lack of identity, as well as feeling emotionally sad or depressed.<sup>2</sup> These statistics show that one out of every three young adults face internal emotional battles and are disengaged from church. Unfortunately, many young adults in America, who have great potential to change the world, are wrestling with internal emotional struggles and question their faith as they navigate young adulthood. During young adulthood, they go through various transitions and changes in order to establish a new foundation as an independent individual. They begin to consider their career, their values, relationships, life mission, and faith.

What about Korean American Christian young adults who grew up in the immigrant church? A Korean American pastor observed,

I have witnessed many self-professed Christian Korean American young adults struggling to keep their faith as they enter college and navigate young adulthood. While some tried to find a Christian community on campus or at a nearby church, others silently kept their faith in the closet, slowly drifting away from practicing

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<sup>1</sup> People either grew up Christian and no longer affiliate with church or still identify as Christians but attend a place of worship infrequently.

<sup>2</sup> Barna Group, *The Connected Generation: How Christian Leaders Around the World Can Strengthen Faith and Well-Being Among 18-35-Year-Olds* (Barna Group, 2019), 7.

that faith. Even though many of the first generations of Koreans modeled sacrificial, passionate, and devoted faith, many emerging Korean American young adults struggle to be rooted in a robust and thriving Christian life.<sup>3</sup>

Many Korean immigrant churches in the U.S. are heavily concerned about the “silent exodus,”<sup>4</sup> a development in which younger church-raised generations are silently leaving both the church and their faith as they go off to college. For example, one of the biggest Korean immigrant churches in the Bay area, with over 2000 Korean-speaking adult members, has less than 50 English speaking young adult attendees. This church experienced a huge drop in their English ministry after the leadership experienced generational conflicts within the church. It is difficult to grasp a clear statistic of the Korean American young adult church dropout rate, yet it is evident that the Korean American immigrant church is losing their young leaders. Unfortunately, many Korean American immigrant churches have a proportionally low number of second-generation Korean American young adults.

The church-raised second-generation children entering young adulthood are disengaging with their faith. This chapter will not diagnose the detailed reasons for this phenomenon, but rather, will focus on the current emotional and spiritual conditions of these young adults. As a result of their ethnicity and bi-cultural identity, Korean American young adults face complex and unique spiritual, emotional, and cultural challenges as they grow up. Many young adults in the Korean American immigrant evangelical churches are struggling and are emotionally stuck on their faith journey. They

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<sup>3</sup> From 2002 to 2019, Heeyoung served as a campus missionary to multiple major college campuses in California including: UC Irvine, UC San Diego, UC Berkeley, UC Santa Cruse, San Jose Sates, Cal State Fullerton.

<sup>4</sup> Helen Lee, “Silent Exodus,” *Christianity Today* (Carol Stream, United States: Christianity Today, Inc., August 12, 1996), no. 9.

have a difficult time integrating their life and faith as a result of their emotional hurts, unresolved griefs, unspoken pains, and past trauma.

This research is aimed to explore and discuss the current spiritual and emotional state of young adults who grew up in Korean American immigrant churches. It then asks the questions, “How can a Korean American young adult in the Korean American immigrant church have the opportunity to explore, reflect, and process their past life journey and move toward a mature faith?” And “How can they be helped and directed toward discovering their God-given identity, self-worth, and spiritual growth?” This chapter will present the research method, discuss the outcome of the research, and unfold the narrative of the emotional and spiritual needs of Korean American young adults.

### **The Research**

Both quantitative and qualitative research methods were used in order to gain a greater understanding of the current spiritual and emotional health of Korean American Christian young adults. First, an anonymous online survey was conducted, next, five young adults were interviewed for more in-depth narrative research. For the online survey, 218 Korean American Christian young adults (hereafter KACYA) participated. They either grew up in a Korean immigrant church or attended for a certain period of their life. The survey participants were 18 to 35 years old, 60% were females, 40% were males. 75% of participants were either U.S.-born or came to the U.S. before elementary school, 23.5% came during elementary and high school, only 5 % came to the U.S. after they graduated high school.

50% of the participants report that they understand Korean but prefer to speak English; 40% of the participants report they are fluent in Korean and English. Only 7%

say they feel uncomfortable speaking Korean and speak only English. The research results indicate that most participants are connected to their ethnic heritage, and they hold to their cultural values on some levels. All the participants currently are connected to a church: dominantly 31% continue to attend an English ministry that is part of Korean immigrant church, 16.6% attend a Korean speaking immigrant church, 19.4% attend an Independent Second-generation church, 13.4% attend an American church, 9.2% attend a multiethnic Asian American church, only 6% say that they currently do not attend church. Even though this is a small sample of Korean American young adults, this research indicates the level of anxiety, emotional hurts, guilt, and shame present within this demographic. The research reveals many profound facts about our young adult's spiritual and emotional struggles, their challenges, needs, and longings. Many positive findings also affirm the hard work that Korean American immigrant churches have invested in their children during the past decades.

## Korean American Young Adults Research

*Table 1-218 Korean American Young Adults Online Survey Research Results*

%	Responses
50.0	said that they often feel anxious and worry about their future.
36.0	had a traumatic experience (or past hurt) and still struggle with its effect.
35.5	often struggle with self-esteem.
35.0	feel guilty about their past and/or have a difficult time forgiving their mistakes.
30.0	struggle with a sense of shame.
23.1	feel sad and depressed and have a difficult time focusing on their daily routine.
18.9	often struggle with anger and have a difficult time handling their emotions.
18.0	agreed that they often struggle with parental relationships.
23.0	often struggle with parental influence over them.

### Summary

#### *Positive findings*

Eighty six percent of the KACYA who took the survey, professed to be Christian and affirmed their security in their identity as a child of God and communicated that they feel connected to God. The survey shows that a foundational seed of faith was planted, and a spiritual root grounded that faith. Sixty percent of KACYA agreed that they receive

regular spiritual support and are a part of an accountability group. However, 20% of young adults answered that they don't have an accountability group and another 20% feel neutral and they are looking for a spiritual community. It is encouraging to learn that many KACYA who grew up in an immigrant church continue to profess that their faith is rooted in their identity as a child of God and continue to build their life in a faith community.

### **Narrative Research**

#### *John's Story*

John is a 27-year-old Korean American young adult currently attending the English Ministry of a Korean American immigrant Church. His parents divorced when he was three years old, and he has been living with his mom since then. One traumatic memory John has from childhood is of being handed over to a strange woman by the person he had believed to be his mom at the time. He later learned that after living with his father and his new wife, he was sent to live with his real mom. This sudden and abrupt change devastated and shocked John. He went to church with his mom during his childhood and teenage years. John didn't get along with his church group. He did not fit in with his church friends, who bullied him over the years. John says, "I always felt like a stranger in my church." He continued to attend church with his mom for Sunday service until he graduated high school, but he drifted away as he went to college.

Thankfully, during his college years, he was led to a good Christian community with quality mentors, where he felt welcomed and like he belonged. He says, "Growing up, I spent a lot of time watching TV shows or playing games alone at home because my

mom was busy working as a single mom.” John’s mother does not speak fluent English, and John did not learn to speak Korean, as a result there has always been a difficult language barrier. Because of this communication barrier, their conversations remained simple, preventing deep and meaningful conversations.

Recently, John was able to hear his mother’s divorce story, learning how she was able to bring John back with the help of a translator. It was a tremendous shock for him, causing him deep emotional pain, leaving him searching for a healthy way to process those emotions. John believes that God wants him to love and forgive his father, but he also feels a strong and deep resentment toward his father. He is stuck between the two. John wonders what God expects of him, he wants to know how to process God’s forgiveness for his father. Although John’s father calls him occasionally, John avoids his calls. He keeps focused on his busy work schedule as a way to ignore his pain. He questions how to move forward and experience God’s healing and wholeness.

### *Jane’s Story*

Jane graduated from a Christian college last year and started to work at a local community outreach center. Jane’s mother is a strong believer and raised Jane in the church. However, Jane’s father finds believing in God difficult and stopped going to church five years into their marriage. As a result, their family was not able to spend time together at church like other Korean families. Although resolved now, Jane’s parents went through serious marital problems after her father had an affair during her middle school years. She said, “I have a fairly good relationship with my dad, but we don’t sit down and have long and deep conversations.” Growing up, Jane never missed church events or Sunday worship. She was a good Christian who participated in all the church



programs and practiced quiet time at home. Up until high school, she never doubted her faith, she went to church and lived a Christian lifestyle that she expected to follow the rest of her life. However, during her college years, many doubts and questions about God's existence, Christianity, salvation, and faith started to enter her mind. These days, she struggles to follow and put her complete trust in God. Jane expressed that she struggles with anger. Sometimes she is even surprised by uncontrollable outbursts of anger. She said, "I am not sure why I get so angry over a little thing when I am a pretty easy-going person. I am surprised by my sudden rage when a car comes my way, or my mother asks me to do a small thing." Rather than seeing time with God as religious duty and work, Jane is seeking to be more honest with God and has intentional personal time with God. She desires to be rooted and understand herself better, she wants to grow in her faith identity.

### *Lora's Story*

Lora is 28 years old, born and raised in America. Both of her parents immigrated to the U.S. from Korea during their teenage years. Lora's family was dysfunctional. Growing up, she witnessed a lot of family violence when her father abused her mother and older brother. She said, "My home wasn't a safe place for me. I would spend most of my time in my room alone when I was at home; or I would make excuses to be away from home." Five years ago, during her college years, her mom committed suicide. Lora struggled with an eating disorder, and continues to face it, from time to time. During highly stressful times throughout her college years, she found comfort through binge eating and its negative cycle. While it has gotten better, she continues to struggle with low self-esteem and feels insecure about herself. Lora stopped going to church. Her faith

in God didn't feel relevant to what she was experiencing in life. There was a disconnect between her faith and the reality of her difficult life. While she is open to seeking and knowing God again, she doesn't know where to start. God seems too far away, and she is not sure where to even begin.

### *Paul' Story*

Paul is a 30-year-old Korean American young adult, currently studying at a seminary in California. After graduating from UCSD<sup>5</sup>, he felt convicted to join full-time ministry work and has worked as a campus minister since then. Paul's parents were both missionaries, after spending his early childhood in the Philippines and Korea, they immigrated to America when Paul was seven years old. Paul grew up in a very spiritual and mission-focused environment, one that included high family and spiritual expectations. During our interview, he expressed that he is wrestling with his vocation and his next step in life, right now he struggles to find joy in ministry.

Paul shared honestly that growing up he struggled with pornography and online gaming, at this point he has not been able to completely overcome his addictions. He often feels very insecure and lonely; he is unable to find a safe place to share his struggle. The expectations of his parents and the ministry continue to push him into a lifelong career in ministry; a career for which he feels inadequate and insecure. Paul confessed that he struggles with a lot of guilt and shame before God; he is unable to pray and sit still in God's presence. Often, Paul struggles with negative emotions toward God, he knows something is stopping him from moving toward God. He is often anxious and

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<sup>5</sup> University of California San Diego

finds it challenging to focus on his school studies as well as daily life. Paul currently attends a monthly spiritual direction meeting at the seminary, he is learning to face his spiritual and emotional condition. Paul is searching for answers for the next stage of his life and calling.

### *Jenny's Story*

Jenny is 23 years old and grew up in a single-parent immigrant family. She came to the U.S. when she was seven years old, after her parents divorced in Korea. Since then, she has been attending a small Korean American immigrant church in the Los Angeles area with her mother and brother. Her mother's job at a Korean Spa does not provide enough income for the family of three and leaves them struggling financially. Because of these financial struggles, Jenny always tries to work part-time. Jenny's mom is a strong Christian who regularly prays for her children at dawn prayer. Jenny believes in God and has been faithfully attending and actively volunteering at her church. However, recently she has been experiencing spiritual dryness and feels disconnected. While she is anxious about her future, she is also sad and doesn't want to do anything. Even though she tries to have quiet time and pray regularly, she is not having much progress. She is confused, feels restless, and doesn't know how to find peace in God. She doesn't want anyone to see her struggle, especially her mom who works hard. She questions if this is all there is to the Christian life. She feels tired and wonders why she feels anxious and emotionally stuck if God is alive in her life.

## Complexity And Challenge Of KACYA

Over 35% of KACYA expressed that they struggle with anxiety and find it difficult to focus on God. They report often feeling a disconnect between their faith and the current reality of their lives. They know and believe that they are Christians, but one out of three is anxious and finds it difficult to live out their faith in their everyday lives. This was demonstrated by Paul, the 30-year-old seminary student in California, who shared his struggles during his interview, stating that his anxiety had prevented him from praying for the last month. He explained that his past mistakes leave him with a lot of guilt and shame hindering him from approaching God. What are the contributing factors for their anxieties and disconnection that affects their spiritual health?

### *The Generational Challenge*

Do the KACYA struggle with anxiety and uncertainty because of their unique identity as 1.5 and 2<sup>nd</sup> generation children of an immigrant family?<sup>6</sup> Most Korean immigrants come to the U.S. in order to provide better educational opportunities for their children, placing upon these children a heavy burden to succeed as they grow up in their immigrant homes.<sup>7</sup> Dr. Sung Moon writes, “Korean American parents have high expectations of academic and occupational achievement which can create a great tension

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<sup>6</sup> The “1.5 generation” refers to Korean immigrants who relocated to the United States between the ages of 6 and 18 from Korea. And the “2<sup>nd</sup> generation” refers to people born in the United States with at least one first-generation (immigrant) parent.

<sup>7</sup> Hyeyoung Kang and Marcela Raffaelli, “Personalizing Immigrant Sacrifices: Internalization of Sense of Indebtedness Toward Parents Among Korean American Young Adults,” *Journal of Family Issues* 37, no. 10 (July 1, 2016): 1332.

in Korean American homes.”<sup>8</sup> However, Dr. Moon explains that while immigrant parents struggle to learn, cope, and assimilate to their new world, they lack “physical presence and emotional availability”<sup>9</sup> for their children. Immigrant parents were busy working to adjust to the new world and deal with their language barriers. Consequently, they did not have the relational space their children needed as they were growing up. Research conducted in 1996 found that the causes of family conflict between the immigrant parents and their children included, “parents’ lack of time to play with their children or supervise them” and “parents’ language proficiency.”<sup>10</sup> Unfortunately, for many KACYA, the needed parental supervision and presence was missing during their formative adolescent years. In many cases, 1.5 and 2<sup>nd</sup> generation children were expected to take a pioneering role to lead and pave their way as immigrant children living in the dual cultural experience. They are caught between the dominant American culture and the Korean culture of their heritage, combined with the lack of parental supervision and modeling, anxiety and uncertainty about their future development.

Many Korean American Christian young adults also struggle with the sense of guilt and low self-esteem. The Korean culture is influenced by “core traditional Confucian values such as filial piety, respect for parents, family-centeredness, emphasis

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<sup>8</sup> Sung Seek Moon, “Acculturation, Social Support, and Family Conflict: Korean-American Adolescents’ Perceptions,” *Child & Adolescent Social Work Journal: C & A* 25, no. 3 (June 2008): 227–40, doi:<http://dx.doi.org.georgefox.idm.oclc.org/10.1007/s10560-008-0123-3>.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 116.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 113.

on education, and strong work ethic.”<sup>11</sup> These characteristics reinforce “interdependence, unconditional loyalty and devotion, self-sacrifice for family needs and filial responsibility.”<sup>12</sup> Korean American young adults who witnessed their parent’s sacrificial living on their behalf often construct a sense of indebtedness toward parents.<sup>13</sup>

Korean American young adults who have highly internalized this indebtedness, can be burdened by their parent’s sacrifices. This indebtedness has the common themes of (a) filial assistance, (b) desire for success, and (c) desire for a positive relationship, and are often driven by these cultural norms.<sup>14</sup> Intergenerational relationship struggles with their parents can often cause feelings of guilt and shame. As a result of navigating through issues such as parental expectations, identity crisis, racial discrimination, and Americanization,<sup>15</sup> Korean American second-generation individuals share a distinct set of experiences. In order to avoid burdening their parents, Korean American young adults are often unable to express their emotional struggle with their parents, as was shared by Jenny whose single mom works at a Korean Spa.

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<sup>11</sup> Sharon Kim, *A Faith of Our Own: Second-Generation Spirituality in Korean American Churches* (New Brunswick, N.J: Rutgers University Press, 2010), 57.

<sup>12</sup> Kang and Raffaelli, “Personalizing Immigrant Sacrifices,” 1334.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., 1341.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., 1342.

<sup>15</sup> Kim, *A Faith of Our Own*, 55.

### *The Model Minority*

The ‘model minority’ stereotype is prevalent among Asian Americans. Dr.

Hyeouk Chris Hahm, founder of the Asian Women’s Actions for Resilience and Empowerment lab at Boston University School of Social Work says,

A lot of Asian Americans worry that they would not meet the high standard as ‘model minority,’ because the common stereotype that says Asian students are great in math and science and bad in sports hurts a lot of young people. Asian students feel that they are not automatically smart; they have to work extremely hard to reach it. That creates unreasonable expectations and can cause a lot of stress.<sup>16</sup>

According to research done by Lei Wang and team, Asian American emerging adults<sup>17</sup> who perceived “a high discrepancy between the standards their families set for them and their own performance experienced higher levels of family shame, which in turn was associated with greater psychological distress.”<sup>18</sup> Family perfectionism and high expectation bring unhealthiness that leads to many Korean American young adults struggling with anxiety and low self-esteem.

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<sup>16</sup> Art Jahnke, “Asian Americans and the Model Minority Dilemma,” *Boston University*, May 11, 2021, <http://www.bu.edu/articles/2021/asian-americans-and-the-model-minority-dilemma/>.

<sup>17</sup> A developmental stage that is neither adolescence nor young adulthood but is theoretically and empirically distinct from them both, spanning the late teens through the twenties, with a focus on ages 18 to 25. Emerging adulthood is distinguished by relative independence from social roles and from normative expectations. Having left the dependency of childhood and adolescence, and having not yet taken on the responsibilities that are normative in adulthood, emerging adults engage in identity exploration, a process of trying out various life possibilities (e.g., in love, work, and worldviews) and gradually moving toward making enduring decisions. During this period, individuals have the highest rates of residential instability (change) of any age group and see themselves neither as adolescents nor entirely as adults. [proposed in 2000 by U.S. developmental psychologist Jeffrey Jensen Arnett]. “APA Dictionary of Psychology,” September 16, 2022, <https://dictionary.apa.org/>.

<sup>18</sup> Lei Wang, Y. Joel Wong, and Y. Barry Chung, “Family Perfectionism, Shame, and Mental Health among Asian American and Asian International Emerging Adults: Mediating and Moderating Relationships,” *Asian American Journal of Psychology* 9, no. 2 (June 2018): 123, doi:10.1037/aap0000098.

Paul Sohn asserts, “Today most twentysomethings, a generation 80 million strong, live with a staggering and unprecedented amount of fear, uncertainty, and hopelessness.”<sup>19</sup> In today’s fast-paced culture that constantly evolves and changes, young adults find it more difficult to navigate the milestones into adulthood. Several decades ago, twentysomethings typically finished all the major transitions into adulthood by age thirty. These transitions include things such as leaving home, finishing their education, becoming financially independent, getting married and having children. Now less than 50 percent complete these transitions by age thirty.<sup>20</sup> They are overloaded by too many options and choices that cause what has become termed FOMO (Fear of Missing Out). Sohn explains, “Millennials face a larger variety of choices and options than any other generation. They are overburdened with choices. In fact, having too many options can have a paralyzing effect.”<sup>21</sup> Emotional health is an essential part of our well-being and spiritual growth. However, even when people know that God loves them and has forgiven them, they still experience emotional “stuckness.” This lack of emotional awareness prevents them from feeling close to God.

From their beginning, in 1903, Korean Americans have been one of the most dedicated, faith-centered, immigrant/ethnic communities.<sup>22</sup> In 2012, Pew Research

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<sup>19</sup> Paul Sohn, *Quarter-Life Calling: Pursuing Your God-Given Purpose in Your Twenties*, Exp Rev edition (New York: FaithWords, 2017), 39.

<sup>20</sup> Barna Group and David Kim, *20 and Something, Paperback*, Illustrated edition (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2014), 15.

<sup>21</sup> Paul Sohn, 41.

<sup>22</sup> Bok-Lim Kim and Ryu Eunjung, “Korean Families,” in *Ethnicity and Family Therapy*, ed. Monica McGoldrick, Joseph Giordano, and Nydia Garcia-Preto, 3rd ed (New York: Guilford Press, 2005), 354.



reported 71% of Korean Americans identify as Christian (Protestants 61% and catholic 10%).<sup>23</sup> These statistics validate the impact of the Korean immigrant church. It is a deeply rooted place that has been forming and shaping the identity and lives of many Korean Americans all over the U.S. However, many Korean American young adults, who grew up in the church, express that even though they feel they are rooted in God, they struggle with disconnection, anxiety, guilt, shame, and low self-esteem. They are looking for a real connection and authentic relationship with God and with other genuine, authentic Christians in their daily lives. As Barna's research showed, “many young adults are wary and weary, wrestling with questions, longing for deeper relationships and facing significant societal, professional, and personal obstacles.”<sup>24</sup>

### *The First Generation of Korean Americans*

The first Korean American immigrant was Seo Jaephil, a Korean Independent activist who immigrated to America in 1884 for education and political reasons. But the first collective immigration began in 1903 when 102 Koreans crossed the Pacific on the SS Gaelic and arrived in Hawaii to work on sugar plantations.<sup>25</sup> Since then, the immigrant population of Korean Americans in the U.S. has been growing. The *Immigration and Nationality Act* in 1965, (which abolished the previous racist

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<sup>23</sup> Pew Research, “Asian Americans: A Mosaic of Faiths,” Asian Americans (Pew Research Center, July 19, 2012), <https://www.pewforum.org/2012/07/19/asian-americans-a-mosaic-of-faiths-overview/>.

<sup>24</sup> Barna Group, *The Connected Generation*, 7.

<sup>25</sup> Hyun Sook Kim and Pyong Gap Min, “The Post-1965 Korean Immigrants: Their Characteristics And Settlement Patterns,” *Korea Journal of Population and Development* 21, no. 2 (1992): 126.

immigration law that prohibited equal immigrant opportunity) dramatically shifted the ethnic population in America. Many Asians started to immigrate to the U.S., since 1971 a significant number of Korean immigrants have come to pursue a better life, education, and opportunity.<sup>26</sup> According to the 2010 U.S Census, over 1.4 million Korean American immigrants live in America, and Korean immigrants are the fifth largest growing population among the Asian American ethnic groups.<sup>27</sup> Currently, many second and third-generation Korean American descendants live in America from the post-1965 immigrant wave.

As stated above, from the early immigrant period, Korean immigrants have been a very religious group.<sup>28</sup> They established and formed their cultural identity around the church as their cultural and religious hub. After experiencing the traumatic national oppression and war through the Japanese colonization and Korean War over the last century, Korean immigrants in America hold strong nationalistic values and continue to establish a collective culture. Serving as a central hub for the first generation of immigrants, the church grew very fast as it met their longings for the mother country. Life for the first immigrants was harsh and brutal as they faced language barriers and the reality of starting from the very bottom of society. The connectedness of their church spiritual family served to fill and resolve much of the high stress and difficulties the first generation of Korean Americans faced.

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<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

<sup>27</sup> Pew Research, "Chapter 1: Portrait of Asian Americans," *The Rise of Asian Americans*, June 19, 2012, <https://www.pewresearch.org/social-trends/2012/06/19/chapter-1-portrait-of-asian-americans/>.

<sup>28</sup> Kim and Eunjung, "Korean Families," 354.

With the early missionary influence in Korea, many converted to Christianity, and developed the church as a focal place to maintain their Korean cultural value and identity. During this tough immigrant journey, the church provided a place of safety, rest, and renewal where they could speak their native language freely and connect with the same homogenous group of people without the cultural or language limitation they struggled with throughout the week. They were free to talk about what was in their heart and mind and worship God together, gaining hope and strength to battle the complex challenges of daily life. They joined together weekly, where sharing a hot Korean meal after the Sunday worship became a very distinct Korean American Christian spiritual practice, one that is still prevalent among Korean American churches today.

Korean American immigrant demographics are changing very fast. There aren't many immigrants coming from Korea; the Korean American population now comes from the second and third generations. The majority of these Korean American young adults, who grew up in the church, live entirely different lives from their parent's generation. They are very comfortable speaking English, as it is their first language. Many of them have received higher education degrees and are beginning to settle into highly promising corporate careers in America. They are the children of the ethnic immigrant minority who are now entering mainstream American society. They are learning how to adjust and assimilate into the American culture. The Korean American immigrant church now has a large second-generation population of young adults and families. These are people who grew up and were educated in the U.S. People who now face a unique and complex cultural and identity challenge, as they seek to influence the world through a spiritual heritage rooted in a Korean American Christian identity.

One of the underlying issues of the Korean Immigrant Church is the lack of any investment into structures to support this generation as they transition into spiritual adulthood, structures that would enable them to flourish and thrive in the church in which they grew up. As a result, many leave their church of origin because they find that they cannot become rooted in the heavily Korean-speaking and dominantly Korean-cultured church.

Transitioning into adulthood and starting to build a career naturally cause stress and anxiety. On top of this stress and anxiety these young adults are missing a spiritual community to engage and process with; a community to be mentored by through the various seasons of life. The Korean American evangelical churches missed an opportunity to provide for our young adults as they grew up in our churches. Pastor Peter Scazzero recognizing this spiritual problem wrote, “We tolerate emotional immaturity, emphasize doing for God over being with God and spiritualizing conflicts covering over brokenness and weakness and failures”<sup>29</sup>

## **Conclusion**

The KACYA grew up experiencing a unique spiritual identity, where Korean cultural spirituality and values were infused into their westernized knowledge base spirituality. They all experienced the pressures of acculturation, assimilation as well as the survival mentality of their first-generation parents.

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<sup>29</sup> Peter Scazzero, *Emotionally Healthy Spirituality: It's Impossible to Be Spiritually Mature, While Remaining Emotionally Immature*, Updated edition (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2017), 6–12.

Many of them now, as a 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> generation Korean Americans, face their own challenges. How can they grow, flourish, and thrive within their ethnic identity, emotional maturity, Christian spirituality, and the God-given vision for their life. How can a Korean American young adult in the Korean American immigrant church have the opportunity to explore, reflect, and process their past life experiences, while being led to grow in their God-given identity, self-worth, and spiritual journey? The next section will explore the current Korean church ministry programs and methods for these challenges.

## SECTION 2: OTHER SOLUTIONS

### **Introduction**

The Korean American immigrant church has experienced consistent growth over the past couple of decades. However, one of the greatest concerns for church pastors and leaders now lies in the fact that young Christians, who were raised in the church, are leaving the church. According to David Kinnaman, “a generation of young Christians believe that the churches in which they were raised are not safe and hospitable places to express doubts.”<sup>30</sup> As the research in chapter one indicated, Korean American young adults, who grew up in the Korean immigrant church, confess that they are anxious and emotionally distraught. Many young adults who grew-up in the church find it difficult to make sense of their emotions, doubts, and lives. At the same time, they do not know how to integrate their faith. They feel trapped by emotional anxiety, emptiness, aimlessness, doubts, pain, guilt, and shame. They feel stuck because they have trivial knowledge as to how to work out those emotional and internal issues, they find that just reading their Bible and praying more isn’t working for them. They desire to grow in faith, to be more spiritually alive, and make sense of their emotions and their faith. Unfortunately, working out those spiritual struggles and learning how to practically navigate through life, while also living out their Christian identity, is out of their reach. The question this chapter

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<sup>30</sup> David Kinnaman and Aly Hawkins, *You Lost Me: Why Young Christians Are Leaving Church--and Rethinking Faith* (Grand Rapids, MI: BakerBooks, 2011), 11.

seeks to answer is, “How can the church help these anxious and emotionally struggling Korean American young adults?”

As the research moves forward and more in-depth, the need to create a formative space to help these young Korean American Christians grow in their given identity becomes evident. They need to experience the healing and freedom that comes from a holistic relationship with God. When they are given an opportunity to reflect on their own personal journey with God, to meditate on God and gain insight in an intentional and creatively spiritual formative space, Korean American young adults will be able to explore their inner world. In this space the Holy Spirit facilitates emotional processing and healing, enabling God’s truth to develop their faith and identity.

What are possible creative methods for these Korean American young adults to experience this type of spiritually formative space? This chapter will explore some of the current ministry models and approaches within the Korean American immigrant churches and explore various approaches that exist outside of church modalities to gain a greater understanding of the research discussed in chapter one.

### **Current Korean Immigrant Church Ministry Model**

In order to explore the current Korean American young adult church modalities, three pastors from three Korean American immigrant churches were interviewed. All three pastors are involved in young adult ministry in the San Francisco Bay area. Pastor Mickie Cho, lead pastor of a 2<sup>nd</sup> generation independent church (99 Church), was interviewed. Pastor Cho’s congregation consists mainly of 2<sup>nd</sup> generation Asian American young adults.

These were the questions used for the interview:

1. Please share about your ministry and your role.
2. What percentage of your congregation are young adults (18-35 years old)?
3. Describe your young adult ministry as well as any programs you have.
4. What are the struggles and distinctive characteristics you observe among Korean American young adults at your church?
5. Does your church talk about and engage with your young adults regarding their emotional health? If yes, in what way?
6. Does your church provide any structure for young adults to open up and process their inner/past journey? If yes, does this structure help them to understand themselves and grow holistically?

*Church A: New Hope Baptist Church<sup>31</sup>*

Pastor Brian has been leading Living Water English Ministry (EM) for the past ten years, an English-speaking ministry at New Hope Baptist Church (NHBC). NHBC currently has over 1000 Korean-speaking immigrant congregants (KM), while the Living Water EM has a little over 100. The majority of the EM congregation are second generation Korean Americans. Most Korean American immigrant churches follow this model of ministry, with the EM co-existing under the dominant and larger KM immigrant church. One unique characteristic of the Living Water EM is that 80% of the members are over 35 years old. Currently, only 15% of the Living Water population are young adults. And 5% are kids and youth.

The young adult population meets every Tuesday evening. This group eats and worships together, and then breaks into small groups for Bible study. They have two service times on Sunday: 9:30 a.m. and 11:30 a.m. The larger, and dominant group uses

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<sup>31</sup> Names of churches, pastors, and ministries have been changed.



the sanctuary on Sundays, so their Sunday service meets in a mobile tabernacle outside the main building.

Pastor Brian's parent's owned restaurants when he was growing up. This allowed him to experience the way in which eating together brings people together. He explained that when he was growing up no one left his house hungry. This has influenced the way he leads his congregation. Every Sunday all members of Living Water ministry gather at the church, where they fellowship together around the table. Pastor Brian also believes that the church should be intergenerational, a space where young adults can connect with older adults. So, after their meal, rather than dividing into different age groups, they fellowship freely. A place where they can learn and be plugged into various ministry opportunities. He believes that in this environment the younger generation can learn and be plugged into various church ministries, enabling them to grow as members of the church. Pastor Brian offers discipleship classes for those who sign up and prefers to meet people in a more organic way to disciple them.

Pastor Brian acknowledged that ministering to young adults has been more challenging in the past six years. As these young adults face greater cultural and social issues, they are more confused and struggle with both their identity and spiritual foundations. There are also more cultural divisions and challenges as the numbers of 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> generations of the Korean American population grows. Pastor Brian explained that many young adults express frustration as they struggle with the Korean hierarchical cultural expectations of younger serving older people, even among the Korean pastors. It is difficult for these young adults to learn about serving and sacrificing without the older generation modeling it. They are confused and frustrated when the young adults are

expected to serve more than the older generation. He stated that these young adults need guidance and mentorship as they navigate through these cultural differences and learn to make sense of the ethnic differences between spiritual and cultural expectations.

*Church B: Grace Korean Baptist Church*

Pastor John has been pastoring Grace Korean Baptist Church EM English-speaking congregation for over three years. They have around 60 members, and about half are young adults. As a full-time pastor at this Korean EM immigrant church, Pastor John also leads the youth ministry. The pattern of one full-time English-speaking pastor leading both youth ministry and EM ministry is prevalent within the Korean Immigrant church. It is the result of a lack of ministers and resources. Grace Korean Baptist Church has a joint, intergenerational, worship service on Sundays, with age-appropriate small group gatherings during the week.

According to Pastor John, the majority of young adult members are like “home buddies” who grew up together in the Korean immigrant church. He pointed out that many appreciate the Korean cultured church; however, they also struggle from the hurt they have experienced within the church. Korean first-generation immigrant spirituality tends to focus on deeds and sacrificial serving in the church. Pastor John explained that a “work and serve until you die” mentality, along with the emphasis on sacrificing and serving God, is a lifestyle that many emerging young adults find difficult to embrace. With these high expectations, young adults find it difficult to make a commitment to the church, which prevents them from growing spiritually. As a result of what these young adults have experienced, they tend to be overly cautious, setting strong boundaries to protect their space.

Pastor John pointed out that these young adults are struggling to find their identity and own their personal faith after they go off to college. Their faith is significantly challenged after they move to college. With their newly gained freedom, along with the reduced influence of their parents, they start to wrestle with the meaning of truly following Jesus. Oftentimes, they are anxious, easily becoming stressed about the many decisions and responsibilities that they have to make during this transitional phase of life. Many of these individuals struggle with loneliness, self-worth, lust, finances, career and calling, and relationship as they go through the significant and uncertain life stage where many changes are inevitable, and they have to make many important decisions that will set their foundation of life to come.

Currently, their young adult ministry is focused on small groups using the book *Experiencing God* for their material. They meet every other Friday for worship and fellowship, and they have a once-a-month intercessory prayer meeting. Grace Korean Baptist Church also focuses on outreach ministry, they regularly participate in community service, such as picking up trash and sharing food with people in need while they share the gospel with them. Lastly, Pastor John shared that he longs for relevant bible study material for Korean American young adults that allows for a study related to their own life contexts. Because of the unique culture and spirituality of Korean Americans, an ethical and spiritually reflective bible study curriculum could be used to discuss a biblical perspective that will build them up as the leaders for the next generation.

*Church C: Open Door Church (Presbyterian church)*

Open Door church is one of the biggest Korean American Immigrant churches in the San Jose area, with over 2000 members. Pastor Timothy is the new lead pastor of the English-speaking congregation. He recently moved up to the Bay area for this ministry position and has been leading this ministry for over one year. Going through the pandemic season and revitalizing the EM after a year without a pastor, has been tough for him. He has past experience of English Ministry church planting in the past, which has been helpful as he strives to restructure and lay a new foundation for this EM congregation. Currently, there are over 150 members, and about 35~40% are between the age of 18 and 35 years old. For Open Door, they have separated the young adult group into age 22 to 35 and created a separate college group. They recognize the different needs of college students, therefore, another associate pastor leads this group.

They have Young Adults Large Group meetings on the 1st and 3<sup>rd</sup> Friday of each month, where there is both teaching and fellowship. On the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> weeks, they have Young Adult Life Groups, which meet independently in their own small groups. They are going through the book *Habit of Grace* by David Mathis and focus on discipleship in the Word and emphasis on accountability to share lives and prayer. He believes that the message of the gospel in the church has been weakened and replaced by many other programs, and he wants to faithfully teach and center around the Word in his ministry. Pastor Timothy expressed that one of the big struggles of Korean American young adults is taking ownership of their faith. Their parents made them go to church all their lives, and as they go to college and begin to work in the world and have money and live their own lives, they start to wonder about their faith, whether it is genuinely rooted in the

gospel, in Jesus Christ, and in their identity. They doubt if what they do is rooted in traditions and family values and simply following what their parents do. In these times, young adults have many struggles as they re-evaluate their faith. Pastor Timothy sees that the cultural difference between Korean and American culture is yet another struggle for young adults at church. They express difficulty in working with the older Koreanized authoritative generation.

In the Korean culture, older aged male adults hold more power and authority, the younger adults are expected to follow and obey the decisions they make. Pastor Timothy is trying to set up a church environment in which young adults can freely approach the older adults and ask for help. Pastor Timothy observed that growing up in the Korean immigrant church, young adults often didn't have good mentors or relationships with older individuals. They didn't have a consistent youth pastor or older adult role-model who could be close and trustworthy, and model the Christian life for them. Many lacked a spiritual leader to walk alongside them.

For young adult emotional and mental health ministries, Open Door invites seminar speakers from the mental health field to bring awareness to the young adults, teaching them to care for their emotional and mental health. Pastor Timothy also created a list of local counselors who he has developed connections with so that he can connect those who need professional attention with the proper care and healing.

### **Independent Asian American 2nd Generation Church Model: 99 Church<sup>32</sup>**

This church plant is only three years old, and the majority of the church demographics are Asian Americans: Korean American, Chinese American, Vietnamese American, Filipino American, with a few black and white individuals. Pastor Mickey Cho and his wife Christa are Korean American who were both born and raised in America by immigrant parents within the Korean immigrant church. They had a desire to plant a church with a unique expression in their city of San Francisco. After three years of ministry, over 50 young adults attend the church. 99 church brings a lot of Asian American millennials who work in the tech company in San Francisco, and interestingly most of them came out from their own Asian American church because they were sick and tired of the Asian American Church.

I asked, “What is so unique about this church that attracts the new Millennials?” Pastor Mickey said, “I think a lot of people want to explore the ‘Why’ in their belief with their real-life topics such as politics, family, and sexuality...etc. They are looking for holistic living where emotions and family lives and our community lives are connected. We don’t spend five days at church. I guess for what people need right now, that’s kind of what they have expressed. They need a space to think about, reflect, and process. And, you know, like any deed focused spirituality, and they’ve been a little bit of burnout, and they want to actually think about the meaning and process the reason to live out their lives in faith and learning what faith looks like.”

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<sup>32</sup> With permission, Pastor Mickey and the 99 church names have not been changed.

He also mentions that they're longing for something new and fresh and not necessarily new in the sense that the church has never talked about it. But maybe there were conversations they weren't allowed to have in a church, or it just wasn't comfortable or safe. They are bringing the real-life conversation into the church and creating a space for the members to process and think about. He said that his church recently, during worship time, instead of praying or singing, had people paint with markers and a canvas to creatively express themselves. Another time they invited people to just write down their stories in a box, and everyone grabbed someone to hear each other's stories. They responded very well to this new way of worship being incorporated, and he is planning to incorporate more creative spaces to give them opportunities to share more of their stories. Pastor Mickey mentioned that young adults are seeking holistic health where spirituality includes emotional, mental, and physical well-being, and it is a wholesome embodied connection. He sees that all area of our personal life is important to God, and all of it is spiritual and is worship unto him. These Asian American young adults are struggling with having voiceless identities living in America, and more recently, they are discovering their voices are misrepresented or overrun by dominant white voices in America.

Pastor Mickey is passionate about creating spaces where people can be creative and innovative, even if it makes one feel uncomfortable in a church setting. Because creativity plays a big part in what we want to build in our community, he said that "Art is really important in our city of San Francisco specifically because people aren't allowed to be creative in our city. like even everything they create and work on. I don't think there are just spaces for people to create just for the sake of creating. Art brings us back into

childlike wonder, and I feel like we don't really have spaces for that in a city like ours with people in tech, and so for me, that's why art is very important to my congregation. I think because we need a space where you're creating not to meet a deadline where you're creating not to hit the bottom line and sell productivity, but just creating and tapping into your God-given creativity because that's who you are and tapping into childlike wonder without having to have an expressed outcome.”

### **Conclusion**

Many second and third-generation Korean American young adults, who grew up in America, face many unique challenges due to their ethnicity. During the critical developmental stages of their childhood and youth, they experienced assimilation and acculturation while living in their host country. Many of them grew up in a first-generation immigrant family dynamic with parents who were often absent from the home. They faced many cultural and financial barriers as they grew up. The barriers and separation included external cultural adaptation while also experiencing internal cultural gaps with their own parents. Oftentimes, they had to navigate the tension and confusion between the American culture they were born into, and their parent’s Korean ethnic values, beliefs, language, and cultural expectations.

The majority of the second and third generation of Korean American young adults grew up in the Korean immigrant church, because their parents belonged to a Korean immigrant church. The immigrant parents found restoration, renewal, hope, friendship, guidance, and comfort from their Korean-speaking and Korean cultured Korean church. The spiritual values, principles, traditions, and disciplines from this type of Korean immigrant church played a formational role for their foundational years. However, many



young adults are now seeking a church of their own, one that speaks their culture, values, and language. One where they can understand their own faith and grow deeper in their spirituality.

As they are growing up mentally, physically, and spiritually, they find themselves more and more longing to escape the “dogmatic rigidity, prejudice and small-mindedness, intolerance, and chronic levels of anger and hatred”<sup>33</sup> of their parent’s church. For their parent’s generation, the church functioned as an essential place for cultural connection in both life and business. The church played a central role as a holistic temple while living in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. They came to church and found fellowship, teaching, and spiritual community. The church became a place of spiritual connection, emotional healing, and a community center; it was a refuge from the harsh immigrant life.

However, the second and third generation of Korean American young adults grew up in a completely different environment. They do not speak Korean well, they received an American education, where they learned to think and speak like Americans. They watch Netflix, are well-educated, comfortable in a multi-cultural environment, and most importantly, they are no longer the helpless children of immigrants. They have entered the stage of life where they want to own their own faith, serve the church in their own culture, grow deeper practically with Jesus, and experience a holistic, daily Christian life. As Richard Rohr described, these Korean American young adults are just passing through the first half of life where “The first-half-of-life container, nevertheless, is constructed

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<sup>33</sup> David G Benner. *Soulful Spirituality: Becoming Fully Alive and Deeply Human* (Grand Rapids, Mi: Brazos Press, 2011), 3.

through impulse controls; traditions; group symbols; family loyalties; basic respect for authority; civil and church laws; and a sense of the goodness, value, and special importance of your country, ethnicity, and religion.”<sup>34</sup> They are entering into the second half of life when they must be supported, guided, and mentored, so that they can “actually blessing others in what they feel they must do, allow them to do what they must do, challenge them if they are hurting themselves or others.”<sup>35</sup> They need a creative and safe spiritual space where it allows them to reflect back on their personal and unique journey and help them reflect and own their decisions in future directions and visions.

Spiritual maturity and growth in faith are deeply interconnected to one’s emotional health and well-being. Anyone who wants to go upward for healing and growth can’t avoid walking the inward journey. Many of these Korean American young adults face high levels of stress, multiple areas of pressure, as well as responsibilities in their careers and work relationships. Peter Scazzero describes the gap between faith and reality as “a disconnect when we fail to apply our spirituality with Jesus to such leadership tasks as planning, team building, boundaries, endings, and a new beginning.”<sup>36</sup> In John 8:32, the Bible says, “You will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.” In order to experience true freedom and wholeness in Christ, it is vital that we look honestly at our inner world with the appropriate attention, awareness, and awakening. From here we move toward healing and forward in our spiritual growth. We often only focus on the surface and what is seen; however, we need to understand that what is seen is caused by

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<sup>34</sup> Richard Rohr, *Falling Upward: A Spirituality for the Two Halves of Life*, 1st ed (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2011), 141.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., 127.

<sup>36</sup> Peter Scazzero, *The Emotionally Healthy Leader: How Transforming Your Inner Life Will Deeply Transform Your Church, Team, and the World* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2015), 174.

many unseen layers of life. The church is called to bring healing and spiritual recovery into internal transformation and sanctification in our personal lives.

These interviews show that many Korean American Christian young adults are seeking a church rooted in authenticity and holistic spirituality. They are tired of traditional ritual and in-house-focused spirituality. They crave to be more alive and active through personal and real embodied spirituality where they can express and reflect their own identity. They have grown up in a world of new philosophies and technologies that challenges the current church even more than the generational gap, language gap, or cultural gap. The current young adult ministry is based on older, traditional ways of worship, discipleship, bible study, and fellowship. But the emerging generation is completely different from the previous generations. According to Dan Kimball's book *The Emerging Church*, "they view spirituality from a pluralistic viewpoint, they are going to be drawn more to the mystical and experiential over the rational, their view of sexuality is going to be much more open and tolerant, and they are going to view Christianity as the negative religion of finger-pointers."<sup>37</sup>

This means that the new emerging young generation, including Korean American young adults, will desperately need an intentional and experiential safe space for them to pay attention and learn who they are. This is especially true for the second and third-generation Korean American young adults, those who grew up in a Korean immigrant church setting. It was good for them to grow up learning about God through bible studies and sermons when they were young. And now, they are in a new transitional phase of life where they need to discover their unique identity and calling by revisiting their past and

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<sup>37</sup> Dan Kimball, *The Emerging Church: Vintage Christianity for New Generations* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2003), 63.

experiencing a holistic embodied spirituality. They need a formative spiritual space where they can encounter and experience a sacred place - a holy place. Kimball, who has been incorporating interactive and expressive worship for the younger emerging generation, reasons that the church needs to have a more holistic view of spiritual formation and intentionally provide more space where the younger generation can freely and creatively encounter and experience God to bless their lost generation. In his book *Sacred Space: A Hands-On Guide to Creating Multisensory Worship Experiences for Youth Ministry* he states, “Every sense is involved: you could smell the burning sacrifices and incense, hear the trumpets and temple choirs, see the transcendent architecture of soaring pillars and expansive courtyards.”

Multiple creative modalities and programs exist outside of church that help people find emotional healing and enrichment. Art and creativity are two examples of those resources, resources that many evangelical churches have avoided while they focus on discipleship and knowledge-focused learning at church. The next chapter will explore how art and creative space are useful resources for the spiritual formation, healing, and wholeness of Korean American Christian Young Adults.

## SECTION 3:

### THESIS

#### **Introduction**

The church of Gethsemane, built in the garden of Gethsemane in Jerusalem, commemorates Jesus and his agony. People from all nations come here to experience first-hand the garden where Jesus spent the hours before his arrest. Before walking into the church, one experiences the garden, the olive trees and mosaic walls. Inside the church, you encounter beautiful dome ceilings, floral mosaic tiles, stained glass windows, the stone where Jesus laid to pray, and historical remnants of the early Christianity.

The beauty of the architecture and the art come together to create a profound, mysterious, and wonderful experience as you walk in the church. Standing in the beauty and history of this place, it is easy to be filled with awe and wonder. The beautiful expressions of art, murals, glass, stonework, and architecture create a transformative experience. Reflecting on Jesus, who went through the agonizing pain in the garden of Gethsemane before His crucifixion, enables a deeply moving experience. It allows for the story of Gethsemane to become a vivid and personal story.

In the beginning of Francis A. Schaeffer's classic book *Art and the Bible*, he asks the question, "What is the place of art in the Christian life?"<sup>38</sup> We are familiar with Sunday worship songs derived from biblical poetry, but people find it difficult to connect art with modern worship in the evangelical church. Generally, no one disagrees with the

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<sup>38</sup> Francis A. Schaeffer and Michael Card, *Art and the Bible*, 2nd edition (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Books, 2006), 13.

impact of art on the human soul - how art is expressed and used as a very powerful agent to communicate, connect, express, and transform the deeper places of the human soul. It invites people into transcendent spiritual and holistic experiences. Art has impacted and transformed individuals, cultures, societies, and the world throughout history. However, we often don't see much interaction with art and creative work in the modern evangelical church. It is rare to see art used as part of spiritual formation in the current Korean American immigrant church. The Gen Z population in the Korean American young adult demographic is seeking a way to meaningfully experience God and encounter holistic spiritual formation. What does God say about art and artmaking in the Bible? What is a historical and theological understanding of art? What are the gifts of art in spiritual formation? Why is it important to bring back art in the spiritual formation church space? How can art be used as a possible platform for young adults to connect to God and tap into the invisible, sacred, spiritual world? These are the questions this chapter will explore.

### *Art and Christian theology*

The development of art and Christianity was always closely infused over the centuries. Early Christianity and art continued to form together and grew rapidly into the 16th-century renaissance era. The break from art in modern evangelical Christianity dates to the time of the reformation. William Dyrness, the author of *Visual Faith*, explains that both "John Calvin and Martin Luther preferred a nominalist and mystical way of thinking about God that owed a great deal to the medieval mystical tradition. This tradition sought simplicity and focused on inward and individual piety...it is through

the pure preaching of the Word that one comes to proper faith.”<sup>39</sup> The cultural movements of the reformation era brought a change from religious and objective faith to a personal and pious faith. The modern innovations of the reformation era, such as the printing press, the appearance of Scriptures in the common language, and the movements of reformed theology, all worked together to “develop a particular form of piety and an accompanying worship experience, which included sitting in pews, closing one’s eyes during prayers...in such a setting, images necessarily played no role, in fact, they were usually perceived as a distraction from the inward focus on the preached (and sung) Word.”<sup>40</sup> Calvin recognized the value of visual arts as a source of pleasure, but would not allow the art to be in sanctuary.<sup>41</sup> With the churches emphasis on piety and inward spirituality while emphasizing the supremacy of the Word of God, slowly the influence of art and its appreciation in the church diminished. This brought more skepticism and separation of visual art in the church.

However, as the twentieth century came, the reform Scottish theologian P.T. Forsyth began the theological conversation around the importance of art and faith. In his book, *Religion in Recent Art*, Forsyth claimed that “no religion can be true religion if it does not encourage art.”<sup>42</sup> This led to many more in-depth discussions and reflections

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<sup>39</sup> William A. Dyrness, *Visual Faith: Art, Theology, and Worship in Dialogue* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2001), 52.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

<sup>41</sup> J. W. De Gruchy, “Christianity, Art and Transformation,” *Acta Theologica* 40 (January 2020): 6–27, doi:<http://dx.doi.org/10.18820/23099089/actat.sup29.1>.

<sup>42</sup> Peter Taylor Forsyth, *Religion in Recent Art: Expository Lectures on Rossetti, Burne Jones, Watts, Holman Hunt and Wagner* (London : Hodder and Stoughton, 1901), 145, <http://archive.org/details/ReligionInRecentArt>.

regarding art as an inseparable part of the Christian church and faith. Theologian Karl Rahner, Paul Tillich, George Bell, John Dillenberger, and H.R. Rookmaaker continued to explore the role of visual art and beauty in Christian faith and formation.

Ronald Rolheiser, in his book *The Holy Longing*, emphasizes the current struggle of Christian spirituality as a place of unbalance. He points out the false dichotomy between western religion, eros, and ecclesiology. This false dichotomy resulted in a divorce between religion and spirituality, “Religion got to keep God and the secular got to keep sex. The secular got passion and God got chastity.” Unfortunately, this kind of either/or thinking created a rigid path for faith and life. There is an inherent nature of spiritual energy in our soul that is from God, but people feel unbalanced between the tensions of holding the two worlds of faith and life together at the same time. Rolheiser points out that we struggle and search for finding a balance that lies in “a proper relationship to energy, especially creative, erotic, spiritual energy.”<sup>43</sup> God creates desire and beauty, but we are afraid of holding the image and creativity in worship because of the fear of idolatry and judgment.

### *Biblical Understanding of Art*

Genesis 1 tells the story of the creation of the universe. It points to God as the Almighty Creator who brought the universe into existence, including both the visible physical world and the invisible spiritual world. God created the heavens and the earth. The Hebrew verb בָּרָא *bā·rā*, translated as created, means “to form and to make something

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<sup>43</sup> Ronald Rolheiser, *The Holy Longing: The Search for a Christian Spirituality* (New York: Doubleday, 1999), 27.



that has not been in existence before.”<sup>44</sup> Almighty God בָּרָא created the world out of God’s own creative ability.

Each day, God was passionately involved in the creation process as a maker and originator of life. On the sixth day, God determined to create human beings, reflecting the image of God. Genesis 1, records “Let us make humankind in our image, according to our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the wild animals of the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth.”<sup>45</sup> Genesis 1 reveals that God is passionate about creating, and every single human being bears the Imago Dei (Image of God). God’s nature is not only about imagination of ideas, but it actively involves the work of art, beauty, and creative-making. Each day God declared the creative work to be good. God’s life-giving energy originated and overflowed out from God to create something meaningful and magnificent.

If God is the ultimate creator who is dedicated to imagining and creating, then what about humanity who bears the divine image? God ordained and commissioned the creative and imaginative capacities of humanity for continuing the work of expressing and praising the glory of God. N.T. Wright argues that the main vocation of humanity is “image-bearing” - reflecting the Creator’s wise stewardship of the world and reflecting the praises of all creation back to its maker. He writes, “creation itself is understood as a kind of Temple, a heaven-and-earth duality, where humans function as the ‘image-bearers’ in the cosmic Temple.” Wright argues that God created humanity as the “the

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<sup>44</sup> James A. Swanson, “1343 Bā·rā,” in *Dictionary of Biblical Languages with Semantic Domains: Hebrew (Old Testament)*, Logos Bible Software (Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, 1997).

<sup>45</sup> Genesis 1:26 (NIV)

people who are called to stand at the dangerous but exhilarating point where heaven and earth meet.” As the stewards of God’s creation, humanity is “called not just to keep certain moral standards in the present and to enjoy God’s presence here and hereafter, but to celebrate, worship, procreate, and take responsibility within the rich, vivid developing life of creation.”<sup>46</sup> If our vocation on earth, as NT Wright put it, is the cosmic Temple, we need to continue to be creative and develop and nurture the world as wise stewards.

Richard Viladesau, author of *Theology and the Arts*, affirms the fact that God is the “horizon of every experience of beauty which explains why even the tragic emotions can be experienced in art as beautiful, and why there is at the heart of every deep aesthetic experience an intense feeling of striving toward something beyond the moment.”<sup>47</sup> On earth, where we see the reflections of God as a great creator, we are called to participate and be a present in the creative beauty of Earth. Humanity is called to join in the purpose of creating, developing, and nurturing the life of creation to reflect God. We become genuinely human when we live like Creator God and join in God’s creative work. Schaffer writes that if Christianity is true, then it involves the whole person, including his or her intellect and creativeness.<sup>48</sup> Our vocational calling to be image-bearers must reflect the whole person in all of life, including artistic expressions and creative art.

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<sup>46</sup> N. T. Wright, *The Day the Revolution Began: Reconsidering the Meaning of Jesus’s Crucifixion* (San Francisco, CA: Harper One, 2016), chap. 4.

<sup>47</sup> Richard Viladesau, *Theology and the Arts: Encountering God Through Music, Art, and Rhetoric* (New York: Paulist Press, 2000), 43.

<sup>48</sup> Schaeffer and Card, *Art and the Bible*, 16.

God not only creates the world, but God's redemptive work is also expressed in the creative artistry of the tabernacle and temple of Israel, the dwelling place of God. God is the initiator, master planner, and creator who loves and used images, beauty, and creative space in order to communicate God's will and sanctify a person's faith. The Hebrew Scriptures are full of descriptions of God ordering and using the skills of humanity to build God's tabernacle and the Temple. For example, in Exodus 26, God commanded Moses to make the tabernacle, giving specific instructions for its design. The lampstand, for example, "Make a lampstand of pure gold. Hammer out its base and shaft, and make its flowerlike cups, buds and blossoms of one piece with them."<sup>49</sup> God also gave instructions for skilled workers to create the curtains, with specific colors of yarn, as well as the image of Cherubim. God delights and pursues beauty as well as creative artistry. In so doing, God invites humanity to experience glory.

The Bible is full of accounts and testimonies from individuals who encounter God through art. Viladesau describes that "beauty, specifically in the form of art, can be for the Christian a revelation of God and a way to God."<sup>50</sup> God used the visual imagery of stars in the sky to promise God's blessing on Abraham. In Exodus 3, Moses encounters God in a burning bush. This was a powerful and transformative moment for Moses as he encountered God's vision for his life to lead and serve the Israelites. Over many centuries, numerous art forms of the burning bush have been used to transform and call many Christian leaders into the work of leading and serving God's people. God used an image of the burning bush to communicate to Moses many truths that Moses would need

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<sup>49</sup> Exodus 25:31 NIV

<sup>50</sup> Viladesau, *Theology and the Arts*, 57.

to hold onto in order to carry out and accomplish his life calling. The fire represented God, and the weak and fragile bush represented Moses himself. This powerful image of Exodus 3 has been used to bring deep encounters, renewal, and transformation to many Christian individuals and churches all over the world. Makoto Fujimura, the author of *Art and Faith*, describes our journey in life to be a “journey to know God that requires not just ideas and formation, but actual making, to translate ideas into real objects and physical movements.”<sup>51</sup>

The Church represents the body of Christ, which is the temple of God in the new covenant. One of the fundamental restorations of God’s plan for humanity is seen through the stories of the temple throughout the Bible. God commissions Moses and the Israelites to build a tabernacle and then establishes worship practices for them in the wilderness. Coming into King David and Solomon’s era, these practices are moved from the tabernacle to the temple. In this special place of God’s dwelling, God commissions images, colors, and decorative elements used for worship.

The Imago Dei, reflected in humanity, involved the use of art to bring people together into a community with God and neighbor. The making of the tabernacle and temple included a greater purpose to encounter and see the visual beauty and the magnificent glory of God. God was the original designer of the temple and tabernacle. Viladesau explains that God used art to serve a purpose, “art always serves beauty, and beauty is a delight in form, and form is the key to organic life since no living thing can exist without it, so that every work of art, including tragedy, express the joy of

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<sup>51</sup> Makoto Fujimura and N. T. Wright, *Art and Faith: A Theology of Making* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2021), 6.

existence.”<sup>52</sup> It was God who commission the people to the work of the temple and the establishing of worship practices in order to restore the broken fellowship between God and the people. All of the arts, architecture, and beauty of the temple and tabernacle represented the visual image of the love, mercy, grace, forgiveness, sovereignty, and power of God. In our modern society, the beauty, that reflects God’s character, is lost. This is also lost in the way art and creative-making are absent in the churches redemptive practices. David Taylor, the author of *For the Beauty of the Church*, argues, “the majority of recent energy around the arts has focused on artworks outside of public worship. This makes it very difficult for artists, pastors, and congregations to imagine good possibilities for arts that contribute to public assemblies for worship, particularly in Christian traditions with little experience with or historical reflections upon the role of arts in worship.”<sup>53</sup> The Bible and Christian history reveal that art and creative work have been designed as a platform for the body of Christ in the worship of God.

One way to look at the Bible is through the theology of redemption and incarnation. The true beauty of the Gospel that inspires, saves, and transforms a person to live a life dedicated to the Lordship of Jesus Christ comes through the image of the cross. The saving work of God can be imaged in the crucifixion, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. The image of the crucifixion and the death of Jesus Christ portrays the reality of our disordered, fallen, and broken world. Alan Storkey explains, “The Bible teaches that both I and what is out there – nature – are in relationship to God. If we leave

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<sup>52</sup> Viladesau, *Theology and the Arts*, 42.

<sup>53</sup> Luci Shaw, *For the Beauty of the Church: Casting a Vision for the Arts*, ed. W. David O. Taylor, Illustrated edition (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2010), 48.

God out of the picture, we leave out the binding force that holds all things in tension.

The broken relationship with God means that we also live in a broken relationship with the earth.”<sup>54</sup> The image of Jesus Christ in Isaiah 53 reveals the existence of rejection, suffering, pain, sorrow, grief, affliction, piercing, and crushing of life that comes from a broken relationship with God.

The redemption and restoration of our relationship with God are discovered through the mystery and the beauty of the resurrection of Jesus Christ. The beauty and hope found in the resurrection has served as one of the greatest inspirations for art in the history of humanity. The incarnation of God’s beauty is clearly communicated through the image of the crucifixion, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Brand and Chaplin, the authors of *Art and Soul*, remind us that “God did not give up on rebellious humanity after the fall. He never has, and he never will. Patiently he formed a people who began to understand and worship the one true God...Eventually, when the time was right, he sent his son Jesus.”<sup>55</sup> This Imago Dei, who creates life out of nothing, who creates life out of death, and who creates hope out of the world’s greatest injustice, is the true form of art and the definition of beauty. This redemptive and restoring message of the gospel needs to be freely expressed and experienced in modern Christianity.

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<sup>54</sup> Hilary Brand and Adrienne Chaplin, *Art & Soul: Signposts for Christians in the Arts*, Illustrated edition (Carlisle, UK: Piquant, 2001), 49.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid.

### *Historical Understanding of Art*

Christians in every era struggled to express their unique identity through mediums of art. They all tried to visualize what they thought and felt as they endured persecution, hardships, triumphs, and successes in their world. St Augustine wrote:

What do I love when I love my God? Not physical beauty or the splendor of time; not the radiance of earthly light, so pleasant to our eyes; not the sweet melodies of harmony and song; not the fragrant smell of flowers, perfumes, and spices; not manna or honey; not limbs such as the flesh delights to embrace. These are not the things that I love when I love my God. And yet, when I love him, I do indeed love a certain kind of light, a voice, a fragrance, a food, an embrace; but this love takes place in my inner person, where my soul is bathed in light that is not bound by space; when it listens to sound that time never takes away; when it breathes in a fragrance which no breeze carries away; when it tastes food which no eating can diminish; when it clings to an embrace which is not broken when desire is fulfilled. This is what I love when I love my God.<sup>56</sup>

Just as St. Augustine wrestled with the inner workings of the image of God, Christians throughout the centuries have been expressing and creating art to express the love of God and love for God. Another way to look at Christian history is that there has been a constant struggle in humanity to express, articulate, and communicate the activity of God within us and this world. Fretheim describes Christian art as an expression of God's relationship:

God's relationship with the world is such that God, from the beginning, chooses not to be the only one who has creative power and the capacity, indeed the obligation, to exercise it. God certainly takes the initiative in distributing this power to the creatures, and God is the one who invites their participation in the use of power. But, having done so, God is committed to this way of relating to them in such a way that forfeiting or suspending this role is not a divine option. God is a power-sharing God,

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<sup>56</sup> St Augustine, *The Confessions, Revised: Saint Augustine*, trans. Maria Boulding (Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 2002), 10:6.

and God will be faithful to that way of relating to those created in the divine image.<sup>57</sup>

Not only are human beings created in the image of God, but we are also created to be the image of God, this is our role and responsibility in this world. Vincent Van Gogh, once a preacher and missionary in the mining town in Belgium, experienced many failures as a minister before he turned to art. He expressed that art connects people to God: ‘To try and understand the real significance of what the great artists, the serious masters, tell us in their masterpieces, that leads to God.’<sup>58</sup> Van Gogh saw the transcendent connection of art to God as he tried to deeply appreciate the paintings.

In the history of Christian art, one of the struggles and arguments against the use of art in the church revolved around its use of idolization and replacement of holiness. The art forms and holy articles became objects of worship, substitutes for God’s place in our hearts. In the Eastern Orthodox Church, holy art and objects became symbols of replacement for the holy presence of God. David Brown, in his book *God and Enchantment of Place*, mentions “the result has been in the East great insistence that the divine presence should not be confused with what appears on the board itself, but rather be viewed as a vehicle for participation in what remains essentially a transcendent reality – It is thus holy by participation rather than holy in itself.”<sup>59</sup> During the medieval period, sacraments and art were intertwined with magic and sorcery. The movement to eradicate

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<sup>57</sup> Terence E. Fretheim, *God and World in the Old Testament: A Relational Theology of Creation* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2005), 85.

<sup>58</sup> Vincent van Gogh, *Van Gogh; a Self-Portrait: Letters Revealing His Life as a Painter*, Dutton Paperback; (New York: E.P. Dutton, 1963), 51.

<sup>59</sup> David Brown, *God and Enchantment of Place: Reclaiming Human Experience* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 41.



false worship and magic relegated many objects related to mysticism and sacramental traditions into rationalization and led to the eradication of images in the church. John Calvin was more direct in opposing the use of images in church,

We must surely infer this general doctrine, that whatever men learn of God from images is futile, indeed false. If anyone takes exception that it was those who were misusing images for impious superstition who were rebuked by the prophets, I admit it is so. But I add, what is clear to all, that the prophets totally condemn the notion, taken as axiomatic by the papists, that images stand in place of books.<sup>60</sup>

He claimed that even if the usages of images contained nothing evil, it still had no value for teaching because the proper faith can only come from an inward faith in the pure preaching of the Scripture.<sup>61</sup>

Up to the reformation era, the church of God was filled with multiple expressions of art. The Hellenistic period, the Medieval period, and the Renaissance period flourished with art and beauty that filled the Church and impacted the lives of people of faith. Starting with the Reformation, visual arts were implicated in two controversies. According to Cameron Anderson, the author of *The Faithful Artist*, art in the Church “represented the considerable wealth and holdings of the church, a symbol of its oft-abused privilege. But more than this, the production of devotional images- especially efforts to produce the likenesses of God – seemed to defy the biblical injunction against adding or subtracting a single word from Holy Scripture...Protestant reformers such as Zwingli and Calvin regarded the creaturely use of material forms to represent God’s

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<sup>60</sup> Calvin, Jean, John T. McNeill, Ford Lewis. Battles, and John T. (John Thomas) McNeill, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2006.), bk. I, xi, 5.

<sup>61</sup> Dyrness, *Visual Faith*, 53.

ineffable nature a blasphemy.”<sup>62</sup> The shift in the theology and philosophies in modern and post-modern Christianity began to influence distancing and separation of art from evangelical Christianity.

The life-giving and redemptive work of God’s plan is reflected by various Christian artists throughout Christian history. According to Fretheim, “the language of salvation has reference to both the effects of redemptive actions as well as to the effects of distinguishable acts of continuing creation...Redemption does not do away with the life-giving effects of the Creator but stands in the service of them. The objective of God’s work in redemption is to free people to be what they were created to be, the effect of which is named salvation.”<sup>63</sup> For example, the Early Renaissance period initiated a reform movement within the structures of the buildings – a new form of art to express the new theology of the new era. According to Dyrness, the Gothic cathedrals became a concrete expression of the holistic worldview of the church:

These great structures...became the center of the social and religious life of the community but were actually intended to be a microcosm of the world at large...An image of the last judgment was frequently located over the central portal of the cathedral...the space of the church represented the ark of salvation...images of the prophets and apostles, on whose word rested the hope of God’s people...the body and blood of Christ, the bread of heaven and the cup of salvation, were distributed...together they represented a unified worldview that encompassed every creature and all ages of Christian history.<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>62</sup> Cameron J. Anderson, *The Faithful Artist: A Vision for Evangelicalism and the Arts* (IVP Academic, 2016), 132.

<sup>63</sup> Fretheim, *God and World in the Old Testament*, 34–35.

<sup>64</sup> Dyrness, *Visual Faith*, 40.

Housed in Duckwon Art Gallery, in Seoul Korea,<sup>65</sup> is a life-sized painting by Shin-ho Lee<sup>66</sup> covering one of the gallery's walls. Shin-ho Lee beautifully expressed and depicted the sound of a mountain with ink-wash paintings. It is a powerful piece of art. As you stand before it, its powerful presence touches your soul. Images create emotional and cognitive connections. Ever since the beginning of time, people have expressed themselves through art. It was a way of communication and bringing meaning to life. NT Wright, in his book *For All God's Worth*, encourages us to internalize the God encountering moments:

Hold the moment in your mind. And ask yourself: what does this beauty do to you? It enriches you; yes. It warms you inside, yes. It makes you more alive, yes. It makes you stronger, yes. It makes you, perhaps, a little humble: you didn't cause this beauty, you didn't make it, it just happened and happened to you. Yes. And what does this beauty call out from you? Gratitude — of course; delight — yes, naturally; a sense of awe — well, perhaps; a sense of longing for something beyond, something just out of reach — quite possibly, though if your experience of beauty was the smell of a good meal I hope it didn't stay out of reach for too long. What about — worship? Does beauty call out worship from you?<sup>67</sup>

Art has been used in historical context to represent the voice of an individual to the voices of the community. Christian paintings such as Trinity with the Virgin and St. John by Massacio, The Resurrection of the Flesh by Luca Signorelli, The Starry Night by Vincent van Gogh, and The Madonna and the Child with a book by Raffaello Sanzio represented a voice for the voiceless. It is no coincidence that “religion and spirituality

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<sup>65</sup> This instillation was held in the mid 1990's

<sup>66</sup> <https://m.blog.naver.com/lotuslhr/221610290101>

<sup>67</sup> N. T. Wright, *For All God's Worth: True Worship and the Calling of the Church*, New edition (Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2014), 3–4.

have progressively come to be identified with the inner world”<sup>68</sup> in each era of Christian history. Every museum in America displays a rich history of Christian art that emphasizes God’s character and God’s call for each generation of a different era. Christian art history visibly displays Christian theology and its impact on society to communicate the passion of Christ expressed differently in each era of history. Richard Viladesau, in his book *The Beauty of the Cross*, explained:

Our consideration of late Gothic art, the theology of nominalism, and the piety of the devotion to Moderna have brought us to the threshold of the Renaissance and the Reformation. Luther was a Conon of St. Augustine and inherited the theology of the nominalists. The art of the quattrocento, in which the imitation of nature became the criterion for visual representation, is directly descended from Giotto. The essential forms of graphic representation of passion were established in a way that would endure until the twentieth century.<sup>69</sup>

Currently, the emerging generation struggles to define balance in their life. What does it mean to balance family and work? How do I balance life’s complexities such as health, career, money, and marriage? And for the modern Christian, the most difficult question is how to live out one’s faith in everyday life? Ronald Rolheiser views “good spirituality” as a matter of channeling our eros correctly.<sup>70</sup> The question of balancing faith and daily life, the question of how to be more intimate with God, and the question of how to grow deeper in one’s faith, perhaps lies in the search to seek and encounter the invisible God. The modern world is seeking for a spirituality that reveals God, not for organized religion. Art can be used in the modern evangelical Church, especially in the Korean

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<sup>68</sup> Dyrness, *Visual Faith*, 62.

<sup>69</sup> Shaw, *For the Beauty of the Church*, 172.

<sup>70</sup> Ronald Rolheiser, *The Holy Longing: The Search for a Christian Spirituality*, 1st pbk. ed (New York: Image, 2014), 33.

American immigrant church. Used as a platform to seek and encounter God. Dryness suggests that art is “the response to the call of creation that all are called to hear...art is special in a way where God’s revelation of himself and the call of creation to praise him in response...Human art, when it is good, manages some echo of this reality”<sup>71</sup> of our daily life in God. Many Korean American young adults are seeking holistic health and spiritual growth. They want their faith to be fully integrated into their daily life and desire to have a meaningful connection with everyday life. Many young adults who grew up in faith are seeking to be whole and fully alive before God, but simply feel detached and separated from God. Unfortunately, many evangelical churches are good at teaching the gospel and producing Bible study material to equip and teach people about God but fail to help young people know and encounter Christ in an emotional and transforming way. A practical workshop that involves mediums of art to create, reflect, and meditate on God in their life, can be used by the Holy Spirit to satisfy our deep longings to know and hear God.

### **Art and The Brain**

Overwhelming stress, trauma, and deep pain happen all around us all the time. According to research by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, “one in five Americans was sexually molested as a child; one in four was beaten by a parent to the point of a mark being left on their body; and one in three couples engages in physical violence. A quarter of us grew up with alcoholic relatives, and one out of eight witnessed

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<sup>71</sup> Dryness, *Visual Faith*, 101.

their mother being beaten or hit.”<sup>72</sup> This is the gloomy reality that ministers must face every day. The everyday people we interact with daily all carry pains, wounds, deep scars, and trauma that they carry tucked deeply within their hearts and minds. The horrific and painful experiences cause people to be stuck in their hardened and frozen emotions. According to online survey and narrative research gathered for this paper, Korean American young adults shared that they often feel numb and distant from God. Dr. Bessel Van der Kolk gained new understanding of the impact and manifestations of trauma through his lifetime work of researching and working with trauma patients. He came to understand that “overwhelming experiences affect our innermost sensations and our relationship to our physical reality – the core of who we are...Trauma results in a fundamental reorganization of the way mind and brain manage perceptions. It changes not only how we think and what we think about, but also our capacity to think.”<sup>73</sup>

Whenever stress or trauma is triggered by images, sounds, or thoughts related to their painful or traumatic experiences, the part of the brain called the amygdala takes control and activates the body’s stress response in order to warn and protect us from impending danger. Located in the left frontal lobe of the brain is the region called the Broca’s area. When Broca’s region is impacted by certain triggers and stress responses, you cannot put your thoughts and feelings into words. When things are normal and ordinary, the two brains, left and right, work together to process and put things in order. “The left brain remembers facts, statistics, and the vocabulary of events...The right brain

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<sup>72</sup> Bessel A Van der Kolk, *The Body Keeps the Score: Brain, Mind, and Body in the Healing of Trauma* (New York, NY: Penguin Books, 2015), 1.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid., 21.

stores memories of sound, touch, smell, and the emotions they evoke.”<sup>74</sup> People who have gone through deeply painful and traumatic experiences suffer from deactivation of the two parts of the brain working together and leaves them feel numb, detached, lost, and confused. They describe their life’s feelings and spirituality as stuck and frozen which makes them stuck in their spiritual growth because they simply can’t integrate new experiences into their lives. In order to grow in one’s faith over the years, cognitive knowledge is required in order to transform and be known as truth through an experiential reality. Taking on the new self in Christ and moving on from the old self requires faith and strength to overcome different nervous systems and reorganization of inner chaos.

Can art be used as a channel and a space for people to experience a new reality in God? Can art be used so that a person might engage with movement of the Holy Spirit that will bring newness into one’s body, mind, and the brain that leads to healing and sanctification? In recent developments in neuroscience and evidence-based practice (EBP) research discovered traditional narrative and cognitive focused therapy isn’t effective for trauma related patients. Many of these children and adult patients cannot “provide a narrative when there is not a discrete traumatic event, they have incomplete recall of what happened, or their attachment issues are complex.”<sup>75</sup> When it comes to treating traumatized children, expressed therapy that uses art to help the child express is widely and successfully used. Juliet King explains that “treatment interventions that

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<sup>74</sup> Ibid., 45.

<sup>75</sup> Juliet L. King, ed., *Art Therapy, Trauma, and Neuroscience: Theoretical and Practical Perspectives* (New York: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2016), 141.

bypass the severely maltreated child's habitual or defensive modes of response are needed, and these kinds of interventions are often expressively based. The goal of expressive therapy is to support the client's coping skills at his or her emotional-developmental level, and to use art to help the child express that which is impossible to verbalize...In particular, traumatic memories are stored in the right hemisphere, making verbal declarative memory of the trauma more difficult."<sup>76</sup> Successful therapy often involves going beyond processing traumas and problems. It needs to help the wounded to replace old and bad memories into a new promise of newfound realities. Expressive art therapy is used as a playful platform where people can interact in order to unlock what words cannot express and take in new ideas and truths that will bring new identities and healings.

One of the most important responsibilities in the design of our brain is in its function to ensure survival. In order to do that, Dr. Van der Kolk learned that the brain needs to: "(1) generate internal signals that register what our bodies need, such as food, rest, protection, sex, and shelter; (2) create a map of the world to point us where to go to satisfy those needs; (3) generate the necessary energy and actions to get us there; (4) warn us of dangers and opportunities along the way; and (5) adjust our actions based on the requirements of the moment."<sup>77</sup> This means that our brain has been constantly working throughout a person's life to process, protect, and guide against suffering, pain, danger, and threats. But over the course of life, people experience painful and traumatic circumstances that disrupts the healthy development of our brains. The complex brain

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<sup>76</sup> Ibid., 142.

<sup>77</sup> Van der Kolk, *The Body Keeps the Score*, 55.



structures that play a role in essential functions are disrupted, disconnected, and disengaged whenever “psychological problems occur when our internal signals don’t work, when our maps don’t lead us where we need to go, when we are too paralyzed to move, when our actions do not correspond to our needs, or when our relationships break down.”<sup>78</sup>

The brain develops from the bottom up. We are born with the most primitive part of the brain called the reptilian brain. The reptilian brain is “responsible for all the things that newborn babies can do: eat, sleep, wake, cry, breathe, feel temperature, hunger, wetness, and pain; and rid the body of toxins by urinating and defecating.”<sup>79</sup> Then from this baby brain, the limbic system which is right above the reptilian brain, begins to take off holding our emotions, monitoring danger, deciding and judging what is pleasurable or scary, and becoming the command post for managing the complex and challenging world around us. Dr. Van der Kolk explains that together the reptilian brain and limbic system make up the emotional brain – “the emotional brain is at the heart of the central nervous system, and its key task is to look out for your welfare...have a huge influence on the small and large decisions we make throughout our lives: what we choose to eat, where we like to sleep and with whom, what music we prefer, whether we like to garden or sing in a choir, and whom we befriend and whom we detest.”<sup>80</sup> Neuroscience explains the composition of our brains and the lifetime development of our inner brains drive, influence, and impact how we feel, interpret, perceive, respond, think, act, and relate to

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<sup>78</sup> Ibid.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid., 56.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid., 57.

others day to day. Overwhelming experiences, deep pains, and trauma from the past leaves our present emotions, thoughts, spirituality, and soul in a place of fragmentation, dislocation, and dissociation.

Henri Nouwen, the author of *The Wounded Healer*, reminds ministers they are “called to be the wounded healer, the ones who must not only look after their own wounds, but at the same time be prepared to heal the wounds of others.”<sup>81</sup> The calling of a minister involves compassion and empathy in order to hear the stories that people have stuck in their hearts, and need to share. On many occasions, people need to share something that is stuck in their hearts and minds and need help in verbalizing and conceptualizing exactly what is hidden there, things which stems from those past overwhelming experiences. In the art world, there is a phenomenon called visual indeterminacy – a perceptual phenomenon that occurs when a viewer is presented with a seemingly meaningful visual stimulus that denies easy or immediate identification. When it comes to spirituality and growth in faith, many suffer from what this paper suggests is spiritual indeterminacy.

Spiritual formation of a person’s soul involves “our continuing response to the reality of God’s grace shaping us into the likeness of Jesus Christ, through the work of the Holy Spirit, in the community of faith, for the sake of the world...it is not a program or project or course that is completed in a few weeks, but rather is a lifelong journey of transformation.”<sup>82</sup> When the spiritual formation and growth of a person becomes stuck

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<sup>81</sup> Henri J. M. Nouwen, *The Wounded Healer: Ministry in Contemporary Society*, 1st Image ed (New York, NY: Image Books, 02), 88.

<sup>82</sup> Jeffrey P. Greenman and George Kalantzis, *Life in the Spirit: Spiritual Formation in Theological Perspective* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2010), 24.

and lost the person experiences a state of spiritual indeterminacy. In order for formation and growth to take place, one has to revisit the roots of fragmentation, pain, scars, and trauma in order to shine God's light and hear God's truth into the place of our wounds.

The appreciation of beauty goes deeper than just sensory stimulation. The beauty in art and art making has the power to move emotions and unlock lost cognitive memories. Painting is "a form of artistic creativity involving translation of complex information this being emotional, abstract, subconscious, expressive, impressive, purely informative or surreal into two-/three dimensional plane through application of dyes, colorants or other marking substances with usage of bare fingers, wooden sticks, paintbrushes, paper, cloths or other materials specific to the époque, artistic style or technical ability and availability."<sup>83</sup> The direct and interactive engagement with art making is a mechanical process where the brain will be triggered to ignite and process emotions, memories, intellect, new brain mapping, and cognitive awareness. The neurons and transmitters will interact in a deeper way to unpack and release creative ways to reorganize what has become solidified in the past. The art making process has been used in the past to create a space for the participants to detach and pause from their routine of life and be given a creative space to reflect and meditate. Catherine Moon described art making as "an act of diving into the waters deep, where only faith leads the way. The salvific value is not in the promise of what one will find but in the act of making, in the experience of being held up even when what one finds seems like it will surely be too

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<sup>83</sup> Bruno Colombo, *Brain and Art: From Aesthetics to Therapeutics* (Switzerland: Springer Cham, 2020), 41.

heavy to bear.”<sup>84</sup> Creating a space for art and spiritual formation will help participants to explore their past wounds, scars, issues, trauma, and pain in order to hear and experience new grace and truth that comes from God the healer.

The area of art therapy has been growing in its effectiveness over the years for treating trauma patients. According to research by Lusebrink and Hinz:

Experiencing trauma causes neuroendocrine responses that can result in structural and functional changes in the developing brain. Specifically, childhood maltreatment may impair the ability of the prefrontal cortex to exert control over limbic system responses through the Prefrontal Cortex (PFC)-amygdala-hippocampal network. Consequently, unregulated signals from the amygdala may lead to excessive anxiety due to insufficient cognitive discrimination, resulting in emotional deregulation. In addition, trauma is associated with memory deficits and reduced hippocampal volume, as well as decreased corpus callosum volume and difficulties processing language and regulating emotion and behavior.<sup>85</sup>

Researchers have found positive results from various forms of art therapy because they have the advantageous ability to aid in the “cognitive restructuring and subsequent integration of traumatic experiences”<sup>86</sup> to produce healthier and restored holistic reformulation of memories, feelings, and thoughts. Case studies focused on art therapy treatment using the mediums of painting and clay proved to be interactive and effective in treating trauma patients.

In a case study of two brothers, aged seven and eight years, the use of art therapy illustrates how interacting with art mediums has the power to unlock many things that

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<sup>84</sup> Mimi Farrelly-Hansen, ed., *Spirituality and Art Therapy: Living the Connection* (London; New York: Jessica Kingsley Publishers, 2001), 46.

<sup>85</sup> King, *Art Therapy, Trauma, and Neuroscience*, 42.

<sup>86</sup> Linda Gantt and Louis Tinnin, “Support for a Neurobiological View of Trauma with Implications for Art Therapy,” *The Arts in Psychotherapy* 36 (July 1, 2009): 148–53, doi:10.1016/j.aip.2008.12.005.

self-consciousness cannot unlock<sup>87</sup>. The space to create art naturally brings out the “expression of trauma-related thoughts and feelings, including expression and integration of the nonverbal traumatic memories encoded as sensations, the organization of a trauma narrative, and psychological growth allowing the freedom to choose appropriate coping skills based on a positive sense of self-esteem.”<sup>88</sup> From their research, Lusebrink and Hinz concluded:

Art therapy as a sensory-motor and visually based expressive modality addresses two important aspects of therapy with trauma survivors: the integration of the nonverbal sensory-motor-based traumatic memories and the temporal organization of segmented verbal memories. The theoretical concept of the ETC with its three hierarchical levels—Kinesthetic/Sensory, Perceptual/Affective, and Cognitive/Symbolic—provides a structure for the organization and integration of trauma memories in a bottom-up or top-down manner. The three levels of the ETC reflect parallel brain activity in the posterior cortex—specifically the occipital, temporal, and parietal cortices—and the PFC.<sup>89</sup>

In Gantt and Tripp’s research on treating preverbal trauma with art therapy, they proposed how art therapy is “essential to the treatment of preverbal traumas... We believe that recent neurobiology research supports the idea that a nonverbal approach, such as art therapy, is ideally suited for working with early developmental trauma.”<sup>90</sup> They found out that patients experienced great difficulty talking about the trauma and at worst it can be re-traumatizing experience. Usually, the brain functions have disconnected and dissociated from the traumatic events and experience and left the

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<sup>87</sup> King, *Art Therapy, Trauma, and Neuroscience*, 50.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*, 52.

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*, 63.

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*, 67.

patients with inability to connect to feelings. Through decades of research in neuroimaging studies and neuroscience, it is now widely accepted view that traumatic memory is encoded through “visual imagery and bodily sensation, rather than through language or cognition, and that unresolved traumatic memory can severely compromise cognitive functioning.”<sup>91</sup> Many researchers and writers have described long lasting negative effects of overwhelming experiences, deep pains, and traumas on a person’s holistic development.

Intensive Trauma Therapy, Inc. (ITT) is a trauma treatment approach pioneered by Linda Gantt and Louis Tinnin in Morgantown, West Virginia. The ITT clinic and its affiliated training institutes provide training and education for many master’s and doctoral level therapists in counseling, social work, and psychology as well as art therapy. ITT utilized art therapy as their chief means of treatment and their basic tenets for working with preverbal trauma is stated as follows:<sup>92</sup>

1. **Preverbal traumatic memories are stored in the nonverbal mind.** These nonverbal memories consist primarily of body experiences of the animal survival instincts that we call the Instinctual Trauma Response (the ITR). These evolutionarily acquired survival behaviors are shared with reptiles and mammals. The hardwiring of the human brain means the core of the trauma experience happens outside awareness and beyond one’s capacity for conscious choice.
2. **Preverbal memories are blocked from awareness by verbal cerebral dominance and are inaccessible to verbal probes.** Nonverbal means such as art and external dialogs can access the memories without the client reliving them. This makes it possible to recover the preverbal traumatic experience and imbed it in a verbal narrative that will provide closure and subsequent storage in long-term verbal memory. The reconsolidated trauma memory is retired when converted to past tense, and the emotional arousal

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<sup>91</sup> Ibid.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid., 69.

connected to the memory becomes neutralized, no longer able to provoke flashbacks or other intrusive symptoms.

3. **In the nonverbal mind, imprints of trauma memory lack narrative structure and therefore lack narrative closure.** Preverbal traumatic memory may last a lifetime if not treated. When activated, imprints of trauma or implicit memories may be experienced as occurring in the present (a flashback). Art therapy provides the means to retrieve preverbal traumatic memory and to integrate it in a verbal autobiography. In helping a client construct the graphic narrative (our art therapy technique we describe later), the art therapist provides the necessary structure and linear sequence of the traumatic event. When the graphic narrative is re-presented the client can hear and see that the event is truly history; it is no longer felt to be present tense. Not only is the vertical connection of the right hemisphere's cortical and subcortical limbic systems restored, but also the way is paved for intra-hemispheric communication. The left hemisphere's obligatory rejection of the right hemisphere's implicit memories can be overcome.

In the field of neuroscience, Dr. Van der Kolk discovered that “Nobody can treat a war, or abuse, rape, molestation, or any other horrendous event, for that matter; what has happened cannot be undone. But what can be dealt with are the imprints of the trauma on body, mind, and soul.”<sup>93</sup> The wickedness and brokenness in humanity leaves a person robbed of being in charge of oneself. The road to recovery requires regaining control and reestablishing ownership of one's body and mind through spiritual identity formation. Dr. Van der Kolk further explained that the challenge of recovery involves “(1) finding a way to become calm and focused, (2) learning to maintain that calm in response to images, thoughts, sounds, or physical sensations that remind you of the past, (3) finding a way to be fully alive in the present and engaged with the people around you, (4) not having to keep secrets from yourself, including secrets about the ways that you

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<sup>93</sup> Van der Kolk, *The Body Keeps the Score*, 205.

have managed to survive.”<sup>94</sup> Creating a new self in Christ requires creating new pathways in the brain. Rewiring the brain pathways in order to bring different reactions and behaviors requires accessing the emotional brain and doing limbic system therapy. Neuroscientist Joseph LeDoux and his colleagues have shown that the only way we can consciously access the emotional brain is through “self-awareness, i.e. by activating the medial prefrontal cortex, the part of the brain that notices what is going on inside us and thus allows us to feel what we’re feeling...Most of our conscious brain is dedicated to focusing on the outside world: getting along with others and making plans for the future.”<sup>95</sup> It isn’t just trauma patients who need to learn how to managing themselves. There are so many events that have taken place in all of our lives that have left us all in need of digging deeper into our inner selves. Neuroscience research emphasizes the importance of looking into ourselves to change the way we feel. The only way to do this is by spending time to become aware of our inner self, our past experiences, and then to reflect and learn about what is going on inside of us. We cannot change what happened in the past, but what we have the power to change the way we respond to God’s initiatives and God’s actions.

### **Art and Spiritual Formation**

The heart of human identity is the capacity and desire for birthing.  
To be is to become creative and bring forth the beautiful.  
—John O’Donohue<sup>96</sup>

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<sup>94</sup> Ibid., 206.

<sup>95</sup> Ibid., 208.

<sup>96</sup> John O’Donohue, “Beauty: The Invisible Embrace” (New York: HarperPerennial, 2005), 142.



“And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose. For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. And those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified.” - Romans 8:28-30 –

In Romans 8:28-30, the Bible describes a person’s sanctification journey as the utmost calling and lifelong process of the deepest spiritual level of formation within a human spirit. Jefferey P. Greenman, editor of *Life in the Spirit*, defined spiritual formation as “our continuing response to the reality of God’s grace shaping us into the likeness of Jesus Christ, through the work of the Holy Spirit, in the community of faith, for the sake of the world.”<sup>97</sup> The process of spiritual formation requires spiritual openness and obedient participation in an ongoing invitation from God to bring a progressive spiritual movement toward Christ-like character development and personal growth in faith (Christlike personhood). There exists a deep need within every saved soul, a need to be transformed and to grow more intimate with our Creator, God. We are created to walk closely with Him and be renewed in our true identity, to be restored by the truth that comes from the living Word of Jesus Christ through the Holy Spirit. God created us as God’s own image bearer and continues to invite us to be fully alive in Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit. This section will explore how art and art-making can be used as a creative platform for the Holy Spirit to freely move and bring restoring work within a believer’s sanctification journey and healing. To be simply put, the creation of creative and artistic space for individual believers creates a place where the Holy Spirit can

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<sup>97</sup> Greenman and Kalantzis, *Life in the Spirit*, 24.

intimately move and direct the spiritually formative ART - Awareness, Reflection, and Transformation.

From the beginning of creation in Genesis, the Bible illustrates our relationship with God using the term *Imago Dei*. All humanity is born bearing the image of God. Ignatius of Antioch loved to “emphasize that we are all image-bearers...we are created in and bear the image of God, but our image bearing is now cracked, skewed, distorted.”<sup>98</sup> The Bible clearly mentions that from the very beginning of creation, the Divine Creator created Adam, the first human, by breathing the living breath into humankind giving a living soul that bears the image of God. Creativity is one of the innate qualities of the image of God that the Creator instilled in humanity. Philip Hefner describes human beings as God’s co-creators:

Human beings are God’s created co-creators whose purpose is to be the agency, acting in freedom, to birth the future that is most wholesome for the nature that has birthed us—the nature that is not only our own genetic heritage but also the entire human community and the evolutionary and ecological reality in which and to which we belong. Exercising this agency is said to be God’s will for humans.<sup>99</sup>

To be able to breathe means to be created! To be fully alive, we are called in our spiritual life to breathe God’s breath of creativity. Connecting the gift of art and the creative process of art-making and spiritual formation can provide a transformative space for God’s abundant love and grace through the Spirit. The journey of spiritual formation requires the awareness and understanding of God’s unconditional grace and love and involves our ongoing response to the movement of the Spirit, which results in the

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<sup>98</sup> Ibid., 144.

<sup>99</sup> Peter R. Holmes, *Becoming More Human: Exploring the Interface of Spirituality, Discipleship and Therapeutic Faith Community* (Milton Keynes, Bucks, UK: Paternoster, 2006), 27.

transformation of the soul. Whether you are in a gallery looking at artworks or participating in a simple art-making process, the viewer or participant can immerse themselves in the work of the Spirit. Spiritually formative space through art can create a soul-moving space of Awareness, Reflection, and Transformation through the work of the Spirit.

### *Art as Awareness*

Terry Glaspey writes that art can give us new ways of seeing and open us to new ways of responding to the world around us and to God.<sup>100</sup> Art moves us emotionally and touches our souls, and it helps us to bring awareness of ourselves and God. It creates a space for the person to slow down, to pay attention, and become more aware of oneself. It allows the person to engage the present moments tangibly with one's mind, body, and soul as we slow down to meditate and be attentive to art pieces and the art making process. This kind of slowing down process helps the believer to notice and experience the prompting of God and God's presence in their lives, which they are not able to pay attention to in our fast-paced life. David Benner, the author of *Spirituality and the Awakening Self*, described that "each moment of awareness is a small awakening, and each awakening- no matter how insignificant it might seem- can be a doorway to becoming."<sup>101</sup> Whether you engage yourself in looking at a piece of artwork or actual

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<sup>100</sup> Terry Glaspey, *Discovering God Through the Arts: How We Can Grow Closer to God by Appreciating Beauty & Creativity* (Chicago, IL: Moody Publishers, 2021), chap. 2.

<sup>101</sup> David G. Benner, *Spirituality and the Awakening Self: The Sacred Journey of Transformation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2012), 5.

participation in the creative process, you become more attentive, which can be a moment of awakening for your soul and for the transformation path.

In today's world, young adults experience the world around them accelerating at a faster rpm and therefore feel life becoming more and more complex. In our current age of digital Babylon, many young people get lost trying to find their identities through digital screens and contemporary identities. David Kinnaman, the author of *Faith for Exiles*, explained that the search for human identity is found using personal screens that “reinforce the notion of elective identity by giving us daily, even hourly, chances to present a self-selected, carefully filtered, curated version of ourselves to friends and followers.”<sup>102</sup> Spiritual formation requires detaching from the distractions of this world and coming before our Creator to hear what our loving father has to say about our unique design and purpose. This requires the practice of being present in the Presence of God as we slow down. In the contemplative space with art and art-making process, where you learn to slow down and pay attention, you learn to notice the beauty of the present moment. As Terry Glaspey points out that “the present moment is one in which we can experience the presence of God if we are paying attention, and all the smallest things of our lives are a potential mouthpiece for Him to communicate with us.”<sup>103</sup> As God's image bearer's we alone have the divine capacity and imperative to be imaginative and creative. In Psalm 27, David writes that we have a calling in us to gaze upon the beauty of God, to seek him, and to be in a relationship with him in all circumstances. Visual art

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<sup>102</sup> David Kinnaman and Mark Matlock, *Faith for Exiles: 5 Ways for a New Generation to Follow Jesus in Digital Babylon* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2019), 48.

<sup>103</sup> Glaspey, *Discovering God Through the Arts*, chap. 2.

and the process of creative art making stirs in a person's mind, emotions and memories creating the opportunity for a doorway to the awareness of oneself.

Jeffery Greenman points out that while the current contemporary evangelical church focuses on biblicism, crucicentrism, conversionism, and activism, it neglects the other valuable traditional Christian sources that help people to know and experience God. He writes that “Unfortunate, but common, consequence of the evangelical affirmation of the Bible as the supreme authority for faith and practice is that other promising sources of spiritual insight sometimes are unnecessarily denigrated, particularly historical sources drawn from various streams of the Christian tradition.”<sup>104</sup> Many various valuable spiritual practices and contemplative spiritual formative space were replaced by inductive bible study and short quiet time. This kind of rational focused spirituality has been a normative phenomenon to the Korean American immigrant church as well, where the contemplative and creative space has been missing. Makoto Fujimura writes that “art making is a discipline of awareness, prayer, and praise.”<sup>105</sup> Intentionally creating a space for art-making and spiritual formation allows us to slow down to connect the presence and awareness. Fujimura further explains that “when we make, we invite the abundance of God's world into the reality of scarcity all about us.”<sup>106</sup>

In order for the Holy Spirit to transform our unseen character in the heart, mind, soul, and body, we have to come before God, ready to be still, and slow down to listen with our heart, mind, soul, and body. The Bible commands Christians to be still in Psalm

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<sup>104</sup> Greenman and Kalantzis, *Life in the Spirit*, 29.

<sup>105</sup> Fujimura and Wright, *Art and Faith*, 3.

<sup>106</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.

46 in the midst of troubles, chaos, and disasters. Makoto Fujimura, artist and author of *Art and Faith*, argues that art-making is essential to the human soul:

Art is necessary for our daily survival, it is still necessary for our flourishing. Our sense of beauty and our creativity is central to what it means to be made in the image of a creative God. The satisfaction in beauty we feel is connected deeply with our reflection of God's character to create and value gratuity. It is part of our human nature. This is why our soul hungers for beauty.<sup>107</sup>

Laurence Gonzales in his book *Deep Survival* points out that one of the important survival principles is noticing the beauty in the midst of crisis. He writes that “Survivors are attuned to the wonder of the world. The appreciation of beauty, the feeling of awe, opens the senses. When you see something beautiful, your pupils actually dilate. This appreciation not only relieves stress and creates strong motivation, but it allows you to take in new information more effectively.”<sup>108</sup> Encountering art and the acts of creative art-making process allows people to be awakened to their senses and to notice the new movement of God. It allows them to be in the beauty of wonder and awe of this world. Art produces a natural place for our attunement and to be open before God; to listen to the sanctifying guidance of the Holy Spirit through beauty, and the creative and imaginative process of art making.

Cameron Anderson, the author of *The Faithful Artist*, points out that Genesis 1 presents the visual and material dimension of God's work, God is one who "makes," "forms," and "sees" as a creator, Anderson reminds us that “the most tangible fruit of

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<sup>107</sup> Makoto Fujimura, *Culture Care: Reconnecting with Beauty for Our Common Life* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Books, an imprint of InterVarsity Press, 2017), 51.

<sup>108</sup> Laurence Gonzales, *Deep Survival: Who Lives, Who Dies, and Why: True Stories of Miraculous Endurance and Sudden Death* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2017), 289.

God's Word is God's creation, the visual and material world that is seen.”<sup>109</sup> The visual presentation is a powerful way that we can imagine and understand who God is and the glory of God. Unfortunately, the evangelical church disregarded and minimized the visual presentations and forms as a second class under the doctrine of sola Scriptura. We need to cultivate and bring God's power and the gift of beauty and art into our evangelical faith community to bring the wholeness of God's revelation and redemption into our inner beings. Fujimura explains that “the impulse toward making seems embedded in us from the beginning...So our journey to know God requires not just ideas and information, but actual making, to translate our ideas into real objects and physical movements.”<sup>110</sup> The first step of the spiritual formation process is about acknowledging and being aware of God’s abundant grace and love, which is present in our lives and work.

### *Art as Reflection*

Creating art creates an intentional space of reflection. In order to create anything, one must take time to reflect past, present, and future. It creates a safe and natural place for our souls to listen to the voice of the Holy Spirit, to reflect, and respond. Everyone who is born of God is called to be on a relational journey toward sanctification. As Peterson said, “spirituality is never a subject that we can attend to as a thing-in-itself. It is always an operation of God in which our human lives are pulled into and made

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<sup>109</sup> Anderson, *The Faithful Artist*, 158.

<sup>110</sup> Fujimura and Wright, *Art and Faith*, 6.

participants in the life of God.”<sup>111</sup> The spiritual formation journey is not initiated by us nor operated by our power, but it is directed and initiated only by the Spirit of God. The Bible describes the breath of God as life, and that is how life began for humanity when God breathed into the human.

In Henry Nouwen’s book, *The Return of the Prodigal Son*, Nouwen wrote his own spiritual formative experience and reflection journey on Rembrandt’s painting of the parable of the prodigal son. His first impression of the painting stirred something within him that moved him to go deeper into reflection by visiting the Russian museum to look at the art piece with his own eyes. The painting helped him awaken to God’s gracious hands toward him and to encounter God’s love and acceptance as he visually contemplated the painting of the father embracing the prodigal son.<sup>112</sup> Through the painting the Spirit allowed him to reflect upon himself as both the prodigal son, the ungrateful first son, and also to experience God’s generous invitation to become a gracious Heavenly father. Art and its physically embodied presence continue to be alive and allow us to create a space of ongoing reflection that leads us to respond to God’s transformational invitation to become like Him.

Art-making opens a whole new dimension of meditational and reflectional freedom to allowing believers to have a new spiritual reality in Jesus Christ. Over the years, art-making has also developed into an area of art therapy. According to Cathy Malchiodi, the author of *The Art Therapy Sourcebook*, art therapy has grown from the

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<sup>111</sup> Eugene H. Peterson, *Christ Plays in Ten Thousand Places: A Conversation in Spiritual Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans, 2005), 31.

<sup>112</sup> Henri J. M. Nouwen, *The Return of the Prodigal Son: A Story of Homecoming*, New edition (London: Darton Longman and Todd, 1994), 10.



concept of serving as a way of understanding, making sense, and clarifying inner experiences without words to a place where “art images can help us to understand who we are, to express feelings and ideas that words cannot, and to enhance life through self-expression. It is accepted and widely recognized as a viable treatment method and a modality for self-understanding, emotional change, and personal growth.”<sup>113</sup> Working with visual images and tangible substances creates a space of self-reflection and the ability to respond from within. Christine Valters Paintner and Amy Waytt write:

Art empowers our daily lives through a time of self-reflection and contemplation. Art requires acts of courage to make oneself visible through the creation of form and the expression of visions. Most importantly, when we steep ourselves in the creative process, we open ourselves to deeper awareness, encounter, and knowledge, which serve us in our becoming and in our loving engagement with the world.<sup>114</sup>

In Philippians 2:12, the Bible instructs Christians to work out our salvation, Colossians 1:9-10, commands us to grow in our maturity through the understanding and wisdom that the Holy Spirit gives. God created humans as multi-dimensional beings. Life as a single human being is made up of physical, psychological, relational, and spiritual dimensions that develop over years of experience. Psychologists have identified about two dozen of these dimensions and suggest that major developments are presented in “twelve major dimensions of the self and the existential questions they address.”<sup>115</sup> For believers then, who are seeking spiritual formation and inner growth, there has to be a safe and inspiring space where they are given an opportunity to reflect, meditate, and hear from the Holy

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<sup>113</sup> Cathy A. Malchiodi, *The Art Therapy Sourcebook* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 2007), 2.

<sup>114</sup> Christine Valters Paintner and Amy Wyatt, “Creativity as a Christian Spiritual Practice: Foundations and Explorations for Ministry,” *Journal of Supervision and Training in Ministry* 26 (2006): 2.

<sup>115</sup> Benner, *Spirituality and the Awakening Self*, 41.

Spirit so that the Spirit of Truth can illuminate those twelve dimensions<sup>116</sup> of the self and existential questions that they are wrestling at the moment.

The power of art-making involves connecting what is unseen and what is seen, what was in the past and where it should be headed in the future, what is understood as the self, and what is understood as the non-self. Quoting from Dr. Robert Kegan's book *The Evolving Self*, Dr. Benner writes, "Robert Kegan describes each level of consciousness as a temporary truce between self and non-self, a truce that lasts until the transition into the next level of consciousness, when the self once again broadens and the division between self and non-self once again changes."<sup>117</sup> Spiritual transformation takes place when a person reflects and meditates upon who they are in God and hears why, what, and how God wants to change their false identity, unhealthy attachments, and past lies rooted in the self. In the arena of art therapy, identifying image awareness is the most important process in discovering one's identity. Many people "carry memories of many experiences throughout their lives,"<sup>118</sup> and they were never given a proper opportunity to reflect, meditate, and process those experiences and memories. Creating an intentional spiritual formation platform of reflection of art and through art-making creates a secure and inspirational atmosphere where a person can focus on the caring, forgiving, and

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<sup>116</sup> The 12 dimensions are as follows: 1. Self: Who am I? 2. Values: What is important to me? 3. Moral: How should I chose? 4. Interpersonal: How should I related to others? 5. Spiritual: What is of ultimate concern? 6. Needs: What do I need to be well? 7. Kinesthetic: How do I indwell my body? 8. Emotional: How do I feel? 9. Aesthetic: What do I find attractive? 10. Cognitive: What am I aware of? 11. Ego: How do I wish to appear? 12: Faith: Whom and how do I trust? Ken Wilber, *Integral Psychology: Consciousness, Spirit, Psychology, Therapy*, 1st pbk. ed (Boston, MA: Shambhala, 2000), 60.

<sup>117</sup> Benner, *Spirituality and the Awakening Self*, 60.

<sup>118</sup> Malchiodi, *The Art Therapy Sourcebook*, 52.

loving nature of God and oneself– “caring and loving are the fundamental elements of the act of making.”<sup>119</sup>

### *Art as Transformation*

For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers and sisters. And those he predestined, he also called; those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified. - Romans 8:29-30 -

Scripture describes God’s provision and predestination of the process of salvation to justification to sanctification to the glorification of a child of God. This process embodies the transformative activity of God’s Imago Dei transfiguring the clay into God’s masterpiece. Art allows for an interactive process and offers transcendent experiences of awakening, integration of the two worlds of seen and unseen, and new newness. Artist and viewers both are invited to a spontaneous prompting and stirring during the process learning to trust and surrender, to dance with its invitation of transformation. Art has been used as a platform for a divine message where it transforms the soul of a person, community, and nation. Many places art has been used for the transcendent power of healing, freedom, and instilling hope. Art is a gift from God to humanity, it has the power to go beyond awareness and reflection to allow the transfiguration experience of the human soul.

Spiritual formation is about surrendering to the work of the Spirit, which we need to pass through a river of denying self and yielding to the will of God. We tend to want to be in a place of comfort and enjoyment to avoid the suffering and self-denying process.

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<sup>119</sup> Fujimura and Wright, *Art and Faith*, 61.

Peterson writes that it is important to have the ability to say “no” to the flesh and the world, to follow Christ unto death. The ability to say no opens up a whole new dimension of freedom and allows followers to have a new spiritual reality with Jesus. If one has never denied oneself, he or she would never have the chance to experience the freedom dance of resurrection. Spiritual formation is about becoming familiar with and recognizing the beauty of death, the beauty of life by denying sensual flesh. Art making also allow you to go through this spiritual journey of life and death toward resurrection. Sitting in front of a white blank canvas is the first stage of art creating. It can bring excitement but most of time it stirs up fears and anxiety. Just as the spiritual formation journey requires trust and surrender, creating something new requires trust and surrender. This process allows us to face the fear of the unknown and learn to walk in a new reality and a new way of life with the Father, Son, and the Holy Spirit. It requires both obedience and trust in the way of salvation that will move followers to crossover from lifelessness to life-fullness in Christ.

Learning to be participants in the process of this experience, you discover the importance of faith and surrender to listening to new possibilities. Michael Gatlin who is the watercolor artist and pastor at Vineyard church shares the important process of surrender and giving himself to the vision in his mind and living in the tension between. Artists always live in the tension between their ability to bring out the beauty with the beauty the artist sees.<sup>120</sup> This is part of the transformative journey of trusting and surrendering to sanctification. As Peterson points out, God, who is the Spirit, is the

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<sup>120</sup> Michael Gatlin, “The Artist/Pastor,” Art & Faith Conversations, n.d., Spotify.

ultimate source of life who is living, creating, saving, and blessing us.<sup>121</sup> Many of the formational and transforming ideas and philosophies are based on human-initiated and self-driven ideas. But spiritual formation begins first in a place of reflection when God initiates and shapes us into Christ-likeness through the work of the Spirit of God. Often Christians are confused and have a difficult time understanding the spiritual formation process because it is a lifelong sanctification process that requires intentional, ongoing reflection and harmonious partnership with the Divine Trinity of God. Art-making is not static and rigid, but it requires continuous movement and ongoing changes. It is not just your effort and work, but it is a transforming process of surrendering. Spiritual formation brings forth growth to the imperishable seed of salvation that is planted by our true creator. We are not in control of spiritual formation. We are obeying the direction and interactive presence of the Holy Spirit.

Fujimura described that “a work of art is something new in the world that changes the world to allow itself to exist.”<sup>122</sup> Similarly, the bodily incarnation of Christ opened the follower of Christ to a new world in a tangible way. Rolheiser explains the embodiment of the divine as “God takes on flesh so that every home becomes a church, every child becomes the Christ-child, and all food and drink becomes a sacrament. God’s many faces are now everywhere, in him. God, in his many-faced face, has become as accessible and invisible as the nearest water tap. That is the way of the incarnation.”<sup>123</sup> Because of Christ’s incarnation, all Christians are called to live into a new reality, through the

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<sup>121</sup> Fujimura and Wright, *Art and Faith*, 29.

<sup>122</sup> Ibid., 8.

<sup>123</sup> Rolheiser, *The Holy Longing*, 1999, 78.

presence of the Holy Spirit. How do we experience this more tangibly? Rolheiser challenges, “A theist believes in God. A Christian believes in a God who is incarnate,”<sup>124</sup> Art allows us to create something new out of the ordinary, to connect the old and new. Art has the power to bring a new reality out of the broken and imperfect. The Japanese pottery technique Kintsugi demonstrates this spiritual representation. This technique uses golden resin to restore broken pieces of pottery thereby transforming what was broken into beautiful new creations. The world is broken by depravity and sin, but Jesus has the power to revive our souls with his incarnate embodied presence of the Holy Spirit, who is in all believer's hearts. Jesus's transfiguration and resurrection restores the broken pieces of our lives into new creations bringing newness to our journey. Art is the technique that allows us to participate in the creating and recreating transformation process.

Art is an interactive and relationally transformative process in the Spirit, within oneself, and the community. It does not only change the individual but has the power to heal and transform the community. This transformation creates a new reality and introduces a new way of life with the Father, Son, and the Holy Spirit within the communal spiritual family. The spiritual formation practice of art-making within a group setting offers a place of rediscovering hope, truth, vision, and renewal as a spiritual community as they share their personal reflection and experience creative artwork. Just as it is reflected in the theology of the Trinity, we are called into a restoring community of love, acceptance, forgiveness, and grace. The horizontal calling of relationship to love our neighbors - our family, our friends, and the world - invites all of us to grow into

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<sup>124</sup> Ibid., 81.

“ever-deepening levels of mutual commitment, grace, empowering, and intimacy”<sup>125</sup> in the spiritual faith community. In order for this kind of growth to take place in a spiritual faith community, there has to be a mutual involvement to open up and embrace one another. Art making within a group, allows for space to share each art piece, discuss the meaning, listen to the stories behind it, reflecting and meditating on what has been discovered about God and themselves, brings God’s hope, opening the way for transformation and sanctification.

Bruce Moon, the author of *Art-Based Group Therapy*, explains, “making art in the presence of others is tangible, yet metaverbal, expression of hope. In a truly profound and perhaps unconscious way, making art is an act of benevolence, a way of giving to the world...Hope is conveyed artistically, verbally, behaviorally, and metaphorically.”<sup>126</sup> It brings not only connections with God but, most importantly, with others in the faith community, ending isolation and brokenness. Dallas Willard emphasizes the aspect of spiritual formation within a spiritual faith community by saying that “God is in himself a sweet society of love... where not only is there love and being loved but also a shared love for another.”<sup>127</sup> He explains that the nature of the personality of the Trinity is inherently communal, and we are to live in a community of bond. Jesus loved his people and gave himself for the lost. Dr. MaryKate Morse stresses that spiritual formation is not

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<sup>125</sup> Jack O. Balswick and Judith K. Balswick, *The Family: A Christian Perspective on the Contemporary Home*, 3rd ed (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2007), 21.

<sup>126</sup> Bruce L. Moon, *Art-Based Group Therapy: Theory and Practice*, Second edition (Springfield, IL: Charles C. Thomas, Publisher, Ltd, 2016), 69–70.

<sup>127</sup> Dallas Willard, *Renovation of the Heart: Putting on the Character of Christ* (Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 2002), 184.

about my glorification and myself. It is ultimately for the soul and for the world.<sup>128</sup> God precedes this transformational work of the Holy Spirit within a person's life and connects the body and the Spirit.

The image of God created in all of us who are saved calls us to be more like Christ every single day as individual disciples of Christ and as a community of the body of Christ. 2 Corinthians 5:17 teaches that we are a new creation in Christ! The old has gone, and we are called to create new every day! What are we creating as a saved soul and as an ambassador to our world? We are called to create the resurrection of Jesus Christ, we are called to create the image of God in our souls, and we are called to create the true love of God in others around us! We are made to be “marked with Making into the New, and we are also here to help make sense of the expressive markers of the Maker working through others, including non-Christians...Let us reclaim creativity and imagination as essential, central, and necessary parts of our faith journey.”<sup>129</sup> In the broken and hurting world all around us, disciples of Jesus Christ who are spiritually forming into the New image of Jesus Christ are immensely needed.

#### *Invitation to ART – Awareness, Reflection, and Transformation*

Two thousand years ago, Jesus Christ broke into the reality of human brokenness and the sinful world as light, hope, and the living Word as a tangible image of God as human. The current reality we face in our world hasn't changed when compared to

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<sup>128</sup> MaryKate Morse, “What Is Spiritual Formation” (Lecture, Cannon Beach Face to Face, March 2019).

<sup>129</sup> Fujimura and Wright, *Art and Faith*, 149.



previous centuries. The world we live in now is still filled with broken souls, broken relationships, broken moralities, broken truths, and broken justice systems. Current words that describe this brokenness of humanity are isolation, depression, anxiety, injustice, mass shooting, global warming, global pandemic, and sexual immorality. Henri Nouwen, the author of *The Wounded Healer*, describes the incarnation and the power of the gospel in the fullness of Jesus Christ. Nouwen describes that “Jesus has given this story a new fullness by making his own broken body the way to health, to liberation and new life. Thus, like Jesus, those who proclaim liberation are called not only to care for their own wounds and the wounds of others but also to make their wounds into a major source of healing power.”<sup>130</sup>

The resurrected Jesus Christ continues to carry out the work of healing and calling the new creation into the good work of wounded healers in our world. Incorporating art-making into the spiritual formation process of becoming more like Christ will bring growth into our souls, and thus bring the good work of the Holy Spirit to create, heal, and restore our true humanity before our beautiful creator. Korean American Christian Young Adults in the church need a space to slow down and to work on their brokenness, hurt, confusion, and lostness. They need to become aware of themselves, God, and others in a creative environment where they can thrive, be fully alive, and become more like Christ. Providing a reflective space to search within through art and art making that allows people to learn to dance with the Spirit.

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<sup>130</sup> Nouwen, *The Wounded Healer*, 88.

#### SECTION 4:

#### ARTIFACT DESCRIPTION

The artifact is four 2.5 hours workshops called *ART Workshops: An Invitation to Awareness, Reflection, and Transformation*. Each workshop will use the spiritual formation practice of art making to explore and reflect on who they are in God, how God has been leading them in the past, and how God will continue to lead them into the future. In these workshops each participant will have the opportunity to engage with their inner self, discover and explore formative spiritual experiences, and facilitate faith and identity growth. This particular artifact is focused on Korean American young adults, however, with minimal adjustments, the workshops can be tailored to fit specific audience demographics. The topics addressed in the four workshops are: guilt and shame, lament, remembrance and celebration, and vocation and dreams.

The power of these workshops come from the participants and how they engage with the Holy Spirit who reveals healing and new insights to them. The art-making spiritual formation space allows for the opportunity to focus on their heart as they become aware, reflect, and transform more and more into the image of God. The workshops are designed to first engage cognitively with the principal that we are designed by God, this is done using Biblical scriptures and images. Time is then given so that each participant can reflect on how they want to create their art piece. A safe and peaceful space is allowed as they engage with the Holy Spirit and work on their art pieces. This allows the participant to have focused space in which their mind, emotions, and hearts are allowed to adventure into a new space that is different from their daily

rhythms and routines. Finally, they will be given time to share their experiences and new discoveries with the group.

## SECTION 5:

### ARTIFACT SPECIFICATION

#### **Goal**

Many Korean American Christian young adults are anxious and emotionally stuck. Creating a spiritually formative art workshop will enable participants to become both spiritually and emotionally aware. It will provide them with space to reflect and experience God, who is present and moving in their lives. It will help them to process and understand their inner world and enable them to go deeper into their spiritual journey with God as their guide. The art creating process will help them rediscover themselves in a tangible way. Through these creative art-making spiritual workshops, Korean American young adults can slow down from their fast-paced life and daily distraction to connect with the Spirit who moves within them. Within these workshops participants will be able to express their desires, thoughts, beliefs, values, emotions, and the unconscious self deep within. Hands on art-making workshops open new pathways to connections, understanding, revelation, and restoration for participants.

#### **Structure**

The Creative Art worship runs 2-2.5 hours, and it can operate with a group or individual setting. It is important to set the workshop atmosphere as inviting and open to the creative expression where people feel safe and free. At the beginning of the workshop, it is crucial for the presenter to explain the art-making goal is to process and

discover new things within ourselves, and is not about creating great artwork, trying to compete with or impress others.

### **Audience**

The workshop is for Korean American Christian young adults who are 18 -35 years old.

### **Content**

The four workshops will be on Guilt and Shame, Lament, Remembrance and Celebration, Vocation and Calling

### **Session 1 My Heart:**

**Guilt and Shame Workshop** – Looking at God’s design for our hearts and the cause of depravity. This workshop will give participants space to discern God’s original design in contrast to their past internal scars by drawing their heart.

### **Session 2 My Tears:**

**Lament Workshop** – Provide a space to learn about lament as a holy cry and an inseparable part of the human experience for connecting with God. This workshop will

allow the participants to be honest about their own pain and express their cries to God through their artwork, which will then all for the healing process to begin.

### **Session 3 My Past:**

**Remembrance and Celebration** – Provide a space to create a memorial rock monument of their past journey as they reflect on their significant life events. This workshop will allow them to remember and recollect their lives, their significance and give them time to celebrate God’s presence in their lives.

### **Session 4 My Dreams:**

**Vocation and Calling** – Provide a space to unpack their vocational journey from childhood dreams, deep-seated desires, and current dreams, to their past disappointments and pains. This workshop will allow each participant to explore of how God invites us into our desire and calling through collage art.

### **Budget**

Four sessions will cost \$ 200.

Art materials: paper, magazine, pastels, watercolor, colored pencil, sharpie, glue, scissor, frames, rocks...etc.

### **Action Plan**

This can be offered as a church young adult program as a 4-week program or can be used as a part of a young adult retreat program.

## SECTION 6:

## POSTSCRIPT

The past couple of years of this doctorate journey have been spiritually formative for me. It has been an arduous time of searching within while also wrestling with the faith journey of those within the Korean American immigrant church, working to discover the role Art plays in the world of ministry. The dissertation research and final art workshop artifact are my own stories of how God has been forming me through my own spiritual journey as an immigrant, artist, and pastor in America.

The research I conducted revealed that Korean American young adults, who grew up in a Korean American immigrant church setting, experience significant anxiety, loss, emotional pain, and brokenness. They walk hazy roads as they navigate daily life within their bi-cultural identity and family. Growing up in an immigrant family and church setting where survival was the prevalent backbone of the lived theology, many of them were driven to succeed. For many of these individuals, the American dream is a vague mirage to hold onto as they step forward in life. Often, their life revolves around a repeating cycle of work in an American corporate world, while they recite Bible stories and witness to the fragmented pieces of their faith. However, they live with a disconnect in their relationship with God and the reality of their daily life, they are disconnected from who they are in God, which makes them feel uncertain and anxious.

During my dissertation journey, integrating Art and faith, I had several opportunities to hold Art workshops with Korean American young adults at church and youth group. I led four Art workshops with my young adult group over the last two years. Because this was something new for the church, I led the workshops once each semester.

Attendance at the 2-hour workshops ranged from 8 to 15 people. The feedback from the first workshop was very positive, and the young adult ministry invited me to lead the art workshop at their seasonal retreat. I witnessed the art workshop open a new spiritually formative space where the Spirit touched and moved in and among the participants. They were able to go deeper in their relationship with Christ, look inside, and have internal as well as external dialogues. The Holy Spirit moved the participants during the art-making process, stirred up something within them, and led them to a deeper awareness of self and God. I also experienced the art workshop creating a safe and non-judgmental space where they could hear and listen to each other's stories, build special bonds and experience healing. Lastly, the art pieces they created transformed the gathering place with a new presence of hope and beauty. I experienced that the tangible and visual art works that created became a holding object of our retreat space throughout the retreat time and mediating tool to connect and understand each other deeper way.

I also had the opportunity to lead three Art Workshops at the YouthWave conference, the annual youth conference in San Francisco Bay Area. The youth engaged with the art-making process, and my art workshop was one of the popular workshops because of the gift Art making offers to students. Each class was attended by 25-35 students. During the workshop, I observed the students easily opening their hearts and engaging in conversations, reflecting, and sharing. At the beginning of each workshop, it was important to give clear guidance about the art they would be creating, explaining that it was not about trying to impress people, rather it is between them and God. The experience was powerful, witness the way each student made their art work out of their



own creativity and reflections with God. Once again I confirmed the way in which the Holy Spirit uses the art workshop to connect people with God and others.

Through my academic and research journey, as an artist myself, I was able to launch my online art gallery called *hesed.space* with the goal to provide a visually reflective space for people. Lastly, God solidified in my heart, through my dissertation journey, my call to bring Art into the worship space. Creating Art during worship as a visual messenger, an artist, and pastor to reveal God's message to people and show God's presence in a more tangible and creative way.

## APPENDIX A:

### ARTIFACT

#### ART Workshops

#### *An Invitation to Awareness, Reflection, and Transformation*

### **My Heart Workshop: Guilt and Shame**

Things to prepare: Plastic sheet cover for paper (8.5 x 11), paper, colored pencils, pastels, fixative, and sharpies.

Open with prayer: Invite the Holy Spirit to lead and work through the workshop

### **Introduction**

Purpose: To provide a space to be aware of personal darkness, guilt, and shame in a loving presence of God and to differentiate them from God's original design and plan for them.

Centering Prayer: Allow the participant to be in silence and help them to center in the presence of God. Ask the participants to place their hands on their chest and feel their heartbeat.

Stirring Questions: Share your moments when you heard or felt the heartbeat of someone or your child for the first time. What did you feel? What image comes to your mind when you think about the heart? (take 5 minutes to share with your neighbor)

### **Lesson**

Hebrew word heart: Levav

In the biblical understanding of the word, the heart is a place of thoughts, emotion, desire, and choices; therefore, it reflects your whole being. It is also the place where your wisdom dwells and helps you discern between truth and error. In the bible, the heart is

where you feel emotions such as joy, sorrow, pain, fear, and distress and connect with God.

*Read*

Psalm 139:13-16

- <sup>13</sup> For you created my inmost being;  
you knit me together in my mother's womb.
- <sup>14</sup> I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made;  
your works are wonderful,  
I know that full well.
- <sup>15</sup> My frame was not hidden from you  
when I was made in the secret place,  
when I was woven together in the depths of the earth.
- <sup>16</sup> Your eyes saw my unformed body;  
all the days ordained for me were written in your book  
before one of them came to be.

Deuteronomy 6:4-5

<sup>4</sup> Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD, is one <sup>5</sup> Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength.

### **Activity**

Imagine/Reflect/Create: Imagine the Genesis 1 creation account and Psalm 139 and draw your heart. Be imaginative and creative as you express your pure heart originally created by God. Imagine Creator God, the one who created a light in the darkness and brought life into this world. Draw your heart as God intended in His original Creation design. Be imaginative and creative~

- What kind of image and color comes to your mind when you think about your conception? Imagine the tender and soft flesh of your heart that started to pump at your birth as the breath of God filled your lungs. Once the lifegiving Spirit of God entered your body, your heart started beating and faithfully working to circulate the flow of energy and blood to give you life.

The Bible tells us that the heart is where the spring of life flows in Proverbs 4:23. Please take time to imagine and draw your heart to how God created you to be in God's loving presence in the light.

Reflect & Write: Distribute a clear plastic cover and a black sharpie. Place the clear plastic cover over your heart drawing artwork.

Take time to reflect on the questions below in your heart. Write down the words or draw the images on the clear plastic cover.

1. Is there any brokenness in your heart? What images come to your mind when you think about your shame and guilt?
2. What are some negative experiences that you have experienced personally or witnessed in your life?
3. What are some of the things that happened in your life that made you feel guilty and shameful?
4. What makes you sad and depressed?

Examples depression, abuse, physical harm, emotional abuse, sadness, disappointment, Grief, betrayal, jealousy, fear, low self-esteem, comparison, judgment, negative thoughts, Hatred, bitterness, stress, losing hope, ...etc.

### **Reflect**

Integration: Take some time to look over your heart with those negative words and images on your heart. Now remove the plastic covering from the original drawing. Consider the heart with the words and images.

What did you experience seeing your new heart?

Sin has entered into the world and brought guilt and damage to your heart; however, it was not God's original image, and it is not from you. God promised us that God would give us a new heart through the Holy Spirit and guard our hearts in Christ Jesus.

Journaling: Read the scripture below. How do they help you understand yourself and God? How do they help you receive your new heart?

Ezekiel 36:26

<sup>26</sup> I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh.

Deuteronomy 30:6

The LORD, your God, will circumcise your hearts and the hearts of your descendants so that you may love him with all your heart and with all your soul and live.

Psalms 51:10

Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me.

Philippians 4:7

And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

**Share**

Small Group: In your small group share what you discovered through the process of drawing and writing on your heart. How have you become aware of God's desire for you?

## My Tears Workshop: Lament

Things to prepare: canvas, paper, colored pens, paints, brushes, and glue.

Open with prayer: Invite the Holy Spirit to lead and work through the workshop

### Introduction

Purpose: To provide a space to express and validate the grief, pain, and sorrow and to bring healing.

Centering Prayer: Allow the participant to be in silence and help them to center in the presence of God.

Stirring Questions: (take 5 minutes to share with your neighbor)

1. What is your natural response to things that make you sad or mad?
2. What do you tend to do with your pain? How do you act it out? Rationalize it? Blame it on others? Deny?
3. What messages about crying did you pick up as a child?

### Lesson



“Men and women are at their noblest and best when they are on their knees before God in prayer... To pray is not only to be truly godly, but it is also to be truly human.”

- John Stott –

Read and reflect on Psalm 77 / Psalm 142

Lament is the honest cry of a hurting heart wrestling with the paradox of pain and the promise of God’s goodness – *Dark Clouds, Deep Mercy* author Mark Vroegop (p26)

“The laments are a legitimate part of a robust adult faith that knows God will not be shattered or provoked by strong words of protest. God does not,

unlike many of us, avoid conflict, for he knows that the honest expression of our current situation is essential for our transformation.”

*A Time for Sorrow: Recovering the Practice of Lament in the Life of the Church*, Lindsey Wilson (chapter 1)

## Activity



Imagine/Reflect/Create: According to Psalm 56:8, God collects your tears and puts them in a bottle.

First, draw the bottle/vase on the canvas. You are going to honestly express your laments to God inside of the bottle. Take some time to write and express your laments in your heart on a sheet of paper. After you write your thoughts and words on the sheet, you can tear them to pieces as it represents your tears to God. After that, you can paste them inside the bottle as you imagine God listening to your every prayer or lament and gathering them in the bottle. You can add paint over the collage or draw the image or design that

expresses God's loving presence around your tear-filled bottle on the canvas as you would like. Imagine God's loving embrace over your honest cry and prayer.

## Reflect

Journaling: How was the experience of expressing lament through journaling and art?

What did you discover about yourself and God? How would you describe lament to someone?

## Share

Small Group: What did you learn about lament today? What was surprising to you? What was comforting?

## My Past Workshop: Remembrance

Things to prepare: Various stones, wood plates, color sharpies, tacky glues.

Open with prayer: Invite the Holy Spirit to lead and work through the workshop

### Introduction

Purpose: To remember God's grace and miracle work in our lives.

Centering Prayer: Allow the participant to be in silence and help them to center in the presence of God.

Stirring Questions: (take 5 minutes to shar with your neighbor)

1. Do you have any collections that you collect at home? If you do, what are those items and why are those are so special to them?
2. If you can save only three items from your house in case of emergency, what are those items and why would take them?

### Lesson

*Meditate on Joshua 4*



God commanded Joshua to choose twelve men from each tribe to take up the twelve stones from the middle of the Jordan River. The Israelites followed Joshua's commands, picked up the twelve stones, and brought them to Gilgal. They set them up to commemorate the mighty work of God and remind the Israelites to walk humbly before God. Also, according to Joshua 4:9, "Joshua set up the twelve stones that had been in the middle of the Jordan at the spot where the priests who carried the ark of the covenant had stood." Not only God commanded Joshua about the stone of memorial, but Joshua also set up the twelve stones in the middle of Jordan even though it was not God's direct command.

*This shows that Joshua wanted to put this memorial stone inside his heart not out of obligation but out of his heart to remember before God.*

*Remembrance is an integral part of our formation. We tend to forget if we aren't reminded of God's work within us.*



## Activity



1. Write about an important life event in which you experienced God's grace and love, received God's provision, and witnessed the miracles of God.

2. Take the number of stones that matches the number of events you want to remember about God's great works in your life and draw or write on the stone to represent God's mighty work within you.

3. Design the stone art to remember God's goodness and miraculous work in your life.

## Reflect

### Journaling:

1. Personal reflection on what God has shown you through working with stone art
2. What do you notice about yourself?

## Share

### Small Group:

1. Share something you have discovered about yourself or God today
2. Is there anything new that you discovered
3. How might this change the way you see yourself as you move on from here today?

## **My Dreams Workshop: Vocation and Dreams**

Things to prepare: Various kinds of paper, colored pens and pencils, eraser, paints, brushes, magazine, and glue.

Open with prayer: Invite the Holy Spirit to lead and work through the workshop

### **Introduction**

Purpose: To provide a space to reflect on your deep-seated desire and dreams in your life and how those dreams come together as important pieces in your spiritual journey, fulfilling God-given dreams in your heart to continue living out your calling.

Centering Prayer: Allow the participant to be in silence and help them to center in the presence of God.

Stirring Questions: (take 5 minutes to share with your neighbor)

1. What was your childhood dream?
2. What did you want to be when you were growing up?
3. How has your dream been changed, modified, and transformed?

### **Lesson**

*Read*

Genesis 1:27-28

<sup>27</sup> So God created humankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them. <sup>28</sup> God blessed them and said to them, “Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky and over every living creature that moves on the ground.”

Colossians 1:16

<sup>16</sup> For in him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things have been created through him and for him.

2 Timothy 1:9

He has saved us and called us to a holy life- not because of anything we have done but because of our own purpose and grace. This grace was given to us in Christ Jesus before the beginning of time.

God uniquely created us in His own image and blessed us to be fruitful and live out the purpose of our lives. We are called to work in harmony with Holy Spirit to bring glory to God. In Philippians 1:6, Paul writes that God has started God's work in us and will bring it to completion until the day of Christ Jesus. God is working in us so we can fully live our lives.

Question:

1. What is my vocation and calling in this world?
2. What is your understanding of vocation?
3. Calling?

### *Reflection on the life of Joseph*

Joseph was a dreamer, who was hated by his brothers because of the dreams that he had. He experienced many rejections, betrayals, losses, and pains in his life. As a teenage boy, he was thrown into the pit and sold by his own brothers and became a slave in another country. He went through many temptations, trials, and relational hurts; however, he continues to hold on to his dream and walk with God, the one who had given him the dream. Joseph acknowledged that it was God's purpose and plan to bring him to Egypt in order to fulfill God's salvation plan for his family. He forgave all his brothers, and he delivered his family as well as Egypt during the time of famine. Joseph experienced his dream coming true in his own eyes as his brothers and father came and bowed down before him.

Deborah Llyod, in her book *Your Vocational Credo*, writes that the pains and experiences on our life journey become the building blocks for our vocation and we are called alongside suffering to bring comfort in the way we ourselves have been comforted. It means that our experiences of pain are not wasted but are the lifelong building blocks for our vocation. The words used for comfort in Greek are from the same family of words used for vocation and calling, except they include the prefix para: parakaleo and paralesis. This prefix gives these words the meaning of "called alongside."

2 Corinthians 1:3-5

<sup>3</sup>Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, <sup>4</sup>who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves receive from God. <sup>5</sup>For just as we share abundantly in the sufferings of Christ, so also our comfort abounds through Christ.

God uses all our experiences to be foundational soil to bring changes and bear fruits. Our past mistakes and shortcoming can use as to enrich our soil.

### *Kintsugi pottery theology*



Romans 8:28

<sup>28</sup> And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.

Ephesians 2:10

<sup>10</sup> For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in

advance for us to do.

Psalms 37:4

Delight yourself in the Lord, and he will give you the desires of your heart.

### **Activity**

Choose the sheet that you are drawn to you the most

- Take some time to reflect on your spiritual journey and write down or draw your dream on paper. (10 mins – 15 mins)
  - What was your unmet dream/ unfulfilled dream/ broken dream?
  - What were the hindrances and difficulties that happened in your life that impacted you significantly?
  - Any hurts, losses, fears, pains, rejections, negative voices, personal sins, regrets...etc.
  - What makes you angry or sad?
    - What makes you smile and brings hope to your life?
    - What are some of the things you are passionate about?
    - What breaks your heart?
- Tear the paper that you drew or wrote on with your hands or scissors. (3-5 mins)
  - As you tear the paper, reflect on your past disappointments and pains.
- Take some time to look at the torn pieces and be silent. (3 – 5 mins)
  - Bring those pieces to God in prayer
  - Listen to God
  - See if there are any images, voices, and words that come to your mind.
- Do Collage Art with the broken pieces of your paper as you think about your vocation. You can make a butterfly or anything that comes to your mind.
  - Be creative
  - You can add more drawings or add more colored papers to your art.
  - You can write and do journaling on the art as well.

God put me in this earth to \_\_\_\_\_

so that \_\_\_\_\_. (Deborah Loyd's Credo example)

**Reflect**Journaling:

How was the process for you?

What are some new discoveries you made about yourself and your vocation?

**Share**Small Group:

Share what you discovered today, what surprised you, what challenged you, what gave you hope.

## APPENDIX B:

## QUESTIONNAIRE

**Spiritual and emotional health Questionnaire for Korean American Young****Adults**

Hi, my name is Hesed Lee. I am a student at Portland Seminary in Portland, Oregon, conducting a research study for my doctoral studies in Leadership and Spiritual Formation. I am inviting you to participate in the online research survey for my doctoral studies thesis.

This research aims to study the spiritual and emotional health of Korean American young adults who grew up in Korean American immigrant churches. This survey results will be a significant and fundamental part in building a creative way to bring spiritual formation to Korean American young adults' spiritual growth and identity formation. My email address is leeh18@georgefox.edu, and you may contact me at any time if you have questions about this study.

Thank you for helping to better understand the emotional and spiritual state of Korean American young adults. By completing this survey, you are giving your permission to participate in this survey and to use your answers in research. There are no anticipated risks to taking this survey, and this is an ANONYMOUS online survey.

Thank you for your time!

1. Gender
2. Age
3. I came to America.
  - a. After high school
  - b. between elementary school and high school (Elementary-Middle-High School).
  - c. Before elementary
  - d. N/A ( I was born in America.)
  - e. others
4. Language preference:
  - a. I am fluent in both English and Korean.
  - b. I can understand Korean, but I am more comfortable with English.
  - c. I can understand English, but I am more comfortable with Korean.
  - d. I do not feel comfortable using Korean. I only speak English.

- e. I do not feel comfortable using English. I only speak Korean.
- 5. How would you describe your current church congregation?
  - a. Primarily Korean speaking, immigrant church
  - b. English Ministry, which is a part of a Korean immigrant church
  - c. Primarily Second Generation, English-speaking Korean-American church
  - d. Multiethnic Asian-American church
  - e. Typical American church
  - f. Not attending one
  - g. I'm actively searching for one
  - e. others

### Section 1: Spiritual health

Please check the one that is most relevant to you.

1(Strongly disagree)-----3(Neutral)-----5(Strongly Agree)

- 1. I feel secure and confident in my identity as a child of God.
- 2. I am continually growing spiritually and feel connected to God.
- 3. I receive regular spiritual support or am a part of an accountability group
- 4. I believe that suffering and hardship are part of the maturing process.
- 5. I often struggle and doubt about my faith and/or wonder about my identity in God.
- 6. I often have difficulty trusting God and/or praying.
- 7. I often feel God is far from me and sense negative emotions when thinking about God.
- 8. I often struggle with guilt and shame and have a negative emotions about myself before God.
- 9. I often struggle with anxiety and have a difficulty focusing on God.
- 10. I often feel a disconnection between my faith and the current reality of my life.
- 11. I often struggle with my ethnic identity living in America.

### Section 2: Emotional Health

Please check the one that is most relevant to you.

1(Strongly disagree)-----3(Neutral)-----5(Strongly Agree)

- 1. I can be honest with myself about my feelings.
- 2. I can openly share my feelings, hurts, beliefs and doubts with others.
- 3. I often feel anxious and worry about my future.
- 4. I often feel sad and depressed and have a difficult time focusing on my daily routine.
- 5. I often feel guilty about my past and/or have a difficult time forgiving myself.
- 6. I often struggle with a sense of shame.
- 7. I often struggle with my self-esteem.
- 8. I often feel angry and have a difficult time handling my emotions.
- 9. I have had a traumatic experience (or past hurt) in the past and still struggle from its effects.

10. I often struggle with my relationship with my parents and it brings me negative feelings.
11. I often struggle with parental influence over me.
12. I often feel stressed with my identity with racial discrimination living in America.



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