

Spiritual Formation of the Minister

Class Lecture Outline

Introduction to the Course

Open class session in prayer

1. Introduction of Professor & Course

- Briefly share background
- Please feel free to offer comments, ask questions, etc.
- We're on this journey together.
- The more you put into it, the more you'll get out of it.

2. Introductory Disclaimer:

- I harbor no illusions about being an expert on Christian spirituality.
- I'm sure you've discovered, the more you learn the more you realize you don't know.
- It's the same way in our spiritual growth.
- The closer we become to God, the more we realize how far we have to go.
- I would be inclined to be suspicious of anyone who claimed to be.
- No single interpretation of the spiritual life can be considered definitive.
- The Holy Spirit is always free to increase our understanding.
- In this class I will offer my own understanding of what Christian spirituality is and how it may be nurtured in the lives of Christians today.

3. Focused "Spirituality Sharing" Activity

- Ahead of time, arrange a large tray with numerous and diverse objects (ruler, rock, tape, ball, globe, drum, candle, creel, etc.)
- Pass the tray around the circle and have class members select one object that reveals some aspect of their spirituality, and explain why.

4. Complete "The Christian Life Profile" & Spirituality assessment tools.

- Allow the class 1 1/2 hours to complete these assessment tools.
- Remind them to give three copies of the form to significant others in their lives to assist them in evaluating their spiritual state.

I. Spiritual Transformation: What is it?

Introduction/Background: The Cultural Milieu of Spirituality

Unprecedented spiritual hunger: contemporary society is searching for spirituality

- In American society today, a hunger for spiritual depth and meaning has become a social phenomenon.
- Example: Bookstore sales
 - "Gallup studies have projected that the largest sales increase in nonfiction books in the 21st century will be in religion/spirituality. The projection is that there will be an 82% growth in these books [by] 2010." (Downey, 6)
- People from all walks of life are searching with renewed intensity for a sp. center.
- Marjorie Thompson, Dir. of Pathways Center for Christian Spirituality, claims "what we are witnessing today may be close to the significance of the Great Awakening in the eighteenth century" (*Soul Feast*, p. 2).
- The change represents a powerful impulse toward spiritual wholeness at a time of unprecedented personal and social fragmentation.
- People today are seeking more ways to enter into a deeper expression of faith.

Caution: "spirituality" can mean many things

- While this cultural phenomenon may be good and cause some people to turn to God, many people are searching in all the wrong places.
- Many are turning to Eastern & Native Am. religions, occult, New Age, etc.
- A society perceives a spiritual smorgasbord, a sort of salad bar approach to spirituality which invites a nibble here and there on whatever suits one's taste.
- Much of what is referred to as "spirituality" has little direct reference to God.
- We must be careful then, because the term "spirituality" can mean many things.
 - Simply seeking "spirituality" does not automatically result in authentic sp. trans.
 - This phenomenon can however, be taken advantage of by Christians to encourage their own authentic spiritual transformation, as well as the sp. formation of others.

Beneath the cultural and personal factors lies a deeper reason for the spiritual hunger of our day: Humans are innately spiritual--God created us for relationship with Him.

- We are made for relationship with God.
- Therefore, until that relationship is sought and found, there will always be an emptiness at the core of our being.
- Centuries ago St. Augustine confessed to God, "You have made us for yourself, and our heart is restless until it rests in you." (*Confessions*, p. 3)
- God is the primary factor behind the spiritual seeking of our time.

In light of all that exists in the name of spirituality, what is authentic Christian spirituality?

A. The Definition of Spiritual Transformation

Group Discussion

- What does the phrase "spiritual transformation" mean to you?
- What role does "intentionality" and "alignment" have in our sp. transformation?
- Allow 10-15 minutes for discussion, then proceed with lecture.

1. Background of terms

- The term *spiritual transformation* has gained wide use in Christian circles.
- We seem to be attracted to the word because it is fresh compared to others.
- Older terms like "piety" or "devotion" have become weighed down with negative associations. (What comes to your mind?)
- Piety, once highly respected, now suggests to many a false air of spirituality.
- Indeed, many would consider it a bad thing to be called a "pious" Christian.
- What about another older word "devotion." (What comes to your mind?)
- Devotion, also carries some negative connotations in today's mind.
- The notion of complete devotion to anyone or anything may suggest excessive emotional attachments or lack of objectivity.
- Obsession or excessive commitment, like to a cult.
- The term also has the ring of a superficial and external exercise: "I do my 15 minutes devotions every morning."
- So terms such as *spiritual formation*, and *spiritual transformation* have become the contemporary words of choice for expressing how we live with God in this world.

2. Working Definition: Spiritual Transformation

- Spiritual transformation is the process of being conformed to the image of Christ by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit.
- Originally, humans were made in the image and likeness of God.
- Unfortunately, the Fall distorted that likeness.
- In Christ we are reshaped according to the image we were created to reflect.
- This reshaping process is what we refer to as spiritual transformation.

Illustration: Play-Doh

- Take a new can of play-doh and show the dough perfectly shaped.
- Then squeeze the dough so that it loses its shape completely.
- Now begin to shape the dough back into its original shape.
- This is what God is doing with our lives when we allow him to shape us.
- This reshaping process is what we refer to as spiritual transformation.

Personal Reflection

- This creates an opportunity for us to reflect.

- What or whose form are we seeking?
- What, in our personal or corporate life, needs to be re-formed?

Having considered a definition of spiritual transformation, how should we understand it?

B. The Nature of Spiritual Transformation

1. Spiritual transformation is dynamic.

- God's Spirit is continually challenging, changing, and maturing us.
- Although we may be able to point to a single and decisive conversion experience, spiritual transformation involves a continual journey.
- It can never be said in our lifetimes that we have "arrived."
- We are all simply journeying together in a process of transformation.
- This realization should bring relief for some who have been striving after perfection.

Group Discussion

- Is it God's work or our work that makes spiritual growth happen?
God's work?
 - Is He slacking off on His job, because I'm certainly not perfect yet
 - What about Phil. 1:6 which tells us to "work out our own salvation with fear and trembling"
- *Our work?*
 - What about Eph. 2:8-9 "It's not by works of righteousness that I have done..."
 - John 15, "The branch must remain in the vine, for life only comes from the v.."
- The answer of course, is both. Let's see...

2. Spiritual transformation is a work of the Spirit.

- It should be clear that authentic spirituality begins with God, depends on God, and ends in God.
- "It is God who works in us both to will and to do His good pleasure." (Phil. 2:13)
- Authentic spirituality is initiated and sustained by God's Spirit living in us.
- The spiritual life is not a task of self-reformation.
- There is no fix-it-yourself kit, no manual promising "five easy steps to complete spiritual maturity."

3. Spiritual transformation requires our cooperation

- Yes, spiritual growth comes from God, but it also requires our cooperation.
- God is not going to wave His magic wand & make us instantly spiritually complete
- Sp. growth is essentially a work of divine grace w/which we're called to cooperate
- Experience tells us that this is the hard part--we don't cooperate easily.
- Opening ourselves to the work of the Spirit requires effort and discipline.
- But when we choose to, God will help us grow.
- It's our choice if we want to do what it takes to grow spiritually.
- God, in His grace, undergirds rather than undermines our free choice.

Illustration: Observe a Sailboat

- It cannot move by its own power but must rely on the force of wind.
- Neither the sailboat nor sailor has any control over the wind.
- Still, a sailor can shift the position of the boat by adjusting tiller and sheets so that the sails catch the wind. Free will is like the sailor.
- Though at times it's hard, we can choose to hold the boat of our life steady into the wind of the Spirit. Then, our efforts are supported and directed by God.
- Caution: Once we have opened our sails to that wind, we need to be prepared to go where the Spirit blows!
- At least we can look forward to exhilaration and joy in the ride!

C.S. Lewis Story

- An excerpt from one of C.S. Lewis's books beautifully illustrates this balance.
- God wants to do the work, but we have to cooperate and allow Him to.
- Background: *The Great Divorce* is a story about a bus ride from Hell to Heaven. For some it is a one-way trip, for others it's a round trip.
- Read excerpt from pages 98-101.

Personal Reflection

- What are the lizards in your life that have hung around too long?
- (You want to get rid of it, but still you hang on--part of you enjoys it, or you're afraid of the pain of killing it.
- Think it through, then let God kill it.

4. Spiritual transformation involves every aspect of our lives.

- Our natural tendency is to compartmentalize our lives.
- We have our "spiritual life", our "work life", our "personal life," etc.
- We tend to think, "Ok, I've had my devotions for the day--I've spent my time with God" then go on with the rest of our day, never to think about Him again.
- But authentic spirituality is naturally holistic.
- The Spirit insists on transforming us at every level!

Illustration: Loaf of Bread

- Our life is kind of like this loaf of bread.
- We slice it up into many different pieces.
 - Hold up one slice: Here's our spiritual life
 - Hold up one slice: Here's our thought life
 - Hold up one slice: Here's our relationships
 - Hold up one slice: Here's our academic life; job; etc.
- But our "spiritual life" is not just one slice of our life.
- Rather, our spirituality is the leaven (yeast) for the whole loaf of our life!
- It encompasses every dimension of who we are: physical, emotional, social, mental, intellectual, financial, etc.
- Many of us must reshape how we think about our spirituality.

- Nothing that we do or think is without impact on our spiritual lives, and the spiritual life influences every other dimension of our being.

Application Discussion

- In light of this, what ramifications does authentic spirituality have on our lives?
 - Authentic spirituality will impact every area of our lives.
 - Authentic spirituality is practical and concrete.
 - There will be consistency between inward growth and outward actions.
 - If the Word I read this morning has no bearing on the way I relate to family, friend, and foe, or how I make decisions, then my faith is fantasy.

C. The Need for Spiritual Transformation

1. Five reasons why we hesitate in pursuing spiritual transformation.

- a. *Some feel too small/insignificant for God to bother with.*
 - Some unconsciously (or consciously) operate from the belief that the God Almighty, creator and sustainer of the Universe, has much bigger and more important things to worry about than spending time with them.
- b. *Some fear that God could not love them as they really are.*
 - Again, some unconsciously (or consciously) operate from the belief that they are unworthy of God's love and attention.
 - "When God sees me for who I really am, can I survive contact?"
- c. *Some are afraid of what they will encounter if they come too close to God.*
 - Some may be afraid that God is going to ask them to give up certain relationships, life dreams, or things we enjoy.
 - Fear God might call us to do something we don't feel we could do.
- All of these feelings will make us hesitate to seek God wholeheartedly.
- If someone struggles with one of these issues, I encourage you to make it a matter of prayer and study--with a proper understanding of the nature of God these feelings can be overcome!
- But probably the even greater hindrances are more tangible, practical issues.
- d. *Some are too caught up in the activity of serving God.*
 - The story of Mary and Martha reminds us of a choice we must make.
 - Will we sit at His feet and learn from him, or will we be preoccupied with the many tasks of serving Him?
 - Jesus makes it clear, "only one thing is needed."
 - Our work for Him must flow out of our worship of Him.
 - This is a very common trap of many well-intentioned leaders.
 - It's such a common and important issue that we will discuss this in greater length later in this course.
- e. *Some aren't willing to give it the hard work it requires.*
 - When it comes down to it, the majority of Christians are too undisciplined, or lazy to do what it takes to grow.
 - Let's face it, the disciplines are hard work, and in our busyness the important things tend to get pushed aside.
 - If you want spiritual transformation, it will cost you.
 - Let's quickly examine some of the reasons why its worth paying the price.

We've considered 5 reasons that stop people from pursuing the disciplines, now let's consider...

2. Five reasons why we must strive after spiritual transformation.

a. Spiritual transformation is necessary for our spiritual survival.

- Due to the fall, we are marred from our original likeness in God's image.
- Once we accept Christ's forgiveness, we begin the life-long process of being transformed back into his likeness.

(1) Striving after Godliness (Christlikeness) is our lifelong pursuit

- Godliness is not just a suggestion, but a command to every Christian.
- 1 Tim. 4:7: "Discipline yourself for the purpose of Godliness."
- The Greek makes it plain--this is a command, not a suggestion.
- Heb. 12:14: "Make every effort to live in peace with all men and to be holy, for without holiness no one will see the Lord."
- 1 Pet. 1:15-16 "But just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do; for it is written, 'be holy, because I am holy.'"
- What do these verses say about what it means to be Jesus' disciple?
- Godliness is not just a nice idea to go after if we feel like it.

(2) If Godliness is not an option, than neither is the means to Godliness

- God expects every Christian to practice the spiritual disciplines in their life-long pursuit of Godliness.
- In Gal. 5:23-one of the evidences of a Spirit-led life is self-control.
- We must have self-control (expressed in the disciplines) before we can be godly.
- 2 Pet. 1:6, "and to self-control, perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness."
- As we fill our hearts and minds with the things of God there will be less room for earthly things: A dead leaf cannot remain where a new bud is springing; nor can worldliness remain where the blessings of God are flowing.

b. Spiritual transformation was the model set before us by Jesus.

- WWJD? Has become a popular slogan in our society.
- But it must be more than a catchy phrase-we must really follow in his steps.
- When we read the NT, we see that Jesus' life was pervasively and deeply characterized by the spiritual disciplines.
- His life regularly included solitude, fasting, prayer, meditation, and Scripture study the sake of deepening spiritual communion and the transformation of the mind;
- If Jesus needed to engage in such activities, and learn obedience, how much more so do we?

- As followers of Jesus, we must be just as deeply characterized by the same for developing our spiritual lives.
- c. *Spiritual transformation is a prerequisite to effective ministry.*
- The connection between spirituality and ministry is demonstrated in the meeting between Jesus and a demoniac boy.
 - Jesus instructed his disciples that some ministry can only come through prayer and fasting (Mark 9:29).
 - The extent one is willing and able to weave the spiritual disciplines into their own private life will determine one's ability to minister effectively.
 - We cannot lead our people where we have not gone.
 - We can have all the leadership skills in the world, and simply be a good leader, not a good spiritual leader.
 - Personal charisma and skills will only take a leader so far.
 - Relying on skills and public persona will only last for a season.
 - Many ministers become casualties by running away from themselves, and from God, and into their work (activity trap).
 - Instead, we must learn to see spiritual disciplines for what they are: God's way of providing what we need to sustain us in our ministry.
- d. *Spiritual transformation renews vision and restores energy.*
- Spending time with God helps us keep our focus in life.
 - In Act 6:1-6 we see the account of the disciples and the needs of the growing church (feeding widows).
 - The disciples declared "It is not right for us to leave the ministry of the Word and Prayer."
 - They had discovered that the greatest service they could offer the church was their prayers and spending time in the Word.
 - Unless the Word was lived in them, they could not birth it in others.
 - They had a clear vision for what it was God had called them to do.
 - This can only come through spending time with God.
 - The busier we become, the more we need to spend time with God.
 - Martin Luther, at the height of the Reformation, declared: "I am so busy that unless I pray more hours every day, I won't get my work done."
 - Bill Hybels wrote a good book called "Too busy not to pray."
- e. *Spiritual transformation provides the proper example to our people.*
- Others are watching and will follow our example.
 - We cannot lead others where we have not gone.
 - Personal reflection: Think of a spiritual mentor in your life. What have they taught you about spiritual growth?

D. The Means of Spiritual Transformation

- *Just how do we go about developing spiritually?*
- *In his book Streams of Living Water, Richard Foster discusses four primary avenues for spiritual growth.*

1. Difficulties and Trials

- Often God uses the various difficulties and trials we face in life to produce in us Christlike virtues.
- James tells us that trials can result in patience and endurance (James 1:2-3).
- God uses the problems of life for our spiritual good.
- Remember what was said of Joseph, "Satan meant it for evil, but God used it for good" (Gen. 50:20).
- Brokenness puts us in a place to receive from God
- Illustration: Loaf of french bread; when you pour water over the crusty edge it rolls off, but when you break the loaf in half and pour water it soaks it up.
- Illustration: Joshua Breaking His Leg.
When our son Joshua was 9 months old, he fell and broke his leg. That was a difficult, but valuable growth time for Cheryl. All of the pride, in concern of what others think, comes to the surface. The anger that people would think such of you--it all welled up and had to be dealt with. (Ironically, Cheryl was scheduled to preach the next Sunday, on James chapter 1, trials and temptations. God gave her a living illustration.)
- While this is not always the most fun way to learn, trials are one avenue by which we grow spiritually.
- What's really inside (our true spirituality), will become evident as we face the pressures/tests of life.
- Illustration: When you pour boiling water to different things you get dif. results.
 - Pour boiling water on an egg and the egg gets hard
 - Pour boiling water on a carrot and the carrot gets soft & mushy
 - Pour boiling water on coffee grounds and you change the water
 - Under the boiling water (difficulties of life) do we get hard, soft, or change the circumstances into something good?
- Example: Barry Bonds can practice batting all he wants. But it only matters what he does in the game.
- Illustration: Tea bags-you can only see what's inside when it's in the hot water.

2. Human beings and other physical means

- Sometimes God will use other people or circumstances to help us grow.
- God can strategically place people in our lives to help shape us, form us, and help us to become spiritually transformed.
- You are fortunate if you have had the joy of having a person like this in your life on a regular basis (a mentor).

- You are also fortunate if it has been in the form of an “irregular person/unlovely person” who drains you.
- You can learn virtues through these “spiritual vampires” (patience/longsuffering).

3. Divine infusions of grace

- Occasionally, God will directly intervene in our life in a supernatural way.
- God may grant a "divine infusion of grace" which produce in us quantum leaps forward.
- These appear to be sovereign acts of God--we don't cause them to happen, and they are not connected to our own efforts.
- Example: Perhaps someone has been struggling with a particular addiction, say pornography, and at some point all distorted desires simply and totally disappear.
- Or maybe in some worship service wave after wave of God's supernatural love washes over you, leaving you with a deep peace and joy.
- These are glorious acts of God for which the only response is to fall to our knees in worship, adoration, and praise.

There is a fourth, and more primary avenue by which most spiritual growth occurs...

4. Spiritual Disciplines

- * What is the first thing that comes into your mind when I say the word “discipline”?
 - * For most of you, it’s probably not something very pleasant.
 - * I think of my mother saying, “Now this hurts me more than it hurts you.”
 - * At best, you might think of disciplining yourself to be good at sport/instrument
 - * This involves pain and long hard work that may not seem very exciting at the time.
- * What about the term “Spiritual disciplines”?
 - * When it comes to discipline in the Christian life, for many it’s the same thing.
 - * Many believers feel that spiritual discipline is a drudgery, a cross we must bear.
 - * How about you? Ask yourself (be honest): what has my attitude been like toward Spiritual Disciplines such a prayer, fasting, evangelism, and reading the Bible?
- a. *What are Spiritual Disciplines?*
 - The Spiritual Disciplines are simply those personal and corporate practices that promote spiritual growth.
 - The NT Greek word translated “discipline” in the NASB, is *gumnisa* (*goomnyssa*) from which the English words gymnasium/gymnastics derive.
 - This word means “to exercise or discipline.” (Similar to physical exercise)
 - Just as the physical exercise promotes physical strength, so the spiritual exercise promotes spiritual strength.
 - Spiritual disciplines are known as the "means of grace."
 - This refers to the means by which we make ourselves open and available to the grace of God working in our lives and ministries.
 - John Ortberg makes an important distinction here from training vs. trying.

- Quote: Tom Landry, coach of the Dallas Cowboys football team, said, “The job of a football coach is to make men do what they don’t want to do in order to achieve what they’ve always wanted to be.”
- Christians are called to make themselves do something they would not naturally do (pursue the spiritual disciplines) in order to become what they’ve always wanted to be (like Jesus Christ.)

b. *Variety of spiritual disciplines*

- There are many different kinds of spiritual exercises have been practiced by believers through the centuries.
- Any practice which we engage in on a regular basis to promote spiritual growth could be considered a spiritual discipline.
- Brainstorm: What are some examples of Spiritual disciplines?

Willard: Spirit of the Disciplines

Foster: Celebration of Discipline

Additional Ideas

Disciplines of Abstinence

Solitude
Silence
Fasting
Frugality
Chastity
Secrecy
Sacrifice

Inward Disciplines

Meditation
Prayer
Fasting
Study

Journaling
Sabbath Keeping
Vigil/watch
Work
Play/leisure
Stewardship
Evangelism

Outward Disciplines

Simplicity
Solitude
Submission
Service

Compassion
Mentoring

Disciplines of Engagement

Study
Worship
Celebration
Service
Prayer
Fellowship
Confession
Submission

Corporate Disciplines

Confession
Worship
Guidance
Celebration

- In shaping our own list of spiritual disciplines, we should strive to practice a range of activities that have proven track records.
- This will help keep us from becoming unbalanced in some side area.

Appreciative Reflection

- Think of someone you know who you look up to spiritually.
- Which spiritual disciplines does he/she practice regularly?
- What result/impact has that discipline had on their life?

Personal Reflection

- Think...in the last 2 weeks, which disciplines have you practiced?
- What spiritual discipline are you strongest at? Weakest?
- What challenges does being in full-time ministry bring to your spiritual life?

Personal Exposure

- Variety: Has your spiritual life gotten into a rut?

- There are many things that we can do to bring excitement back into our dev. lives.
- Do the Imaginative prayer exercise (from Jn 1:35-39) described on the next page.

Imaginative Prayer Exercise (John 1:35-39)

Introduction

- Get out a sheet of paper, then sit back and relax.
- Breathe in deep and let it all out--your midterm is over.
- I'm going to read a passage of Scripture (John 1:35-39).
- Setting: John the Baptist has been in Bethany, preaching and baptizing disciples. He has been announcing that Jesus would be coming soon. This is where our passage picks it up...

First Reading

(Read John 1:35-39 slowly & peacefully. Pause to emphasize bolded words.)

The next day, John (the Baptist) was there again with two of his disciples. When he saw Jesus passing by he said, "Look, the Lamb of God!" When the two disciples heard him say this, they followed Jesus. Turning around, Jesus saw them following him and asked, "**What do you want?**" They said, "Rabbi, where are you staying?" "**Come and follow me,**" he replied, "and you will see." So they went and saw where he was staying, and spent that day with him.

Second Reading

- I'm going to read the passage again, and as I do, this time I want you to imagine that they are actually there.
 - You are one of the two disciples of John the Baptist
 - Imagine how things looked in the ancient Palestine town
 - What sounds do you hear, what smells do you smell?
 - Is it hot? How are people dressed?
 - What was going through your mind when you first saw the Messiah?
 - How did you feel?
- Read John 1:35-39 through again.

Reflection Exercise

- You get to spend the day with Jesus at his house.
 - What will you talk about with Jesus? What are you thinking and feeling?
 - I want you to write your conversation with Jesus.
 - Allow 20-25 minutes to reflect/write conversation.
 - Bring group back together and let the group discuss their experience.
 - What did they think of this exercise? Was it meaningful?
 - Would anyone like to share some of your conversation with Jesus?
-
- This is what St. Ignatius of Loyola called "imaginative prayer."
 - It is simply another dimension of prayer, as distinguished from discursive prayer.

- We all respond to God in different ways, and I wanted to expose you to yet another method you can try in your own quiet time.
- This was just one example of bringing variety into our spiritual lives.
- What steps can you take to practice a new spiritual discipline this week in order to energize your spiritual transformation?

c. Motivation behind the spiritual disciplines

Brainstorm

- Why do people practice spiritual disciplines?
 - We know we should
 - Its good for us
 - We're required to

Personal Reflection

- On a scale of 1 to 10 (10=on fire; 1=dead) where would you rate your sp. life?
- Why did you give yourself the score that you did? What standard did you use?
- Was it comparing yourself w/others and you think you do better/worse?
- Did you score yourself low because you feel guilty that you should be doing more?
- Did you score yourself high or low simply because you know that you engage in spiritual disciplines more or less than others?
- It's possible for Xtians to engage in the disciplines, but for all the wrong reasons

Consider some of the following motivations for carrying out spiritual disciplines...

(1) Some people engage in the disciplines out of guilt.

- If we are honest, many people are motivated by guilt
- But God wants us to be motivated by a sincere desire to grow in our love relationship with him.
- Often, this kind of guilt is a product of legalism.
- People are simply performing “duties” out of a sense of obligation.
- They place strict demands on themselves and others, and in so doing, completely miss the joy & delight in the transformation journey.
- When legalism is the motivation, the practice is usually not fresh and meaningful, because their heart is not in it.
- It simply becomes a ritual that can even lead to feelings of smug self-righteousness and pride.

(2) Some people engage in disciplines based solely on comparison w/others.

- When I asked you to rate your spiritual life on a scale of 1 to 10, why did you give yourself the score that you did?
- What standard did you use? Was is comparing yourself w/others?
- Some people have no frame of reference of where they are spiritually and what they need to do, they simply see that someone else did such and such, and so they must need to do that as well.
- What is the problem with using others as our standard of comparison?

- We can only see a slice of their life (what they want us to see), and just because someone looks like they have it together on the outside does not necessarily say anything about their true spiritual state.
- It is often based on wrong motives such as competition or jealousy.

(3) Some people engage in the disciplines for self-serving purposes.

- Some Christians engage in extreme practice of a given discipline(s), (what some would call asceticism) but in so doing can miss the point.
- Example: a devoted Body Builder (or extreme sports)
- Have you ever been in the presence of a person obsessed with diet or body-building? The point no longer seems to be healthy or strength, but self-admiration and self-obsession.
- Like a runner who becomes addicted to running. They seek the "high" and enjoy the strenuous exertion for their own sake more than for the contribution exercise makes to their total life and health.
- In such bodybuilding groups, we often see muscle for muscle's sake.
- Similarly, in the excesses of spiritual legalism or asceticism, we see asceticism for asceticism's sake.
- These people are no longer truly concerned about taking pains for the end of a healthy relationship with Christ. Rather, they are consumed with the practice/activity for ulterior reasons.

(4) We should choose to engage in the disciplines for spiritual transformation

- We choose to engage in a training regimen for long-term sp. benefit.
- The capacity to abide in God's presence come only through steady training. If we wish to experience Christ in our daily existence, we will need some kind of intentional practice of spiritual discipline.
- We recognize that this is necessary, since the desired spiritual response to circumstances does not come naturally, but usually goes exactly against our natural response.
- However, if we practice something enough, it'll begin to come naturally
- Athletes practice over and over, so they can do it right in the test.
- Illustration: Dr. William C. DeVries, who installed the first artificial heart in a human being, told of the many times he had practiced such an installation in animals. And in his discussion was this simple yet profound explanation: "The reason you practice so much is so that you will do things automatically the same way every time."

Having considered what spiritual disciplines are, the variety of disciplines, and the motivation in which they should be carried out, let's quickly identify four limits...

d. The limits of the disciplines

(1) Spiritual disciplines are only a means to godliness, they are not an end in themselves.

- Just as there is little value in practicing the scales on a guitar or piano apart from the purpose of playing music, there is little value in practicing spiritual disciplines apart from the purpose for which they are intended-to grow in our relationship with God.
- To simply practice Spiritual disciplines is not the end-all goal.
- There are pious, religious people who don't have a growing relationship w/God (the Pharisees).
- Just because I fast & pray does not mean that I have communed w/God.
- Remember, all the "disciplines" or "works" in the world cannot make us holy, for growth in holiness is a gift from God (Jn. 7:17; 1 Thess. 5:23; Heb. 2:11).
- However, when we practice the disciplines we put ourselves in a place where God can work in us.
- The disciplines serve as channels of God's transforming power.
- As we practice them, God's grace flows to us and we are changed.

Exercise: Left-handed letter to God

- Have everyone take out a clean piece of paper and write a letter to God using their opposite hand. The letter should discuss how they're doing in practicing the spiritual disciplines. (Allow 5 minutes to write)
- Brainstorm: Why would I have you write this letter in your opposite hand? What could this possibly teach us about practicing sp disciplines?
 - It reminds us that it is not our first nature, it is not what comes naturally, we have to work at it
 - It demonstrates how our own effort/ability is not good enough--we have to rely on God helping us
 - It reveals our insecurities and fears--it's a learning process
 - It reminds us that we can get so caught up in the mechanics of writing that we forget the purpose--writing a letter to God.
 - Practicing sp. disciplines can be the same--we can get so caught up in the discipline itself, that we forget why we are doing them
 - The disciplines become an end in themselves, rather than a means of experiencing sp. transformation in our lives.

(2) Spiritual disciplines are not always "exciting."

- Disciplines, as the ordinary every day means of character transformation, lacks the fireworks of the special infusions of overwhelming grace.
- We'd much rather have a mountain top experience than have to faithfully plod through day by day.
- But this is where the majority of our growth will come from.

Illustration: Vitamin C

- Spiritual transformation is kind of like taking vitamins.
- Have a student swallow 2 vitamin c tablets.

- Ask student, do you feel charged? Are you pretty excited about that?
- No, but through a regular daily practice of that, you would build your body's defenses, making it strong.
- It is the same way spiritually. We may not feel a charge, but we will be building our spiritual defenses, making us strong spiritually.
- It's easy to undervalue this most fundamental means of spiritual growth.
- The disciplines appear so commonplace, quiet and unimpressive, but they are the primary means by which we grow.

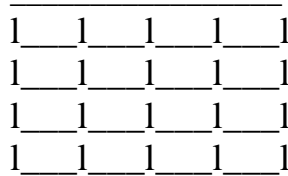
(3) **Spiritual disciplines require work for growth.**

- Our job is cut out for us--we have work to do, with God's help.
- Phil. 2:12b-13: "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who is at work in you, enabling you both to will and to work for his good pleasure."
- Sp. transformation requires patience, faithfulness and commitment.
- One role of the Holy Spirit is to produce within us the desire and the power for the disciplines that lead to Godliness.
- 2 Tim. 1:7: "For God did not give us the spirit of timidity, but a spirit of power, of love, and of self-discipline."
- Make it a matter of regular prayer, and ask for His help.
- In the end, the hard work will pay off.
- Donald Whitney: "The gold of Godliness isn't found on the surface of Christianity. It has to be dug from the depths w/the tools of the disciplines."
- Illustration: It's the difference between snorkeling and scuba diving.
- Illustration: Read Sherlock Holme's mystery (from Howard Hendrick's *Living by the Book*)

(4) **Spiritual disciplines require time for growth.**

- At times, the process of spiritual transformation seems painfully slow.
- The transformation process takes place little by little, by passing from one degree to another with labor and patience.
- "The soul that rises from sin to devotion may be compared to the dawning of the day, which at its approach does not expel the darkness instantaneously but only little by little." (Francis de Sales)
- Godliness does not happen overnight--it is a life-long process.
- We're not going to attain it during a good spiritual emphasis week
- We're not going to attain it by reading Ortberg's book or taking this class
- We're not even going to attain it in this lifetime.
- Be patient & diligent: Don't neglect regularly practicing the disciplines.
- It takes persistent hard work, but it will pay off in the long run.
- Illustration: It Takes Time and Effort

- How many squares do you see below? (30)



- Just as some of you gave up before you found all 30 squares, it's easy for us to give up too easily in our spiritual journeys.
- We don't take the time to really explore the depths of God.
- We settle for snorkeling when we could be scuba diving.

E. The Result of Spiritual Transformation

1. Spiritual transformation brings us ever closer to Christlikeness.

- The ultimate goal of spiritual transformation is our restoration into the image of X.
- As we strive after spiritual transformation, our lives will increasingly operate in the dominion of the spirit, reflecting godly character and perspective.
- As we are faithful, God, through His Spirit, is determined to pursue this good work in us to the very end.
- Discipline builds habits; habits build character; and character builds destiny.
- Note: Our transformation into the likeness of Christ will not be fully completed in this life.

2. Spiritual transformation provides the foundation for effective ministry.

- Spiritual transformation is prerequisite to effective ministry.
- Without it, you're just a good leader, not a good spiritual leader.

3 Spiritual transformation brings freedom and joy.

Freedom

- Freedom comes through the mastery of any discipline.
- Have you ever watched a musician, who has dedicated his/her life to practice, and now they can do anything they want, and they make it look so easy?!
- As we grow in Godliness, we attain a new freedom in Christ that is exhilarating.

Joy

- A disciplined Christian does not have to be a joyless, grumpy, drill sergeant.
- With the proper goal, disciplines become a delight, not a drudgery.
- In fact, Shawchuck and Heuser call them Spiritual Delights, not Sp. Disciplines.
- Discipline with direction-- results in the joy of a spiritually disciplined life.
- That joy is not there if you're just doing it out of guilt or obligation.

Illustration

- How many of you have ever been in love?

- You know that when you're in love you want to spend all of your time with that person, talking to them about everything.
- How would you feel if you found out that the person was just spending time with you for an assignment for school, or because their pastor told them they should.
- As we grow in love with Jesus, we look forward to spending time with Him, talking with him, and hanging on every word.

4. Spiritual transformation results in downward mobility.

- There are two basic (and contrasting) approaches we can take to our spirituality. (These are outlined by Shawchuck & Heuser in *Managing the Congregation*.)
 - One of these approaches reflects that of the early church, and the other reflects the church of Christendom.
 - As I present these two concepts, I challenge you to assess which most characterizes your own spiritual attitudes and experiences.
 - If we reflect honestly, most of us will locate ourselves somewhere in one of these two spiritualities, identifying how expressions of these are manifested in our lives & work.
- a. The Spirituality of the Apostolic Church: Downward Mobility*
- Jesus proclaimed a message of sacrifice and self-denial--out of which would come joy and fruitfulness.
 - While there were some who wanted to make him a political ruler, and argue where each would sit in his kingdom, Jesus resisted such voices and pointed to the downward way of service.
 - From humble beginnings, to a life of service, he eventually died like a criminal.
 - The church that came into being faced rejection by the status quo, persecution, poverty and death.
 - The spirituality of the ancient Church was one of humility, meekness, sacrifice, suffering, but it was also characterized by an infectious joy and freedom, and the rich presence and blessing of God in their evangelistic efforts.
 - The spirituality of downward mobility is the way chosen by God (see Phil. 2).
 - The invitation to journey with Christ into downward mobility is extended to us that we might be able to find God in the midst of our struggles, then we are transformed by the Spirit, being formed into Christ's likeness.
 - The fruit of this spirituality blesses the world: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control (Gal. 5:22-23).
- b. The Spirituality of Christendom: Upward Mobility*
- Christendom, the label for a powerful religious monarchy, did not emerge until the 4th century with the conversion of the mighty emperor Constantine.
 - Upon his conversion Constantine decreed that all his subjects were to be Xtian-or else!
 - By that decree Christendom was born.
 - Now the Church, far from being persecuted and killed, could itself arrest, persecute and kill anyone who did not blindly swallow the party line.
 - From Christendom came the inquisitions, burnings at the stake, wars to subdue heathen kingdoms--all in the name of Christ.

- Christendom ascended to its highest pinnacle of power in the advent of the papacy.
- The leaders of Christendom wrote, preached, and sang about its invincible power in military terms: "Onward Christian soldiers, marching as to war..."
- The spirituality of Christendom was one of power, adulation, conquest, and victory.
- The economic goal was upward mobility, identifying w/the successful & the powerful.

The Temptations of Upward Mobility

- Because of our human nature, every Christian faces numerous temptations, not to mention the extra vulnerability faced by leaders in position of authority.
- The gospel account of Jesus in the wilderness (Mt. 4:1-11) describes three such temptations faced by Jesus at the start of His ministry.
- (Note, all are a result of our relentless desire to join the ranks of the upwardly mobile.)
 - a. The temptation for an abundant supply of bread is the temptation to guarantee our own security.*
 - This temptation is universal.
 - Bread is the symbol of having enough of whatever we need in order to have total relief from the fear of coming to the end of our ministry in poverty.
 - How much do you need to feel secure in your ministry?
 - Will you sleep well and with a secure sense of accomplishment if you have a large salary? Have your home paid for? Have a nest egg stored for your retirement?
 - b. The temptation to cast one's self down is to feel that we have to prove our worth.*
 - In essence, Satan is saying to Jesus: "Prove it. Prove your greatness to me. Prove it to yourself and to others."
 - Herein lies the most insidious temptation for ministers: to feel that we must prove our greatness as the leader of this group.
 - Subconsciously, we believe that only then will we be free of the lurking fear that "I am really not good enough, not bright enough to lead this group."
 - Then people will recognize our abilities and accept me as their equal, or even as more than their equal.
 - c. The temptation to "glory" is the desire to manage w/a sense of spiritual flashiness.*
 - This is the temptation to show people just how spectacular we are, to be the star attraction, or to manage the best program.
 - This temptation pushes us to abuse our power and our calling in order to reach the top, to lead bigger and better programs than others.

Conclusion

- In positioning ourselves before God, we must do business with these bribes.
- The temptations to be secure, to prove our worth, and to be a "great" leader are unavoidable aspects of our positions as ministers.
- How then, do we successfully confront these temptations, inherent with our position?
- The key lies in the practice of the same spiritual disciplines and virtues that Jesus employed to confront the relentless temptations of his own ministry.

Personal Reflection Questions

- Make a list of the aspirations you have held for your life and ministry, and of the major career decisions you have made in the past 5-10 years. Do these aspirations and decisions characterize more of the spirit of downward mobility or upward mobility?
- Which of the two approaches to spirituality most accurately describes your leadership attitudes and behaviors? What are the long-term results for you and for the ministry?

Small Group Discussion Questions

- List 5 or 10 of the most predominant concerns of church leaders today. Are these concerns indicative of the apostolic church or Christendom? Of a desire for downward mobility or upward mobility?

Introduction

- In this session I will present a working model that is designed to facilitate sp. transformation.
- This is just one model, composed of several basic components to get you started.
- You may create variations on this, adding components to meet your specific purposes.
- The following model is designed to lead you through two steps:
 - Assessing your present spiritual formation, then
 - Facilitating a plan to ensure your ongoing/future spiritual transformation
- Let's take a look first at suggestions for completing an assessment of where we are spiritually.

II. Assessing Your Present Spiritual Formation

- It can difficult to gain an honest and realistic assessment of where we are spiritually.
- We all have blind spots, and there may be areas of our faith on which we've never intentionally and specifically reflected.
- Here are several keys to help us objectively assess where we are.

A. Prayerfully Seek the Guidance of the Holy Spirit

- As you reflect on what you need to do to grow, pray about it.
- Make it a matter of prayer for the Spirit to reveal areas for growth.
- It is important that you have an honest desire to see yourself as you really are.
- Allow God to shine the spotlight of His Holy Spirit in the dark recesses of your heart.

B. Utilize Various Spirituality Tests

- There are several different tools that can be used to help us determine our present spiritual formation (spiritual gifts tests, fruit of the Spirit tests, etc.)
- These tools are helpful because they are objective and comprehensive.
- They help us to recognize many things about ourselves which we may not have thought about before.
- We have selected one tool that is particularly helpful, *the Christian Life Profile*, and had you complete that already.
- This test measures spiritual formation in two broad categories: love of God and love of neighbor.
- Within each category, the instrument assesses your personal spiritual formation in three subcategories: beliefs, virtues, and practices.
- In all, 30 different beliefs, virtues, and practices (core competencies) are measured.
- Each of these competencies is individually scored, so you can create a benchmark of your present spiritual formation.
- Reflect upon and pray about the test results in order to target specific areas for growth.

C. Utilize Various Temperament/Personality Tests

- Again, there are many helpful tools that can assist you in identifying potential areas for growth related to your individual temperament and personality.
- Some of these tools include the *T-JTA*, the *Myers-Briggs*, or other personality tests.
- These instruments can help you discover how your natural disposition influences your spiritual transformation process.
- For this course, we will utilize your *T-JTA* test results, since you already had to take this test to attend AGTS.
- Like the Christian Life Profile, this test provides another tool for targeting specific areas in which you can seek spiritual growth.
- As we gain deeper insight into ourselves, we can explore specific disciplines and activities that may best support spiritual maturation.
- Since this is such a big and important part of your plan, next week we will be having Dr. Mark Bradford, the head of our counseling program here, come and address the class on this whole subject. He will help us see how we can best utilize the test results.
- After he does this, it will be important for you to reflect on your test results in order to target specific areas for growth.

D. Reflect on “Appreciative Inquiry” Reflection Questions

- A third way to assess your present spiritual status is to engage in “appreciative inquiry” reflection and discussion.
- Appreciative Inquiry is a method for doing brainstorming and discussion.
- It is a technique that can be used to get you thinking about a subject in a new way.
- The goal of appreciative inquiry is to focus on the positive elements, not the problems.
- In this instance, it is used to get us to focus on the highlights of our spiritual journey.
- We reflect on the good things about our spiritual journey (i.e. the challenges we have overcome, the progress we have made).
- In the same positive light, when we remind ourselves of the dreams/goals we have for our spiritual life, it can refocus us on the possibilities and envision an ideal spiritual future.
- It can help us to recognize what helped us to grow in the past, and what we might need to do to recreate that climate of growth.
- It can help us to gain confidence that what has happened in the past can happen again.
- It can give us fresh vision and motivation to move forward.
- The positive result of operating from an appreciative mode is that we are drawn to pursuing goals that we have identified as life-enriching and that we understand to be attainable.

Sample Appreciative Inquiry Questions

- At what point in your life did you feel closest to God? Why? (What was going on, or what were you doing, to be where you were spiritually?)
- Give one example from your life when something you did most exemplified your faith.
- Without being humble, describe what you value most about your spiritual life.
- Describe your three concrete wishes/future goals for your spiritual life.

E. Seek Input From Significant Others

- God did not create us to live as Lone Rangers. We need each other.
- We must intentionally cultivate meaningful spiritual relationships.
- When we participate in peer accountability groups, and other such discipleship groups, we develop the kind of relationships that allow people to speak into our lives.
- As one tool here, the *Christian Life Profile* test provides additional questionnaires to be completed by three significant other people in your life.
- The perceptions of others who have your best spiritual interest at heart can be a valuable tool to assist you in catching any “blind spots” you may have missed in your own personal introspection.
- Use these tests to talk with these significant people about your spiritual growth.
- Talk with your spouse, pastor/staff, accountability partners, etc.
- Reflect upon and pray about the test results in order to target specific areas for growth.

F. Complete a Personal Spiritual Timeline (Reflect on Your Spiritual Pilgrimage)

- Leadership expert, Robert Clinton, promotes an exercise that helps you to create your own personal spiritual timeline.
- This exercise helps you to reflect upon and systematically recall your spiritual journey.
- What are the significant events in your life?
- What are your spiritual highs and lows? Why?
- How have these events contributed to and shaped you?
- Do you see some general or specific trends and patterns? Are they significant?

G. Prayerfully Seek the Guidance of the Holy Spirit

- As you reflect on all of the information that you have uncovered, pray about it.
- The process begins and ends in prayer--and is bathed in prayer throughout.

H. Determine Your Target Areas for Desired Spiritual Growth

- Reflect upon everything you have gleaned from the first six components in order to determine your present spiritual formation.
- From this, identify specific areas that should be targeted in your personal growth plan.
- Be specific and realistic.
- We'll talk about this more specifically in the next section.

III. Facilitating Your Ongoing Spiritual Transformation

- In light of the above assessment process, you are now ready to move forward.
- There are three steps to follow.

A. Develop A Personal Spiritual Growth Plan

- Reflect on the information obtained from your assessment in order to develop a meaningful personal spiritual growth plan.
- The growth plan should include four things:

1. Specific goals for growth

- Start with 4-6 tangible goals for growth over the course of this semester.
- Depending on the nature of the areas you take on, some people may have more/less than others.
- Example: I want to have more compassion for this in need in my city.

2. Practical and realistic steps to accomplish the goals

- Example: I will volunteer one afternoon a month at the local soup kitchen/Big Brothers program, meals on wheels, etc.
- These personal growth plans should be contextualized to realistically fit your particular situation.
- It's better to have a few things that you can really stick to and do, than several things that sound good, but you could never accomplish.

3. Tangible means of accountability.

- Example: I will commit to a Big Brother program that will require a weekly commitment.
- Example: I will share with my small group once of month on my progress in this area.
- An important component of the spiritual transformation model is the participation in a peer accountability small group.
- Share your goals and plans with your group. They can help you see any unrealistic plans, share additional ideas that have worked for them, and hold you accountable.

4. Tangible means of evaluation

- Your plan must include intentional means by which to determine if the desired growth is occurring.
- Example: In 3 months when I retake the CLP, I would like my score to increase by 5 points.

- Example: I would like to hear my spouse (or someone else) given an unsolicited comment on my increased compassion/concern for others.
- Example: I will log my experiences in my spiritual journal. I can look back to see how consistent I have been, how my attitude is, etc.
- **Example**: I would like to have an honest desire to increase from one intentional activity mentioned in my plan, to 2 or 3.

B. Carry Out Your Personal Spiritual Growth Plan

1. Carry out your growth plan, keeping a journal of your experience.

- Enough time should be allowed for realistic growth to occur.
- A minimum of 8-12 weeks is recommended.
- A log or journal helps to keep you focused on charting your progress.

2. Meet regularly with others to intentionally discuss your spiritual progress.

- You should meet regularly w/others for mutual encouragement toward sp. growth.
- In this class, we will assign you to a small group, specifically to encourage each other in carrying out your spiritual growth plans
- You may also have other small groups or accountability partners outside of this class.
- In addition to upholding each other in prayer, your small groups can provide practical insight on how to practice and grow in disciplines and virtues leading to spiritual transformation.

C. Evaluate to Ensure that Desired Growth is Occurring

- *Reflect on the results of your experience through the following means:*

1. Utilize Evaluation Tools

- Use the *Christian Life Profile* as a posttest to determine if growth is occurring and to provide tangible evidence of your progress.
- Utilize any other specific evaluation means you had built into your spiritual growth plan to evaluate your progress.

2. Obtain Feedback from Significant Others

- Seek feedback from your accountability group, spouses, etc. and any other evaluation means you had built into your spiritual growth plan to evaluate your progress.

3. Engage in Personal Evaluation and Reflection

- Reflect on the results of your experience and all of the information gleaned above.

D. Adjust Growth Plan for Ongoing Growth

- In light of your evaluation and reflection process, determine where you need to go from here and adjust your plan accordingly.
- In light of your growth experience, cater your personal development strategy for ongoing growth.
- Your plan is not complete without this.
- Spiritual transformation is not an 8-12 week program, but a life-long commitment.
- This will set you up to regularly reflect, evaluate and regroup for consistent and continual growth, catered just for you and your current spiritual needs.