



UNIT 5

Chapter 2

Spiritual Formation

This unit was written by several HCMA Chaplains and edited by Jeffrey R. Funk, former HCMA Executive Director. It is for the exclusive use of HCMA Chaplains and Trainees. It is not to be altered in any way—no edits of form or content. Permission for any other use must be obtained in writing from:

Healthcare Chaplains Ministry Association
101 S Kraemer Blvd, Suite 123A
Placentia, California 92870-5094
Phone : (714) 572-3626 | Fax : (714) 572-0585
E-mail : info@hcmachaplains.org | Website : www.hcmachaplains.org

www.hcmachaplains.org

Copyright © 2016, HCMA. All rights reserved.



Chapter 2

Spiritual Formation

Table of Contents

Your Spiritual and Emotional Journey.....	4
Inadequacy.....	5
Accountability.....	5
Strengths.....	6
Daily Devotions/Quite Time.....	7
Bible Reading.....	8
Prayer.....	8
Other Spiritual Practices.....	8
Balance.....	9
Spiritual Perspective.....	10
Spiritual Openness.....	10
Chapter Assignments.....	10
Chapter Resources.....	11
Appendix A: Three Temptations of Spiritual Formation.....	20
Appendix B: Spiritual Formation: A Pastoral Letter.....	23
Appendix C: Father's Love Letter.....	27
Appendix D: Because God Loves Me.....	29



Spiritual Formation



*Nearly all wisdom we possess,
that is to say true and sound wisdom,
consists of two parts: the knowledge of God and of ourselves.*

— John Calvin (1509-1564), French Protestant theologian



*I desire to know God and the soul.
Nothing more? Nothing whatsoever....
Let me know myself, let me know Thee.*

— Augustine of Hippo (354-430), early church father



It is good, periodically, to stop rushing about and take spiritual inventory of our life. It's beneficial to settle down from the frantic pace and be alone with God (Matthew 14:23). It's helpful to remember that it is better to take time to listen to God than to expect Him to only listen to us. Each day we need to take time alone in order to be quiet, to pray, to worship, and to reflect upon what we have been learning and where we are in our relationship with our heavenly Father.

This chapter is designed to help us evaluate our personal, inner life as it relates to our outer life as a healthcare Chaplain.

If you're not in the habit of journaling, you may want to consider starting a journal that reflects not so much the events of the day but your spiritual assessment of them and of your part in them.¹

¹ For those who are not familiar with journal writing, it is recommended that you read James E. Miller, *The Rewarding Practice of Journal Writing: A Guide for Starting and Keeping Your Personal Journal* (Fort Wayne, IN: Willowgreen Publishing, 1998). Another book to consider is Luann Budd, *Journal Keeping: Writing for Spiritual Growth* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2002).

Your Spiritual and Emotional Journey

Spend some time in Bible study, reflection and prayer as you review your spiritual and emotional pilgrimage. Appraise both the ups and downs of your life since you became a Christian.

On a separate sheet of paper, write out the circumstances with respect to each of the points listed below. You may choose to think through this exercise using a chart or timeline. You may find that using colored pencils or markers will prove helpful in emphasizing the difference between the spiritual and emotional events. Be as creative with this assignment as you like. Label the paragraph/chart notations according to a time when:

- God was most real to you...
- You were most afraid...
- You almost lost your faith...
- Your faith was the strongest...
- It was hardest to stand up for what you believe...
- It was hardest to obey God...
- It was easiest to serve God...
- You were most aware of your own spiritual neediness...
- God's call on your life was most clear...
- You experienced your greatest sacrifice...
- You experienced your most significant loss...
- You learned what it means to forgive "seventy times seven"...
- You were most lonely...
- You felt totally powerless...
- You experienced the greatest physical pain or your most serious illness...
- You were especially joyful...
- You experienced a most difficult moment...
- You overcame an epic challenge...

Now ask God to help you look at your pilgrimage outlined above with new eyes. And with this fresh insight, candidly answer the following questions:

- How does your emotional journey compare to your spiritual one?
- When were the times you grew the most?
- Where are you now, in relation to the times of great struggle and/or joy?
- What have you learned about yourself by doing this exercise?
- What have you learned about God from going through this exercise?

You may sometimes become disappointed or frustrated because you are expecting others to give what only God can provide. What are you doing to find your ultimate source of satisfaction in God rather than in your ministry, other people, or other activities?

Sometimes you may be tempted to feel that you must prove yourself by success in ministry instead of simply rejoicing in the knowledge that you are God's beloved child. How have you found your sense of worth from your relationship to Christ instead of in what you do?

Inadequacy

Answer the following questions openly and honestly. Record your answers on a separate piece of paper and add them to this chapter.

1. In what area(s) of your life do you feel powerless?
2. Do you ever feel lonely? If so, how can you use your loneliness to your advantage? To the advantage of the clients to whom you minister?
3. In what ways are you currently experiencing fear or anxiety? If so, how can you use your fears to your advantage? To the advantage of the clients to whom you minister?
4. Do you ever get depressed or downhearted? If so, how can you use your sadness to your advantage? To the advantage of the clients to whom you minister?
5. Why do you think you are feeling this way?
6. How do these feelings impact your pastoral care?
7. Spend several minutes in Bible study, reflection and prayer about these matters. Write out your prayer about the issue that matters the most to you.

Accountability

Take your Bible with you and go to a secluded spot where your family, telephone, and other distractions will not interrupt you. Dress comfortably. Take a few minutes to relax.

Pray. Tell God how much you love Him. Thank Him for those things in your life for which you are grateful. Agree with Him about your limitations, naming each one. Acknowledge any sin you have not yet openly admitted to Him and receive His assurance of forgiveness. Tell Him about the needs of anyone on your heart. Ask Him for whatever you want and/or need.

Read the following passages of Scripture as if you were coming to them for the first time. Discuss each of the passages with Him and then respond to the questions. Record your response on a separate piece of paper and place it in this chapter.

1. Read 2 Samuel 12:1-13 and Jeremiah 17:9. If David, who was a man after God's own heart, could be spiritually blind to his own sinfulness, you can too. In what way(s) is it difficult for you to recognize your own heart, including your weaknesses and limitations?

How do you respond when confronted by another individual?

In what ways do you put up defenses in order to avoid being confronted?

Have you ever asked another person to tell you where you are "out of bounds" or to hold you accountable for your behavior? If so, describe what has happened as a result. If not, explore your reasons for not doing so.

2. Read Matthew 22:34-40; Deuteronomy 5:6-21; Micah 6:8; and Romans 13:10.

What is true righteousness?

In what ways are you a righteous person?

In what ways have you been failing to live a righteous life?

What does righteous living have to do with providing competent pastoral care?

3. Read 1 John 3—4.

What is love?

What does love have to do with providing competent pastoral care?

Is there someone in your life whom you find it difficult to love? Do not write down his/her name, but tell God who it is. Why do you find it difficult to love this person?

If you feel angry with this person, explain why.

If there is a lack of forgiveness for this person, why do you think you have continued to hold a grudge? Can you forgive now, even partially, in spite of your feelings?

If this person has wounded you in any way, how have you wounded him/her in return?

Now is the time to confess this to God and to receive His forgiveness. But is that enough? How will you go about working toward reconciliation with this person? Describe your complete, step-by-step plan.

Regarding seeking reconciliation with a friend with whom you may have conflict: Recognize that sometimes the process may be impeded by things in the heart of the other person over which you have no control. You are responsible for your part (cf. Romans 12:18). But you may need to wait for God to work in the other person's heart. Sometimes a relationship may never be fully healed in this life. This is simply the reality of everyone being sinners.

Go through this process in regard to any other individual(s) with whom you are out of fellowship. Use separate sheets of paper.

How do you think your relationship with God will be affected by this process?

How do you think your ministry will be impacted by this process?

4. In light of these passages, after spending several minutes in Bible study, reflection and prayer, write out an honest assessment of your spiritual life. Remember that any extreme in behavior is exactly that: an extreme. So, if you are not guilty of laziness, can you also be sure you are not guilty of being a workaholic? If you are not a spendthrift, is it possible that you are a miser? Use as much paper as you need on this question and place it in your notebook.

5. The purpose of this exercise is not to produce guilt, but growth. From God you can expect forgiveness and release, not condemnation. Read the promises of God in Romans 8, Colossians 1:13-14, and Romans 3:22-28. Conclude your time today sharing with God anything you still have on your heart and freely receiving His gift of mercy and love.

Strengths

Sometimes we may tend to focus on our weaknesses and limitations without giving much thought to our strengths, our capabilities. Sometimes we may downplay our strengths, gifts, and the delights of our heart for whatever reasons.

Spend some time exploring the positive assets of your life. Record your responses on a separate piece of paper and place it in this chapter.

1. Describe the difference between bragging and celebrating.

2. Do you ever find it difficult to acknowledge or celebrate some unique talent or gift you possess? If so, what is that gift or talent? Why do you have difficulty in this regard?

3. Colossians 2:18 warns about false humility. This does not mean that we take credit for our own virtues and strengths, but we rejoice in the growth that the Holy Spirit has produced in our life. On a separate sheet of paper, make a list of all the positive qualities in your life to which you can lay claim. (If you have difficulty thinking of your strengths, virtues, and positive qualities, it may be that you are having difficulty with healthy self-esteem. Discuss this with your Teaching Chaplain and/or someone else whose wisdom and insight you trust.)

4. Next to each of the qualities you have selected, describe how God can use these assets in your ministry and how you can use them to be a blessing to others.

5. Using your knowledge of the Scriptures, list on a separate piece of paper the spiritual gifts manifested in your life. Describe how you use them in your private life, in your community, and in your ministry:

Spiritual Gifts:

Private Life:

Community:

Ministry:

6. List on a separate piece of paper any of the spiritual gifts you believe you have, but which you think you have not been exercising. Explain why you have allowed them to gather dust as they have sat on the shelf.

7. Galatians 5:22-26 lists the fruit of the Spirit and warns believers against becoming conceited. You are neither to provoke nor to envy one another.

As you reflect on the use (or misuse) of your strengths, virtues, gifts and positive qualities, can you think of ways you may be provoking others? Record any concerns you may have about that.

Test your perception of this by discussing it with another Christian whose insights, wisdom and integrity you trust. Record what you discovered in that conversation.

Similarly, ask God to help you recognize any envy you may be feeling about another person's strengths, virtues, gifts and positive qualities. Describe any concerns that you have in this area.

Test your perception of this by discussing it with another Christian whose insights, wisdom and integrity you trust. Record what you discovered in that conversation.

Daily Devotions/Quiet Time

1. Spend several minutes in Bible study, reflection and prayer asking God to reveal where your heart is with regard to your daily devotions/quiet time.

2. To what degree have you felt connected to God during your devotions/quiet time over the past months? Is there a discrepancy or parallel between how frequently you engage in devotions/quiet time and your sense of connection to God?

3. Are there certain devotional practices that help you feel particularly connected to God? How can you foster these forms of devotional practices more in your life?

4. How have devotional practices affected your gut-level experience of yourself, God, other people in your life, and your ministry?

5. Do you expect your devotional practices to lead to spiritual growth in an orderly, predictable way? How do you feel and respond when this doesn't happen?

6. Are there certain devotional practices you would like to focus on over the next three months? What is your plan for implementing them into your devotional time?

Bible Reading

1. Spend several minutes in Bible study, reflection and prayer, asking God to reveal where your heart is with regard to your daily Bible reading.

2. To what degree have you felt connected to God during your Bible reading over the past months? Is there a discrepancy or parallel between how frequently you engage in reading your Bible and your sense of connection to God?

3. What passages of Scripture help you feel particularly connected to God?

4. How has your Bible reading affected your gut-level experience of yourself, God, other people in your life, and your ministry?

5. Do you expect reading your Bible to lead to spiritual growth in an orderly, predictable way? How do you feel and respond when this doesn't happen?

6. Are there certain passages of Scripture or Bible topics you would like to focus on over the next three months? What is your plan for implementing these into your Quiet Time?

Prayer

1. How frequently do you engage in different forms of prayer (for example, spontaneous prayer, prayer with a friend, group prayer, writing out your prayers, praying silently, praying out loud, reading written prayers of others or liturgical prayers, etc.)? How connected to God do you feel when you engage in these various forms of prayer?

2. Do you feel God is present and responsive when you pray?

3. Spend several minutes in Bible study, reflection and prayer, asking God to reveal where your heart is with respect to prayer. Is there a discrepancy or a parallel between how frequently you pray and your sense of connection to God in prayer? Why might this be?

4. To what degree are you able to pray without words? Are there times when you want to pray, but don't know how to articulate what is on your heart? If so, how do you respond in such times?

5. To what extent do you spontaneously respond to life with prayer? What can you do to provide structure for a spontaneous prayer life?

Other Spiritual Practices

1. To what extent do you engage in other spiritual practices (like meditation, fasting, Bible study, solitude, confession, and worship)?

2. How connected to God do you feel when you engage in these other spiritual practices? Is there a discrepancy or parallel between the frequency of doing these other spiritual practices and your sense of connection to God?

3. Are there certain spiritual practices that help you feel particularly connected to God?

4. Are there any obstacles you feel toward practicing certain spiritual practices? If so, describe them and explain why you feel this way.

5. How have these other spiritual practices affected your gut-level experience of God, yourself, other people, and your ministry?

Balance

1. It is imperative that Chaplains take adequate time for receiving God's love and grace in order to have something fresh to give to others. Write down a plan that you will follow for daily meeting with the Lord. Include the following:

What time and place will you choose for your daily devotions? How will you structure that time?

What schedule will you follow for Bible reading? When will you read your Bible and what will you read?

What structure will you follow for prayer during the next three months? Make a weekly prayer list (with dates of requests and space for recording their answers) in which you pray for various needs on different days (such as unsaved friends, family members, missionaries, Pastors, Chaplains, and other ministries). Keep a copy of your prayer list in your Bible or in the date book that you carry with you.

2. Balance between time for family and time for ministry is a crucial part of chaplaincy. Emergency calls after one has gone home may make this difficult. What plans can you make to assure adequate time for your family and for yourself?

3. Spiritual Formation (sanctification) and the Church.² The scriptural idea of the church as the Body of Christ—a uniquely Pauline expression for the end time assembly of the people of God—contains both the individual and corporate identity of the new people of God. “Body” is singular in grammar but it is the singularity of plurality as well.

The historic, evangelical doctrine of the Church expresses the “one and the many” in one phrase. The question of which one is more real—or more important—is a pseudo-question. The real answer is that both aspects are real and equally important.

Historically, spiritual formation had a particularly narrow personalistic perspective. But there is more to the spiritual growth experience and its sacred disciplines than purely individual and independent disciplines. The Christian is a Christian in the context of membership IN the Body of Christ.

Baptism—water baptism—isn't merely one's personal identification with Christ as Lord and Savior, but it is also membership in the Body. One is baptized into the Body of Christ—into the Church—and, more particularly, into the local congregation. One is not baptized into the universal church apart from the individual congregation of believers. The Great Commission commands that we disciple the nations in the baptism and teaching of Jesus. And one also knows that nations, as such, are not made disciples or baptized as such—only individuals are.

This Body is real, spiritual, and very tangible. The Apostle Paul wrote his epistles not simply to Christians, but to *churched* Christians—real, live, spiritual, living, breathing, Spirit-filled entities who are part of the Body of Christ.

Spiritual formation is not supposed to be done outside the Church. This does not mean that one must always be IN church—the building. To be IN church refers to one's being in an assembly of God's people. Being in THE church refers to one's membership in the society of God's people—the Church.

One cannot claim s/he is a member of the human race without also being a member of a particular family made up of a mom and dad. One who claims to be human and yet denies membership within a particular family unit is a liar or deceived. The same is true with members of the Church. One cannot legitimately claim membership in the Church without also being “born” (spiritually) through the local congregation of believers where they are birthed and nurtured and disciplined.

² The information under this heading (“church”) is by Dr. Charles A. McIlhenny, a BCC with HCMA, who served at USC/LAC Medical Center in Los Angeles, CA.

So, how are you involved in your local Church and how does that fellowship promote spiritual formation for you?

Spiritual Perspective

1. To what extent do you see life through the eyes of the Kingdom of God?
2. To what extent do your gut-level responses to life events align with God's ways and the purposes of His kingdom?
3. What relationships have been particularly influential in developing a spiritual outlook on life? How has this been modeled for you by important people in your life?
4. To what extent is there a discrepancy between your declarative values (theological theory) and your operative values (practical activity)? In what particular area (or areas) is this most pronounced?
5. What events in the past year have impacted your values and spiritual perspective? Describe the impact/perspective.

Spiritual Openness

1. To what extent are you open to your own spiritual doubts, disappointments and perspectives on spiritual growth that are different from your own?
2. How do doubts and disappointments affect your relationship with God? Your ministry?
3. Who has been especially influential in helping you to process your spiritual doubts and disappointments?
4. Do you have any gut-level doubts that you try not to think about, or that are hard to put into words? If so, is there someone who can help you process them? What can you do to help process your spiritual doubts and disappointments?
5. How do you respond to people who have a different outlook (worldview) on God and spiritual growth than you do?



Chapter Assignments

1. Spend several minutes in Bible study, reflection and prayer about your call to the ministry. Then write a two-page essay on 1 Corinthians 1:26-31 as it relates to you and your call to healthcare chaplaincy. Discuss it with your Teaching Chaplain.
2. Spend time in Bible study, reflection and prayer about your spiritual journey. As you do this, read about Erik Erikson's eight stages of human development. If you're unfamiliar with this psychosocial development theory, you need to go online and do a search and read a couple articles on the subject.

Now write a paper (at least two pages, but not more than ten pages) that traces your theological development (spiritual formation) from infancy to adulthood. You might even want to use a time-line to graphically show this journey. Discuss your spiritual journey with your Teaching Chaplain.
3. Read the following passages and, after spending several minutes in Bible study, reflection and prayer on each of them, make some observations about the spiritual life of Jesus:
 - His familiarity with and use of Scripture: Matthew 4:1-11 (and elsewhere).

- His personal prayer life (note the context of each reference): Mark 1:35; 6:46; Luke 4:42; 5:16; 6:12; 9:18, 28-29; 11:1.

Record your thoughts in a journal and share your insights with your Teaching Chaplain.

4. Having gone through this chapter, were there any spiritual formation issues that came up that might have an effect on your ministry at the bedside? Spend several minutes in Bible study, reflection and prayer about these potential learning issues, record your insights in a journal, and then discuss them with the Teaching Chaplain.

5. Examine the “Medical Abbreviations” section in the *Medical Terminology Manual*. You will need to obtain a copy of the medical abbreviations approved for use at your facility. Familiarize yourself with the most commonly used abbreviations that a Chaplain might hear, read, and use in the healthcare setting, especially when writing chaplaincy care notes in a patient’s chart.

6. Make rounds with the Teaching Chaplain over the next week as s/he observes your style of making pastoral visits. Debrief after each day of visits.

7. Write a verbatim report about a pastoral visit. Share this verbatim with a peer review group and your Teaching Chaplain. Discuss your learning issues with your Teaching Chaplain.

Chapter Resources

The following annotated bibliography is not intended to be exhaustive in its content, nor does it contain all the latest resources. HCMA does not endorse all of the ideas expressed in all of the resources listed here. Some of the sources are given simply to expose us to a variety of viewpoints on the subject. It is expected that even in places of disagreement we will reflect upon and think critically regarding our own views rather than simply dismissing views that may run counter to our own.

David G. Benner. *Sacred Companions: The Gift of Spiritual Friendship & Direction*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2002.

This book introduces readers to the riches of spiritual friendship and direction, explaining what they are and how they are practiced.

Blackaby, Henry and Richard, and Claude King. *Experiencing God: Knowing and Doing His Will*. Revised and expanded ed. Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman, 2008.

The book is based on seven Scriptural realities that teach you how to develop a true relationship with the Creator. By understanding how God is working through you even as you try to fathom His ways, you can begin to clearly know and do His will.

Blackaby, Henry and Tom. *The Man God Uses*. Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman, 1999.

The book is a guidebook for Christian men who seek to follow God’s will in their homes, offices, churches, and communities. It outlines a seven-week course of scriptural study, including prayer suggestions and questions to be answered in a daily journal.

Bloesch, Donald G. *The Struggle of Prayer*. San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1980.

The author outlines an evangelical spirituality that has at its heart the “outpouring of the soul before a living God.” According to the author, true prayer is not humanity rising to God in order to become one with him (the mystical ideal), but God reaching out to humanity and calling for a response of obedience. It is the constant struggle to take hold of the outstretched hand of God. This striving with a personal God is foundational to biblical prayer.

Boa, Kenneth. *Conformed to His Image: Biblical and Practical Approaches to Spiritual Formation*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2001.

Exploring twelve approaches to Christian spirituality in depth, the author corrects the tendency to pick and compartmentalize. Pointing the way instead to an integrative, whole-life approach, Dr. Boa shows how each spiritual paradigm discussed is just one important facet in the gem of authentic and powerful NT living.

Bridges, Jerry. *The Pursuit of Holiness*. Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 1996.

The book tackles the question of how to pursue holiness by living an obedient life. The author talks about the role of discipline in that pursuit and why you must pursue God and live a holy life.

Canfield, Jack, and Mark Victor Hansen, eds. *Chicken Soup for the Christian Soul: 101 Stories to Open the Heart and Rekindle the Spirit*. Deerfield Beach, FL: Health Communications 2001.

The book is based on the belief that true testimonies of goodness and loving transformations can nourish you to the bone and heal the cynicism in your heart.

Calhoun, Adele Ahlberg. *Spiritual Disciplines Handbook: Practices That Transform Us*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2005.

Sixty-two spiritual disciplines or practices are explained, grouped in seven themes, including worship, prayer, sharing life with others, hearing God's word, and listening to God's voice. The practices range from personal and introspective, such as engaging in silence and solitude, to extroverted and service-oriented, as in stewardship and care of the earth.

Carlson, Paula J., and Peter S. Hawkins, eds. *Listening for God: Contemporary Literature and the Life of Faith*. 4 Volumes. Minneapolis: Augsburg, 2000.

A collection of essays and stories intended to help you investigate how life and faith merge in surprising ways and places. For example, volume 4 explores the issues of discipleship and theology through guided interaction from eight selections of American literature.

Chapell, Bryan. *Praying Backwards: Transform Your Prayer Life by Beginning in Jesus Name*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2005.

The author urges readers to use the routine phrase, "In Jesus' name," as the premise and basis for prayer rather than merely tacking it on at the end. He offers a well-written, well-organized discussion of prayer based on Jesus' prayer life and biblical principles. Chapell answers tough questions—Why bother to pray? Why does God want persistent prayer? How can we know God's will?—with sound, biblical answers.

Colson, Charles, and Nancy Pearcey. *How Now Shall We Live?* Wheaton, IL: Tyndale, 1999.

The authors explain why American culture has become "post-Christian" and what must be done to "rebuild it with a biblical worldview." He believes that Christian salvation is not just personal but "cosmological," redeeming all of creation.

Colson, Charles W. *Loving God*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1996.

Here is a compelling, probing look at the cost of discipleship and the meaning of the first and greatest commandment—one that will strum a deeper, truer chord within even as it strips the trappings of shallow, self-centered believism.

Collins, Gary R. *The Soul Search: A Spiritual Journey to Authentic Intimacy with God*. Nashville: T. Nelson, 1998.

Beginning with a look at modern approaches to spirituality, including the New Age and the many new spiritualities it has spawned, the author guides readers away from society's spiritual overload to a special intimacy with God. Along the way he answers questions such as: How do people play games with the spiritual? What keeps the spiritual journey alive?

Demarest, Bruce. *Satisfy Your Soul: Restoring the Heart of Christian Spirituality*. Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 1999.

Find solid, biblical direction and personal insight as you join Dr. Demarest in his study of the life-long process of inner transformation. Discover with him the timeless spiritual guidance of the Christian classics essential to helping you develop an authentic relationship with God today. Gain a balanced, biblical understanding of Christian practices such as silence, meditation, contemplation, journaling, and spiritual direction. It is filled with resource listings, deep personal application questions, and Bruce's story of his own contemplative journey.

———. *Seasons of the Soul: Stages of Spiritual Development*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2009.

This book will help you grasp the whole picture of your journey so you might live your days with intention and keep moving toward maturity in faith. Using Scripture, writings from spiritual tradition, and stories of present-day believers walking the same path of faith, Demarest will lead you through the three main stages of the journey: putting your faith in Christ, experiencing struggles and doubts, and coming to deeper faith. In addition, discussion

and reflection questions at the end of each chapter will help you see where you've been and what stage you're at now.

Driskill, Joseph D. *Protestant Spiritual Exercises: Theology, History, and Practice*. Harrisburg, PA: Morehouse Pub., 1999.

This book will help readers discover their rich spiritual heritage through an examination of its history and practice and the theological affirmations that undergird it.

Foster, Richard J. *Celebration of Discipline: The Path to Spiritual Growth*. New York: Hodder & Stoughton, 1989.

The author explains why he believes that the classical spiritual disciplines such as meditation, submission, and fasting are the only true ways to promote a deep inner life and infuse it with over whelming joy.

Foster, Richard J., and Kathryn A. Henders. *Life with God: Reading the Bible for Spiritual Transformation*. New York: HarperOne, 2008.

The author zeroes in on Bible study to help Christians grow in their faith. Although Bible study is nothing if not a well-trod topic, Foster breathes new life into it by drawing on ancient resources: he is especially interested in the age-old practice of *lectio divina*, sacred reading that requires the attention of both mind and heart. Foster cautions several times that *lectio divina* is neither a magical solution to problems nor an approach that bypasses the living God by treating the Scriptures as a sort of Ouija board. He warns that the Bible is also not an owner's manual for successful living or even moral living; we shouldn't read it merely to serve our own needs. Rather, *lectio divina* offers an invitation to enter the Bible as a story (or a complex group of stories) and enter its river of life. As usual, Foster's work is not for those readers who are seeking quick answers or a behavioral checklist of what the Bible says they should do. Rather, it is a deep reflective guide to spiritual rumination and growth.

Gangel, Kenneth O., and James C. Wilhoit, eds. *Christian Educator's Handbook on Spiritual Formation*. Wheaton, IL: Victor, 1994.

Provides the help Christians need to understand and pursue spiritual growth.

Graybeal, Lynda L., and Julia L. Roller. *Learning from Jesus: A Spiritual Formation Guide: A Renovaré Resource for Individuals and Groups*. San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 2006.

To Christians, Jesus is many things: the Son of God, the pivotal figure in whom we put our trust and who speaks on our behalf, a companion in the life of faith. But Jesus is also an incredible example of how to lead a faithful life. Jesus, as a human, walked on earth and confronted the same struggles that we face. Our primary mission as His followers is to learn from Him—to become His apprentices. In this book we seek to further our apprenticeship by studying everything from Jesus' interactions with those around him to the revolutionary wisdom recorded in the Gospels. *Learning from Jesus* is conveniently organized for individual or group study, and each section of this guide leads you further down the path to true discipleship.

Hands, Donald R., and Wayne L. Fehr. *Spiritual Wholeness for Clergy: A New Psychology of Intimacy with God, Self and Others*. New York, Alban Institute, 1994.

The authors combine clinical psychology and spiritual direction to create a practical model of spirituality that integrates theology, psychology, and an understanding of individual frailties in a new way. *Spiritual Wholeness* draws on counseling experience with more than 400 clergy and pinpoints the human problems, traps, and temptations awaiting those who choose the clergy role. Clergy will learn to develop and maintain a psychologically healthy spirituality in relationships with others.

Howard, Evan. "Three Temptations of Spiritual Formation." *Christianity Today* 46, no. 13 (December 9, 2002): 46.

All believers who are participating in organized prayer movements or rediscovering Christian disciplines need to be aware of the temptations that are ready to draw them away from Christ.

Hughes, Kent R. *Disciplines of a Godly Man*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2005.

This is a book for men and women who are eager to learn how to be more effective.

Hybels, Bill, Kevin Harney, and Sherry Harney. *Character: Reclaiming Six Endangered Qualities*. Updated version. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1997.

There are no discount character stores. Courage. Discipline. Confidence. Patience. Endurance. Contentment. They're qualities that can take a lifetime to acquire. Qualities money can't buy. But here's good news: God says you can have them all! In *Character*, you will discover how firmly God is committed to forming noble qualities within you. He wants your character to deepen even more than you do—and He has the power to do something about it! If you're ready to journey toward the kind of character you've always admired, here is a path of radical, God-empowered change and growth—and a transformed, more Christlike you. Interactions—a powerful and challenging tool for building deep relationships between you and your group members, and you and God. Interactions are far more than another group Bible study. It's a cutting-edge series designed to help small group participants develop into fully devoted followers of Christ.

———. *Who You Are When No One's Looking*. Revised and expanded version. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2010.

"When I listen to the evening news or read the morning paper these days my reaction is always the same: what's wrong in our world will not be set right until people who love God and who refuse to cave to these overwhelming challenges put the things they believe into action, things like courage and discipline and love." Bill Hybels *Who You Are When No One's Looking* has pointed the way to godly character for more than twenty years. Now Bill Hybels's essential book is completely revised and updated, featuring a new introduction, a new concluding chapter ("World-Change: When Character Counts Most") and a discussion guide for groups. Read this book to discover who God is calling you to be in the world around you.

Kent, Keri Wyatt. *The Garden of the Soul: Cultivating Your Spiritual Life*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2002.

"In nine short chapters, Kent uncovers connections between gardening and the Christian life. Some of these insights have been fodder for other spirituality-of-gardening books; the necessity of the regular pruning of both trees and souls has been lovingly explored before. Other chapters are more original, as when Kent compares the need for Sabbath rest to the biblical command of allowing land to lie fallow at predetermined intervals. The book is refreshingly honest; Kent gracefully presents an 'ideal' of spiritual practice while admitting that she often falls short of that ideal. Well-written and often perceptive, Kent's book will be most appreciated by fellow gardeners, particularly parents, since many of the insights here relate as much to raising children as they do to growing plants." (Jana Reiss for Religion Bookline (an e-mail newsletter from Publishers Weekly), May 14, 2002)

Miller, Keith J. *A Hunger for Healing: The Twelve Steps As a Classic Model for Christian Spiritual Growth*. San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1991.

An exploration of the Twelve Steps and their unique benefits for Christians.

Moon, Gary W. "Psychotherapy and Spiritual Direction: Reflections and Cautions on the Integrative Path" *Christian Counseling Today* 11, no. 4 (2003): 32-38.

Moore, Thomas. *Care of the Soul: How to Add Depth and Meaning to Your Everyday Life: The Illustrated Edition*. New York: Harper, 1998.

This book offers a therapeutic program to restore the spiritual life to the human soul. We are given the opportunity to go deeper into our emotional problems and find the sacredness in ordinary, everyday life—with friends, in our conversation with others, in more fulfilling work, and in all the experiences that can touch the heart. By integrating classical and modern art with the text, this edition offers the reader the opportunity to envision the already very visual nature of Thomas Moore's writing. It contains more than 150 color illustrations of great works of art that make the text come alive. Thomas Moore has long worked as an art therapist and has studied religion and music—all of which have come together in this volume to bring us an extraordinary and inspirational guide to the spiritual solutions needed in daily life.

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

"The process of being conformed to the image of Christ for the sake of others," so the author defines spiritual formation. Compact and solid, this definition encompasses the dynamics of a vital Christian life and counters our culture's tendency to make spirituality a trivial matter or reduce it to a private affair between "me and Jesus." In *Invitation to a Journey*, Mulholland helps Christians new and old to understand that we become like Christ gradually, not instantly. Not every personality is suited to an early morning quiet time, so Mulholland frees different personality types to express their piety differently. He reviews the classical spiritual disciplines and

demonstrates the importance of undertaking our spiritual journey with (and for the sake of) others. This road map for spiritual formation is profoundly biblical and down to earth. In the finest tradition of spiritual literature, it is a vital help to Christians at any stage of their journey.

———. *Shaped by the Word: The Power of Scripture in Spiritual Formation*. Nashville: Upper Room, 1985.

This book explores the role that Scripture plays in spiritual formation. Mulholland examines obstacles often encountered in spiritual reading and introduces a new approach to reading that will enliven the Scriptures. He also compares informational reading (reading to be informed) with formational reading (reading to be spiritually formed). Readers are released to God's initiative, allowing the scripture to form a spiritual life inside themselves.

Munger, Robert Boyd. *My Heart—Christ's Home: A Story for Old & Young*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1992.

Robert Boyd Munger imagines for us what it would be like to have Christ come to the home of our hearts. Room by room we consider with our Lord what he desires for us. Are we prepared to meet with him daily in our living room?

Nee, Watchman. *The Normal Christian Life*. Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House, 1977.

It describes Christian faith and God's purposes for believers in clear, simple terms.

Nouwen, Henri. "Moving from Solitude to Community to Ministry." *Leadership* 16, no. 2 (Spring 1995): 81-87.

Nouwen, Henri J. M. *Making All Things New: An Invitation to the Spiritual Life*. Reissue ed. San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 2009.

This book is a short, clean, clear book about how to begin finding the peace of mind to hear the voice of God. The book's epigraph, from Mark, is anchored in Jesus' words: "Do not worry." Nouwen acknowledges that worry is so ingrained in many people's daily lives that it seems to be an integral part of positive achievement and self-protection. Yet he explains, with devastating directness, the destructive effects of busy-ness and its attendant habit of worrying, then shows how Jesus responds to these worries, and finally describes some disciplines that "can cause our worries slowly to lose their grip on us, and which can thus allow the Spirit of God to do his recreating work." Nouwen's voice sounds like that of the mentor or spiritual director that many people have always wished for: his authority stems from a talent for realistic comfort rather than forceful coercion. So when he writes the following words, it's eminently possible to believe him: "A hard struggle is required.... But this struggle is not beyond our strength. It calls for some very specific, well-planned steps. It calls for a few moments a day in the presence of God when we can listen to his voice precisely in the midst of our many concerns. It also calls for the persistent endeavor to be with others in a new way by seeing them not as people to whom we can cling in fear, but as fellow human beings with whom we can create new space for God." (Michael Joseph Gross)

———. *The Way of the Heart: Connecting with God through Prayer, Wisdom, and Silence*. Reprint ed. New York: Ballantine, 2003.

Inspired by the ancient teachings of St. Anthony and the Desert Fathers, *The Way of the Heart* clears before us a spiritual path consisting of three stepping-stones: Solitude (learning not to be alone but to be alone with God); Silence (the discipline by which the inner fire of God is tended and kept alive); and Prayer (standing in the presence of God with the mind in the heart).

Packer, J. I. *Knowing God*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1993.

A lifelong pursuit of knowing God should embody the Christian's existence. According to eminent theologian J.I. Packer, however, Christians have become enchanted by modern skepticism and have joined the "gigantic conspiracy of misdirection" by failing to put first things first. *Knowing God* aims to redirect our attention to the simple, deep truth that to know God is to love His Word. What began as a number of consecutive articles angled for "honest, no-nonsense readers who were fed up with facile Christian verbiage" in 1973, *Knowing God* has become a contemporary classic by creating "small studies out of great subjects." Each chapter is so specific in focus (covering topics such as the trinity, election, God's wrath, and God's sovereignty), that each succeeding chapter's theology seems to rival the next, until one's mind is so expanded that one's entire view of God has changed. Author Elizabeth Eliot wrote that amid the lofty content Packer "puts the hay where the sheep can reach it--plainly shows us ordinary folks what it means to know God." Having rescued us from the individual hunches of our ultra-tolerant theological age, Packer points the reader to the true character of God with his theological

competence and compassionate heart. The lazy and faint-hearted should be warned about this timeless work—God is magnified, the sinner is humbled, and the saint encouraged. (Jill Heatherly)

Packer, J. I., and Carolyn Nystrom. *Praying: Finding Our Way Through Duty to Delight*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2006.

Praying is an action that is of the essence of Christian existence. It involves our beliefs, emotions, values, hopes and fears, certainties and uncertainties, knowledge and ignorance. As J. I. Packer and Carolyn Nystrom explain, this book “is a heart-to-heart affair, in which two Christians who try to pray and wish they prayed better share thoughts about what they are doing with people whom they envisage as being like themselves. . . . Our aim is not just to clarify Christian understanding but to foster Christian living. In real praying, head, heart and hands go together.” With wisdom, humility and sincerity the authors lead us through different moods of praying, including brooding, praising, asking, complaining and hanging on. In *Praying* the authors offer hope for those of us who daydream when we try to listen to God and stumble when we try to speak. Yet they don’t just teach us about prayer; they challenge and inspire us to do it by pointing us to a clearer realization of the reality of God and his character. Let Packer and Nystrom come alongside you to encourage and guide your active praying to our powerful God, and let him move your praying through mere duty to delight.

Pettit, Paul, ed. *Foundations of Spiritual Formation: A Community Approach to Becoming Like Christ*. Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel, 2008.

Foundations of Spiritual Formation takes a unique approach to its subject, arguing that we become like Christ in the context of authentic, Christian community. Without undermining individual Bible study, private prayer, and meditation, the authors emphasize these pursuits for the purpose of both personal and community enrichment—that the whole body, as well as the individual, may be built up. Part 1 lays the foundations of spiritual formation. Jonathan Morrow develops a distinctively evangelical theology, while Richard Averbeck writes about worship. Then Gordon Johnston and Darrell Bock delve into the text of Scripture, grounding the pursuit of spiritual formation in revealed truth. Part 2 focuses on functional aspects of spiritual formation. Klaus Issler emphasizes the importance of the heart in spiritual formation, while Reid Kisling illustrates the vital connection between character development and spiritual formation. Bill Miller explores love’s role as the motivation for spiritual formation. Andrew Seidel examines servant leadership, and George Hillman extends the discussion to include the significance of calling. Gail Seidel discusses personal narrative as a catalyst for spiritual formation, and in closing, Harry Shields advocates the public preaching of the Word as a tool for spiritual formation.

Preston, Gary D. *Character Forged from Conflict: Staying Connected to God During Controversy*. Minneapolis, MN: Bethany, 1999.

In *Character Forged From Conflict*, the author explores how the church though still the Bride of Christ can sometimes seem to steal what’s most precious to you: your desire to serve God and people. Using scripture and illustrative stories, Preston addresses the key issues for recognizing, avoiding, or appropriately handling conflict including: Reaching out to those who may be in opposition to you; Preaching through controversy; Resisting the urge to strike back; and Meeting the important needs of your own family.

Roller, Julia L., and Lynda L. Graybeal. *Connecting with God: A Spiritual Formation Guide: A Renovaré Resource for Individuals and Groups*. San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 2006.

With an introduction written by Richard J. Foster, this book explores how God has communicated with individuals in the Bible and throughout history. From Adam and Eve’s direct contact with God to Jacob’s wrestling with God, from hearing God through visions and dreams like Teresa of Avila to experiencing communion with God through nature like Francis of Assisi, this book is intended to recognize the different ways God has communicated with people throughout the ages and will guide the reader into an experience of individual interaction with God.

Smith, James Bryan, and Lynda Graybeal. *A Spiritual Formation Workbook: Small Group Resources for Nurturing Christian Growth*. Revised ed. San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1999.

This beginning workbook for Spiritual Formation Groups features guidelines for starting a group, study plans for the first nine sessions, and a questionnaire that helps map the way ahead. Based upon six major dimensions of the spiritual life found in the life of Christ and Christian tradition—The Contemplative Tradition; The Holiness Tradition; The Charismatic Tradition; The Social Justice Tradition; The Evangelical Tradition; and The Incarnational Tradition—this workbook program provides all the necessary ingredients to start and maintain a Spiritual Formation Group.

Swindoll, Charles R. *Growing Deep in the Christian Life*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1995.

Discover your roots whether you drive a truck, wait tables, work in an office, or ferry the kids to and from soccer practice, Chuck Swindoll understands that your world is practical, earthy, tough, and relentless. *Growing Deep in the Christian Life* takes theology out of the ivory tower and enables you to apply it to where you live every day. The basics of the faith are the roots from which we draw emotional stability, mental food for growth, and spiritual energy and perspective on life. The book offers an easy-going and practical approach that reviews ten key doctrines and shows their power to strengthen and encourage you in faith. Swindoll says, 'By returning to our roots, we determine precisely where we stand. We equip ourselves for living the life God designed us to live.' The book helps you dig deeper and discover the essentials of the faith—essentials that enable you to experience Christian discipleship at a richer and more mature level.

———. *Intimacy With the Almighty: Encountering Christ in the Secret Places of Your Life*. Waco, TX: Word, 1996.

Charles Swindoll offers all new insights from his own journal to guide people on a journey of intimacy with God.

———. *Living Above the Level of Mediocrity*. Waco, TX: Word, 1990.

In this book on excellence Chuck Swindoll boldly tackles the difficult problems of self-discipline, laziness, and our tendency to accept less of life than we deserve. "Perhaps his best book . . . both a challenge to easy living and a blueprint for breaking out of patterns of mediocrity. . . . One of the most helpful aspects of this book is Swindoll's ability to distinguish between striving for excellence and the modern-day philosophies of success." (*Today's Christian Woman*)

———. *The Quest for Character*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1993.

So many voices today tell us that avoiding pain and dodging trouble are the best we can expect from life. Yet God is at work in us. He doesn't call us to a bland vanilla existence but to an exciting quest for the best thing in life -- a heart that reflects the character qualities of Jesus Christ. Let Chuck Swindoll show you the building blocks of character that God wants to develop in you and how these traits can help you achieve lasting fulfillment. *The Quest for Character* offers forty encouraging meditations on character qualities that can significantly change your life. Each brief devotional ends with helpful suggestions for refining your character and scripture readings to draw you into God's Word.

Thomas, Gary L. *Seeking the Face of God: The Path to a More Intimate Relationship*. Eugene, OR: Harvest, 1999.

All Christians face struggles, doubts, and temptations. In this passionate call to a deeper walk, Gary Thomas reveals his own spiritual journey and shares the wisdom he has gained from believers of the past. The result is encouraging, challenging, and intimate

Thompson, Marjorie J. *Soul Feast: An Invitation to the Christian Spiritual Life*. Reprint ed. Philadelphia: Westminster, 2005.

Offering a framework for understanding the spiritual disciplines and instruction for developing and nurturing those practices, *Soul Feast* continues to be a favorite for individual reflection and group study. Now engagingly redesigned to appeal to contemporary spiritual-seekers and repackaged for easier use in study and reflection, *Soul Feast* is a must-have.

Tozer, A. W. *The Pursuit of God: The Human Thirst for the Divine*. Camp Hill, PA: Christian Publications, 1994.

A.W. Tozer's classic Christian work covers: (1) Following Hard After God. (2) The Blessedness of Possessing Nothing. (3) Removing the Veil. (4) Apprehending God. (5) The Universal Presence. (6) The Speaking Voice. (7) The Gaze of the Soul. (8) Restoring the Creator-Creature Relation. (9) Meekness and Rest. (10) The Sacrament of Living.

Whitney, Donald S. *Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life*. Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 1997.

Freedom. The reward of discipline. It's not uncommon for an accomplished musician to be able to sit down in front of a new piece of music and play it through without a hitch. He makes it seem easy, as if it required no effort. Yet, the "freedom" to play with such skill comes only after years of disciplined practice. In the same way, the freedom to grow in godliness—to express Christ's character through your own personality—is in large part dependent on a deliberate cultivation of the spiritual disciplines found in God's Word. Far from being legalistic, restrictive, or binding, as they are often perceived, the spiritual disciplines are actually the means to unparalleled spiritual liberty. So if you'd like to embark on a lifelong quest for godliness, *Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian*

Life will help you on your way. Drawn from a rich heritage left us by godly believers from Christian history—including the Reformers and the Puritan writers, and primarily Jesus Christ Himself—*Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life* will guide you through a carefully selected array of disciplines including Scripture reading, prayer, worship, Scripture meditation, evangelism, serving, stewardship of time and money, Scripture application, fasting, silence and solitude, journaling, and learning. By illustrating why the disciplines are important, showing how each one will help you grown in godliness, and offering practical suggestions for cultivating them on a long-term basis, *Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life* will provide you with a refreshing opportunity to embrace life's greatest pursuit—the pursuit of holiness—through a lifelong delight in the disciplines. (from Back Cover)

———. *Ten Questions to Diagnose Your Spiritual Health*. Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 2001.

These 10 probing questions will help you look beyond your spiritual activity to assess the true state of your spiritual health.

Willard, Dallas. *Hearing God: Developing a Conversational Relationship With God*. Updated and expanded ed. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2012.

“God spoke to me.” “The Spirit spoke to my heart.” “God revealed the idea to me.” Being close to God means communicating with Him—telling Him what is on our hearts in prayer *and* hearing and understanding what He is saying to us. It is this second half of our conversation with God that is so important but that can also be so difficult. How do we hear His voice? How can we be sure that what we think we hear is not our own subconscious? What role does the Bible play? What if what God says to us is not clear? The key, says Dallas Willard, is to focus not so much on individual actions and decisions as on building our personal relationship with our Creator. In this updated and expanded edition of Willard's beloved book, originally published as *In Search of Guidance*, you'll gain rich spiritual insight into how we can hear God's voice clearly and develop an intimate partnership with him in the work of his kingdom. Including new material from Dallas Willard's teaching at the Renovaré Institute and reformatted to be even easier to read, this classic continues to endure as one of today's best resources for learning to listen closely to God.

———. *Renovation of the Heart: Putting on the Character of Christ*. Colorado Spring, CO: NavPress, 2002.

Renovation of the Heart explains the common misunderstandings about human nature and the discipleship process by outlining the general pattern of personal spiritual transformation—not as a formula, but as a systematic process.

———. *The Divine Conspiracy: Rediscovering Our Hidden Life in God*. San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1998.

The author offers a timely and challenging call back to the true meaning of Christian discipleship. In *The Divine Conspiracy*, Willard gracefully weaves biblical teaching, popular culture, science, scholarship, and spiritual practice into a tour de force that shows the necessity of profound changes in how we view our lives and faith. In an era when many Christians consider Jesus a beloved but remote savior, Willard argues compellingly for the relevance of God to every aspect of our existence. Masterfully capturing the central insights of Christ's teachings in a fresh way for today's seekers, he helps us to explore a revolutionary way to experience God—by knowing Him as an essential part of the here and now, rather than only as a part of the hereafter.

“The most telling thing about the contemporary Christian,” Willard writes, “is that he or she has no compelling sense that understanding of and conformity with the clear teachings of Christ is of any vital importance to [their] life, and certainly not that it is in any way essential . . . Such obedience is regarded as just out of the question or impossible.” Christians, he says, for the most part consider the primary function of Christianity to be admittance to heaven. But, as Willard clearly shows, a faith that guarantees a satisfactory afterlife, yet has absolutely no impact on life in the here and now, is nothing more than “consumer Christianity” and “bumper-sticker faith.”

Willard refutes this “fire escape” mentality by exploring the true nature of the teachings of Jesus, who intended that His followers become His disciples, and taught that we have access *now* to the life we are only too eager to relegate to the hereafter. The author calls us into a more authentic faith and offers a practical plan by which we can become Christ-like. He challenges us to step aside from the politics and pieties of contemporary Christian practice and inspires us to reject the all too common lukewarm faith of our times by embracing the true meaning of Christian discipleship.

———. *The Spirit of the Disciplines: Understanding How God Changes Lives*. San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1991.

The author presents a way of living that enables ordinary men and women to enjoy the fruit of the Christian life. He reveals how the key to self-transformation resides in the practice of the spiritual disciplines, and how their practice affirms human life to the fullest. *The Spirit of the Disciplines* is for everyone who strives to be a disciple of Jesus in thought and action as well as intention.

Willimon, William, M. Robert Mulholland, Jr., Steve Harper, et al. *The Pastor's Guide to Personal Spiritual Formation*. Kansas City, MO: Beacon Hill of Kansas City, 2005.

In the midst of ministering to a congregation, meeting the needs of the community, and effectively sharing the Gospel it can become easy for a pastor to forget his or her own need to cultivate a maturing, intimate relationship with Christ. In *The Pastor's Guide to Personal Spiritual Formation*, experienced church leaders, who understand firsthand the importance of maintaining one's own spiritual formation, challenge and inspire pastors to reach new and deeper levels of spiritual vitality and growth, and in doing so Robert Mulholland Jr., Steve Harper, and other well-known church leaders discuss topics such as: Spiritual Direction, Prayer & Meditation, The Sabbath, Grace-Making Choices, Spiritual Reading, and more!

Appendix A

Three Temptations of Spiritual Formation

By Evan Howard³

*“When seeking to be shaped by Christ,
It is all too easy to veer from a fully Christian approach.”*

Spiritual formation is in. One generation ago, evangelical Protestants had hardly heard of the phrase. Now many evangelical seminaries offer programs in spiritual formation. Renovaré, which Richard Foster and others founded in 1989 to cultivate spiritual formation (especially among evangelicals), today offers retreats and resources worldwide. The popular evangelical psychologist Larry Crabb now holds seminars in becoming a spiritual director.

Twenty years ago we were dissatisfied with shallow, rushed “quiet times,” longing for resources to help us toward a more meaningful, life-changing interaction with God. Today things are different. For better and for worse, we have more resources available for spiritual formation than we know what to do with.

Formation, like the forming of a pot from clay, brings to mind shaping and molding, helping something potential become something actual. *Spiritual formation* speaks of a shaping process with reference to the spiritual dimension of a person’s life. Christian spiritual formation thus refers to the process by which believers become more fully conformed and united to Christ.

I have been involved in spiritual formation for over 20 years, having stumbled in just as interest was beginning to develop in the evangelical community. I am now watching my students feel the influence of this movement. The growing interest in spiritual formation is, for the most part, very healthy, and can be found in mainline, traditional evangelical, and Pentecostal/charismatic circles. Yet within each of these traditions, tendencies lurk that can rob this movement of authenticity—the authenticity needed to propel this movement into effective personal and social transformation.

Mainline and Christian

Interest in spirituality has hit mainline Christianity like a flood. Our experience with social justice has led us to see that outer change without inner change has little staying power and often leads to burnout for those devoting themselves to kingdom work. We are ready for a good dose of inner spiritual transformation. We want something capable of empowering authentic social change, something that can make sense in the context of our increasingly pluralist culture.

Exploring spiritual formation in mainline churches often means experimenting with a wide range of spiritual and psychological practices. Mainline retreats often draw on themes from medieval mystics, and have workshops on the Labyrinth (a maze people walk through for enlightenment) or the Enneagram (a temperament schema with spiritual dimensions and Sufi roots). Some directors encourage various Buddhist practices to help us get in touch with our spiritual dimension. These practices are intended to expand our understanding of what it means to relate to God.

For example, one popular retreat and spiritual direction training center in my region offers common meals, massage, inner healing, evening prayer, in-depth dream work, daily Eucharist, and “mandala

³ This article appeared in *Christianity Today*, December 9, 2002. Evan Howard is director of the Spirituality Shoppe: An Evangelical Center for the Study of Christian Spirituality, based in Montrose, Colorado. He is the author of *Praying the Scriptures: A Field Guide for Your Spiritual Journey* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1999).

explorations.” Mandalas (artistic, usually circular, designs) appear in a few religious traditions—in Native American designs, in Gothic rose windows, and especially in Tibetan practices. Those who use mandalas frequently refer to the thought of psychologist C. G. Jung, who saw in mandalas a universal symbol of the integration of the human person. Thus, training for those leading mandala work aims at “assisting your client or directee’s integration process.” Contemporary mandala work uses shape, line, and color to represent aspects of our personality: as one creates and reflects on these artistic designs, conflict or harmony comes to light.

I have nothing against self-discovery, or even using broad-ranging interpretive frameworks like mandalas to assist self-discovery. But sooner or later, we must realize that *Christian* spiritual formation is the process by which believers become more fully conformed and united to *Christ*. The source of transformation is the Spirit of Christ. Spiritual formation develops primarily in the context of a relationship with Christ. The aim of formation is conformity to and union with Christ. While other traditions may provide helpful and legitimate insights into human “integration,” they do not (indeed they *cannot*) express what conformity to or union with *Christ* involves.

As a discipline of Tibetan Buddhist enlightenment, for example, the mandala is designed not to form a person (or self) into union with Jesus Christ, but to help a person realize that ultimately there is no self to be formed. It is not so much that Tibetan theology is explicitly emphasized in mandala seminars (or Sufi theology in the Enneagram), but by drawing in this manner from the world’s religions, the seminars diminish (or leave out) the person of Jesus Christ.

In his award-winning *Satisfy Your Soul: Restoring the Heart of Christian Spirituality*, Bruce Demarest distinguishes authentic Christian spirituality by a few key characteristics. One of these is Christ-centeredness. Demarest writes, “The fullness of life we crave is found only in heart-to-heart relationship with Christ, in growing in his character, and in being directed by his Spirit.” The best way to lead others to Christ is to lead others to *Christ*. We have not even begun to mine the riches of the Christian tradition for resources in spiritual formation. If we in spiritual formation intend to lead people into ever-increasing unity and conformity with the living God revealed in Jesus Christ, we are at our best and generally safest when we lead Christians with teaching and practices that are distinctive to the Christian tradition: *Christian* spiritual formation.

Evangelical and Spiritual

Evangelical Christians have served as defenders of the faith for generations, waving the banners of the central Christian beliefs and the authority of the Scriptures. Yet because of our role as “protectors of the faith,” evangelicals have been slow to welcome the trends regarding Christian spiritual formation. The intentional use of imagination in prayer, the idea of “listening” or “centering” prayer, and the notion of spiritual “direction” have resembled, to some, too much of what we have meant to keep *out* of Christianity: New Age ideas and works righteousness. Hence, we have traditionally kept spiritual formation at arm’s length.

More recently, however, we have seen a renewed interest in spiritual disciplines such as meditation, guidance, study, and service. We have found that there is more to the abundant Christian life than quitting the big sins and trying to bear witness to our acquaintances. We need more. And we have found that desire for more, that intentional development of our relationship with God, in Christian formation.

But I sometimes wonder if we are talking about Christian *spiritual* formation. Christian spiritual formation is not simply improving the regularity of prayer or Bible study. It is not merely becoming personally accountable for our sins. Christian spiritual formation is *the transformation of our spirit* through the Spirit of Christ.

When Jesus told us that he would not leave us as orphans but that he would leave us a token of his presence, he was not talking about leaving us only a holy book. Our relationship with God is mediated

primarily not through the Bible but through the Spirit (albeit working in and through the Bible). If we are leery of things of the Spirit, we will not allow God to bring conviction, healing, or renewal. If we are not prepared to allow ourselves—mind, emotion, and will—to be *moved* by the Spirit, I doubt we will allow ourselves to be *formed* by the Spirit.

I attended a prominent evangelical seminary, where one required theological course was called “God, Man, and Christ.” There was no class on the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit received brief treatment under discussion of *God*. Similarly, I am familiar with an influential, 400-page evangelical book on the will of God and spiritual maturity that spends a total of five pages discussing the work of the Holy Spirit, most of them discussing what he does *not* do. For the author, following God’s will is about growing in obedience to the Bible and learning to make wise decisions.

I am certainly not opposed to the centrality of Scripture or the value of biblical wisdom. Nevertheless, our growth in the things of God is not merely a matter of biblical character, but more profoundly a matter of spiritual relationship. A. W. Tozer, an evangelical leader of the last century, pointed out this danger regarding our view of Scripture: “I believe that much of our religious unbelief is due to a wrong conception of and a wrong feeling for the Scriptures of Truth. A silent God suddenly began to speak in a book and when the book was finished lapsed into silence again forever. ...The facts are that God is not silent, has never been silent. It is the nature of God to speak.” Spiritual formation involves an intentional pursuit of God inspired by the leading of the Spirit, informed by the speaking of the Spirit, and empowered by the work of the Spirit: Christian *spiritual* formation.

Pentecostal and Transformed

Pentecostals and charismatics, of course, have been “into” the things of the Spirit from the start. This movement has spawned a renewed sense of worship, an emphasis on the personal touch of God for believers, and a new sense of the church as a community of gifted believers. The renewed interest in and study of Christian spirituality has been a big boon for charismatics. Again and again, historians of Christian spirituality have pointed out that charismatic experience and expression are not isolated phenomena of recent American history. Some of the most respected saints in church history have experienced and even encouraged profound experiences of the Spirit. The interest in Christian spirituality has brought a slight shift away from Bible to experience, and this is just where we charismatics like to dwell.

And here is where the danger lies. We can get caught up in sharing spiritual experiences and miss the aim of Christian spiritual formation. Christian spiritual formation is not simply fostering the *experience* of the Spirit but rather a radical *formation*, a shaping and molding of the believer into conformity with Christ through the Spirit. Christian spiritual formation is intentional about moving from the experience of Christ’s invitation to the concrete actions of personal transformation. This is hard work at times—not works of righteousness but hard work nonetheless. Obedience is like that, too: it is inspired and empowered by grace, but grace is still tough.

The rediscovery and mis-discovery of Jonathan Edwards during the Toronto Blessing was a textbook case of this very danger. In 1994 Toronto Airport Vineyard Church became the center of a powerful spiritual movement. Millions have visited this church to receive a touch from God. This movement has included “manifestations” of the Holy Spirit: periods of shaking, falling, laughing, and similar phenomena. When historical theologian Guy Chevreau was touched by this movement and looked to the history of Christian spirituality to assess it, he turned to the work of Jonathan Edwards, theologian of the Great Awakening (1735-48). In *Catch the Fire*, Chevreau correctly applied Edwards’s early defense of revival manifestations to the Toronto Blessing, urging that one should draw no conclusions based *only* on the manifestations. I believe he used Edwards fairly in concluding that the Toronto Blessing should be called a revival birthed of the Holy Spirit.

What was missing from Chevreau’s assessment of Edwards and the Toronto Blessing, however, was any application of the theologian’s later work, especially his classic *Treatise on Religious Affections*. In this

work, partly written to correct errors of revivalism, Edwards expressed serious concern about interest in spiritual manifestations to the neglect of transforming character. “Holy practice is as much the end of all that God does about his saints,” Edwards wrote, “as fruit is the end of all the husbandman [farmer] does about the growth of his field or vineyard.” God’s powerful *invitations*, he argued, draw us into his equally powerful (but often less immediately pleasant) *transformations*.

I go to renewal meetings and to healing services. I love participating with believers who are hearing, seeing, and feeling God. But being touched is not necessarily being formed. Christian spiritual formation aims at conforming all of life (thought, feeling, word, and deed) to the life of Christ. My hope is to hate sin as Christ does, to treat the outcast the way Christ does, to regard God the Father the way Christ does, and, yes, to heal as Christ does. While powerful experiences of God contribute significantly to our continuing formation, conformity with Christ comes ultimately only through a lifetime of obedience and the grace of the Spirit: Christian spiritual *formation*.

The blessings of spirituality have arrived, and resources to pursue the spiritual life abound. But therein lies a caution. When we are more interested in the fascinating resources than in pursuing relationship with God, when we use the right words to avoid the real Spirit, or when we pursue the experience of God more than the God of the experience, we are not yet practicing Christian spiritual formation.

Appendix B

Spiritual Formation: A Pastoral Letter

By Richard J. Foster⁴
Sunday January 18, 2004

Dear Friends,

By now enough water has gone under the Christian Spiritual Formation bridge that we can give some assessment of where we have come and what yet needs to be done. When I first began writing in the field in the late 70s and early 80s the term “Spiritual Formation” was hardly known, except for highly specialized references in relation to the Catholic orders. Today it is a rare person who has not heard the term. Seminary courses in Spiritual Formation proliferate like baby rabbits. Huge numbers are seeking to become certified as Spiritual Directors to answer the cry of multiplied thousands for spiritual direction. And more.

Still, any genuine understanding of Spiritual Formation and its immense importance for the lives of individuals and churches is as remote as ever. Many contemporary books on the subject (and their number is now legion) simply take up the all too familiar recipe of consumer-Christianity-without-discipleship. Seminary programs become quickly polluted by issues that are a far cry from the spiritual growth of students: money (D. Min. programs give seminaries ready cash), pride (degrees abounding), arrogance (our program is better than your program), ATS accreditation concerns (reading lists and contact hours take precedence over soul growth in grace), and a host of other issues that have nothing to do with the life of “righteousness and peace and joy” in the Holy Spirit, and, indeed, are more often than not counterproductive to it. But, all this may be just as well, since Christian Spiritual Formation is really hammered out in the harsh realities of ordinary life—ear infections and broken arms and bosses filled with guile and stock market slumps and neighbors who deceive. Hence, these are the very places where our hardest study and most careful work in Spiritual Formation must go on.

⁴ This article first appeared in *Heart-to-Heart*, a publication of *RENOVARÉ*, 8 Inverness Drive East, Suite 102, Englewood, CO 80112-5624. Used with permission.

A Moment of Great Opportunity

You can probably detect that I am not overwhelmingly encouraged by the popular expressions of Spiritual Formation today. I'm not; too much is too faddish and too formulaic for me to be optimistic. And yet, we stand at a moment of great opportunity. Human need today is so obvious and so great that no honest person can deny it. People stagger under the burden of human wickedness. Evil is an open, oozing sore. Therefore superficial, half-answers will not do. Not anymore. Today, there is a great new fact in the contemporary interest in Spiritual Formation. And I view it as a source for enormous hope. This great new fact is the widespread belief that we can no longer bypass authentic, pervasive, thorough transformation of the inner life of the human being.

Add to this the fact that the many "spiritualities" that have arisen in our day do not answer the question of how we can become a good person. Nor do they possess the power to make a person good. But genuine Christian Spiritual Formation does answer the question and does possess the power to bring it to pass. And it is an answer and a power that shines brightly throughout the pages of history. It is no accident that the blazing light and life of Christian faithfulness overcame and supplanted all the "spiritualities" of Rome in the early centuries of the Christian Era. They offered a life—a formed, conformed, transformed life—that the Roman spiritualities simply could not match.

The same can happen today. If . . . if we will: 1) understand the absolute necessity of Spiritual Formation (no more optional discipleship), 2) make a firm intention to pursue it at all costs, 3) learn something of its means, and 4) faithfully practice it in daily life. As we move forward in Spiritual Formation, allow me to suggest several essential areas of focus.

Focusing on Jesus

Nothing is more important in Christian Spiritual Formation than our need to continue ever focused upon Jesus. This is not formation-in-general. This is formation into Christlikeness. Everything hangs on this. Everything. Jesus gives skeleton and sinews and muscle to our formation. In Jesus we find definition and shape and form for our formation. Jesus is our Savior to redeem us, our Bishop to shepherd us, our Teacher to instruct us, our Lord to rule us, our Friend to come alongside us. He is alive. He teaches, rules, guides, instructs, rebukes, comforts. Stay close to him in all things and in all ways.

Then too, as Dallas Willard has taught us, we are constantly learning to live our life as Jesus would live our life if he were we. The point here is that we are not trying to live his life but our life. In the flesh Jesus' life has already been lived. It is our life that needs the living. Remember, Jesus really is Lord; he is the Master of life, all life. He can teach you and me how to live our life. Really. You're a computer programmer—he can teach you how to do that well. Ask him. Then listen . . . listen over a period of time. You'll learn how to do it as he would do it if he were you. A teacher. Well, he is the Master teacher. How about brick laying? Yes, that too.

Some of the deepest teaching comes in the relationships we must deal with day in and day out. How do we relate to someone who deceives constantly? Jesus knows. Ask and it will be given to you. How about ego-driven colleagues? He understands them too. Jesus is the Master of all human relationships. He will guide you in what to say and what to do and how to respond.

Now, the canonical gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John are the touchstone of our understanding of Jesus. These four Gospels in our Bible give us everything needful and essential about Jesus. They refuse, however, to indulge our curiosity about a whole host of details. How long was Jesus' hair? What color were his eyes? What toys did he play with as a child? Did he play as a child? And more.

Beginning in the second century and continuing right up to the present, various writers have rushed to fill in the gaps with imaginative "lives of Jesus". Even today every now and then some publisher will come out with a new book on "the lost life of Jesus". Please, don't be taken in by such consumer plays. These

flights of fantasy (if I may call them that) do not lead us to the Jesus who is the Way and the Truth and the Life; the Jesus who reveals to us the heart of the Father. No, these fictions reveal not Jesus but the agenda and the biases of the writer. They are a waste of good time and energy. Worse, they so titillate our fantasies that they distract the imagination from its proper function, which is, as Mary, to prayerfully ponder all the realities of Jesus in our heart (Luke 2:19). This prayerful pondering, this sanctified imagination, continually confronts us with the realities of ethical decision and moral choice. Always it drives us to turn from our way into God's way. Always it brings us face-to-face with the reality of Jesus and calls us increasingly to take on his character, his thoughts, his habits, his passion, his compassion.

Focusing on Scripture

My mention of the Gospel record leads me to a second essential area of focus for Spiritual Formation: Scripture. Oh, I hope you can feel deep down in your bones the great goodness and wonder of the Bible. God, in sovereign grace and outrageous love, has given us a written revelation of his own being and nature and of his purposes for humanity. That written revelation now resides as a massive fact at the heart of human history. There is, simply, no book that is remotely close to achieving the presence and influence of the Bible. It is truly The Book (hay Biblos).

But the intrinsic power and greatness of the Bible does not make it easy for us to receive the life it offers. In fact, we can often use the Bible in ways that stifle the spiritual life and even destroy the soul. This happened to any number of people who walked in the literal presence of Jesus, and it still happens today. Even to those who speak most highly of the Bible.

Sometimes we study the Bible for information alone in order to prove that we are right and others are wrong in particular doctrines or beliefs or practices. At other times we study the Bible to find some formula to solve the pressing need of the moment. But both approaches to the Bible leave the soul untouched. No, we need to study the Bible with a view to the transformation of our whole person and of our whole life into Christlikeness. We come to the Bible to receive the life "with God" that is portrayed in the Bible. To do this we must not control what comes out of the Bible. We must be prepared to have our dearest and most fundamental assumptions about ourselves and our associations called into question. We must read humbly and in a constant attitude of repentance. Only in this way can we gain a thorough and practical grasp of the spiritual riches that God has made available to all humanity in his written Word.

We can begin with the Gospels looking at the "with-God" life that is fully portrayed in Jesus. And we seek this life abundant that comes in and through Jesus alone. We study the Epistles to see the life of God being poured through his people, the Church. And we seek that life for ourselves and for our families and for our churches and for our times. We study the Psalms and see the people of God at prayer. And we too enter a living experience of prayer, working in co-operation with God to see his kingdom come and his will be done here on earth. We study the Pentateuch to understand the Mosaic Law in the light of grace. And we seek to conform our lives to the heart and spirit of the Law. We study the Historical books to understand how God works through the historical particularities of a people. And we ask for God's life and God's work in the specifics of our histories. We study the Prophets and see their bias in favor of the downtrodden. And we seek the power to live continually with a sensitized social conscience. We study the Wisdom books and discover God's interest in the practical details of everyday life. And we pray for wisdom in the minutiae of our little life. We study the Eschatological books and discover that "He's got the whole world in his hands". And we place our little destiny in God's hands too. And more.

Throughout our study of the Bible we are learning greater love: greater appropriation of God's love for us, and for us to have greater love for God, for others, and for ourselves. All our study of the Bible is so that we might love more and know more of love. Not as an abstraction but as a practical reality by which we are possessed. And since all who love through and through "naturally" (supernaturally, too) obey the Law, we will be ever more obedient to Jesus Christ and his Abba Father. We surrender freely to the life we

find in the Bible, trusting the living water that flows from Jesus through the Bible, and living in the reality of its abundance.

Focusing on Spiritual Disciplines

The life we find in the Bible is meant for us. Jesus' declaration, "I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly" is intended for you and for me (John 10:10). It is a life of unhurried peace and power. It is solid. It is simple. It is serene. It is radiant. But, it is not automatic.

There is a process, a God-ordained means, to becoming the kind of persons and the kind of communities that can fully and joyfully enter into such abundant living. This is the reason for the Disciplines of the spiritual life. They constitute the way God has given us for intentionally "training ourselves in godliness" (1 Tim. 4:7). This is why the Spiritual Disciplines is the third essential focus of Spiritual Formation.

Frankly, no Spiritual Disciplines, no Spiritual Formation. The Disciplines are the God-ordained means by which each of us is enabled to bring the little, individualized power pack we all possess—we call it the human body—and place it before God as "a living sacrifice" (Rom. 12:1). It is the way we go about training in the spiritual life. By means of this process we become, through time and experience, the kind of person who lives naturally and freely in "love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control" (Gal. 5:22-23).

What are these Spiritual Disciplines I am speaking of? Oh, they are many and varied: fasting and prayer, study and service, submission and solitude, confession and worship, meditation and silence, simplicity, frugality, secrecy, sacrifice, celebration, and the like. The commonly identified public religious activities are important to be sure, but the less commonly practiced activities like solitude and silence and meditation and fasting and submission to the will of others as appropriate are in fact more foundational for Spiritual Formation. All Disciplines should be thoughtfully and resolutely approached for the purpose of forming the life into Christlikeness, or they will have little or no effect in promoting this life.

It is vitally important for us to see all this spiritual training in the context of the work and action of God's grace. As the great Apostle reminds us, "it is God who is at work in you, enabling you both to will and to work for his good pleasure" (Phil. 2:13). You see, we are not just saved by grace, we live by grace. And we pray by grace and fast by grace and study by grace and serve by grace and worship by grace. All the Disciplines are penetrated throughout by the enabling grace of God.

The training of the Spiritual Disciplines must always be seen in the context of an intimate, personal walk with Jesus himself. We are not looking for some exhaustive list of the Disciplines so that we can cross every "t" and dot every "i". Nor are we looking for any "formula for blessedness". No, no, this is a dynamic, interactive life "with God". In practicing the Spiritual Disciplines we are simply learning to fall in love with Jesus over and over and over again.

Back to the Beginning

And that takes us back to where we started, doesn't it! We start with Jesus and we end with Jesus. As the Cotton Patch paraphrase of the Gospels puts it, "Jesus is tops over all!" Jesus is indeed our everliving Savior, Teacher, Lord, and Friend. He will guide and direct. All we need do is listen. And obey.

Peace and joy,

Richard J. Foster

Appendix C

Father's Love Letter⁵

This "Intimate Message from God to You" is a collection of Bible verses that are presented in the form of a love letter from God. Each line is paraphrased in order to best express its meaning. Some Chaplain's have used this to not only encourage themselves, but they have also made a copy available to their patients or residents (downloadable at www.FathersLoveLetter.com) in order to encourage them.

My child . . .

You may not know Me, but I know everything about you (Psalm 139:1).

I know when you sit down and when you rise up (Psalm 139:2).

I am familiar with all your ways (Psalm 139:3).

Even the very hairs on your head are numbered (Matthew 10:29-31).

For you were made in My image (Genesis 1:27).

In Me you live and move and have your being (Acts 17:28).

For you are My offspring (Acts 17:18).

I knew you even before you were conceived (Jeremiah 1:4-5).

I chose you when I planned creation (Ephesians 1:11-12).

You were not a mistake, for all your days are written in My book (Psalm 139:15-16).

I determined the exact time of your birth and where you should live (Acts 17:26).

You are fearfully and wonderfully made (Psalm 139:14).

I knit you together in your mother's womb (Psalm 139:13).

And brought you forth on the day you were born (Psalm 71:6).

I have been misrepresented by those who don't know Me (John 8:41-44).

I am not distant and angry, but am the complete expression of love (1 John 4:16).

And it is My desire to lavish My love on you (1 John 3:1).

Simply because you are My child and I am your Father (1 John 3:1).

O offer you more than your earthly father ever could (Matthew 7:11).

For I am the perfect Father (Matthew 5:48).

Every good gift that you receive comes from My hand (James 1:17).

For I am your provider and I meet all your needs (Matthew 6:31-33).

My plan for your future has always been filled with hope (Jeremiah 29:11).

Because I love you with an everlasting love (Jeremiah 31:3).

⁵ Father's Love Letter used by permission Father Heart Communications © 1999 www.FathersLoveLetter.com.

My thoughts toward you are countless as the sand on the seashore (Psalm 139:17-18).

And I rejoice over you with singing (Zephaniah 3:17).

I will never stop doing good for you (Jeremiah 32:40).

For you are My treasured possession (Exodus 19:5).

I desire to establish you with all My heart and all My soul (Jeremiah 32:41).

And I want to show you great and marvelous things (Jeremiah 33:3).

If you seek Me with all your heart, you will find Me (Deuteronomy 4:29).

Delight in Me and I will give you the desires of your heart (Psalm 37:4).

For it is I who gave you those desires (Philippians 2:13).

I am able to do more for you than you could possibly imagine (Ephesians 3:20).

For I am your greatest encourager (2 Thessalonians 2:16-17).

I am also the Father who comforts you in all your troubles (2 Corinthians 1:3-4).

When you are brokenhearted, I am close to you (Psalm 34:18).

As a shepherd carries a lamb, I have carried you close to My heart (Isaiah 40:11).

One day I will wipe away every tear from your eyes (Revelation 21:3-4).

And I'll take away all the pain you have suffered on this earth (Revelation 21:3-4).

I am your Father, and I love you even as I love My Son, Jesus (John 17:23).

For in Jesus, My love for you is revealed (John 17:26).

He is the exact representation of My being (Hebrews 1:3).

He came to demonstrate that I am for you, not against you (Romans 8:31).

And to tell you that I am not counting your sins (2 Corinthians 5:18-19).

Jesus died so that you and I could be reconciled (2 Corinthians 5:18-19).

His death was the ultimate expression of My love for you (1 John 4:10).

I gave up everything I loved that I might gain your love (Romans 8:31-32).

If you receive the gift of My Son, Jesus, you receive Me (1 John 2:23).

And nothing will ever separate you from My love again (Romans 8:38-39).

Come home and I'll throw the biggest party heaven has ever seen (Luke 15:7).

I have always been Father; and will always be Father (Ephesians 3:14-15).

My question is . . . Will you be My child (John 1:12-13).

I am waiting for you (Luke 15:11-32).

Love,

Your Dad, Almighty God

Appendix D

Because God Loves Me⁶

This is a creatively personalized view of 1 Corinthians 13:4-8. Use it to not only encourage your own soul, but consider making a copy that you might share with your patients or residents.

Because God loves me, He is slow to lose patience with me.

Because God loves me, He takes the circumstances in my life and uses them in a constructive way for my growth.

Because God loves me, He does not treat me as an object to be possessed and manipulated.

Because God loves me, he has no need to impress me with how great and powerful He is because He is God, nor does He belittle me as His child in order to show me how important He is.

Because God loves me, He is for me. He wants to see me mature and develop in His love.

Because God loves me, He does not send down His wrath on every little mistake I make, of which there are many.

Because God loves me, He is deeply grieved when I do not walk in the ways that please Him because He sees this as evidence that I don't trust Him and love Him as I should.

Because God loves me, He rejoices when I experience His power and strength and stand up under the pressures of life for His name's sake.

Because God loves me, He keeps on trusting me when at times I don't trust myself.

Because God loves me, He never says there is no hope for me; rather, He patiently works with me, loves me and disciplines me in such a way that it is hard for me to understand the depth of His concern for me.

Because God loves me, He never forsakes me even though many of my friends might.

Because God loves me, He stands with me when I have reached the rock bottom of despair, when I see the real me and compare that with His righteousness, holiness, beauty, and love. It is at a moment like this that I can really believe that God loves me.

Yes, the greatest of all gifts is God's perfect love.

⁶ This was shared with Chaplain Jeffrey Funk by H. Norman Wright when he was a student at Talbot School of Theology, 1977. It has been given to patients to help strengthen the spirit of those who are downhearted. It is used with permission.