

DEVELOPING AN EFFECTIVE SPIRITUAL MATURITY  
PROCESS WITHIN A CONGREGATION

A PROJECT REPORT  
SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY  
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS  
FOR THE DEGREE  
DOCTOR OF MINISTRY  
BY  
PATRICIA A. SNELLING

WINEBRENNER THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

FINDLAY, OHIO

AUGUST 1, 2015



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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This research was born out of the passion of the researcher to see Christians mature in Christ. I was taking a class, Spiritual Formation, at Winebrenner Theological Seminary. One of the requirements of the class, which was taught by Dr. John Nissley, was to attend a Spiritual Retreat. During this retreat, I experienced a whole new level of intimacy with Christ which changed my life forever. A new passion was born into my life.

These four years have truly been a journey that I will never forget. Along this journey I met some remarkable people. My heartfelt thanks goes to my project team. Dr. Gwen Ebner graciously agreed to be my project mentor; her knowledge and wisdom were extremely helpful during this journey. Elder Winona McDaniels, my external reader, used her expertise in the Word of God to help make this project a success. Margaret Sattler, writing stylist, helped immensely with her knowledge of the English language and stylistic details. A special thanks to my pastor, Bishop Duane C. Tisdale, who has supported me in every area possible including prayer. Deepest thanks are extended to Dr. John Nissley and Linda Davison who constantly pushed me and encouraged me in my writing of this project. Their patience with me was incredible.

I grew up in a small family setting where family values were very important. My father, who only had an eighth-grade education, stressed the importance of education to his girls. I honor my deceased parents, Albert and Corrine Jackson, for their values,

spiritual and moral, they instill in me. I thank them for the sacrifices they made for me to start my college education. Thanks to my sisters, Kim Burton and Carole Goodwin for their continual support. I give thanks to my children Deithra Glaze and Che' Snelling. Deithra's computer skills help my project look professional and meet necessary requirements, as well as the help of her husband Terence. Che' constantly encouraged me to stay on the journey. Both of my children prayed me through these four years. Thanks to my friends, Glenda and Karrie, who never gave up on me and was there for me praying. Last but most important, thanks to God for his continual grace and mercy. It was his constant shaping and molding that I was able to complete this assignment. To God Be The Glory!!!

## ABSTRACT

This research addresses the need to have an effective spiritual maturity process in place in our churches. Once a person joins a congregation, then what happens? Are churches satisfied with just growing the membership numerically or growing them spiritually? Such a study is important to determine what is necessary to move congregants to Christ-like behaviors.

The research approach adopted in this dissertation includes both quantitative and qualitative methods. Electronic surveys were provided to the adults in the congregation who had access to a computer. The survey was for adult members only and divided into two sections. The first section, "About You," asked the participants personal questions such as gender, age, and education. The second section asked questions pertaining to spiritual growth practices. Two interviews were conducted with four key leaders of the church.

The research project offers recommendations to the church dealing with education in spiritual disciples. Recommendations to individuals are made in regards to learning and applying spiritual disciplines to their daily living. Recommendations to the leadership are made regarding the development of a spiritual growth curriculum.

## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION TO THE PROJECT

#### I. Context of the Problem

The culture of the church has changed drastically over the past centuries. In the past, people received their basic orientation from the family, school, and church. In the present media culture, however, “images and celebrities are replacing families, schools, and churches as arbiters of taste, value, and thought. Cultural texts—soap operas, the lives of celebrities, films—serve up ready-made scripts that provide templates for everything from the perfect relationship and the perfect kiss to the perfect crime. Culture is the sphere of reproduction not of goods but of life”.<sup>1</sup> Culture spreads beliefs, values, ideas, fashions, and practices from one social group to another. Vanhoozer describe the process of cultural impact:

The chief non-institutional means by which culture perpetuates itself, however are mechanical and “memetic”. The term “meme” come from the Greek term *mimesis* (imitation). Meme relies on an analogy between genes and memes. A meme is an element of a culture that may be considered to be passed on by non-genetic means, esp. imitation. Whereas genes are packages of biological information, a meme is a package of cultural information: A meme might be a clothing fashion, a popular song, or religious belief.”<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Kevin J. Vanhoozer, *Everyday Theology: How to Read Cultural Texts and Interpret Trends* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007), Kindle Reader e-book, location 170.

<sup>2</sup> Vanhoozer, Kindle Reader e-book, 200.

The Friendship Baptist Church (FBC) was organized in 1905. At that time, the culture of the church reflected the traditions that had been handed down through generations. It is presently over 100 years old and has approximately 900-1000 active members. An active member is (1) one that pays tithes/offerings, (2) has not missed three consecutive communion services, (3) completed membership class, (4) attend at least 3 out of 4 regular worship services a month, (5) willing to follow the pastor and the rules and regulations of the church, (6) willing and committed to ministering and serving within the ministries, and (7) morally and physically support the ministry and its vision. When this church was established it was a very traditional Baptist church. The church culture was traditional because of some of their beliefs such as no women preachers or women deacons and the church services were prearranged instead of being led by the Holy Spirit. Everything had to be done in a specific order. For instance, if the bulletin called for an "A" and "B" selection from the choir and after the "A" selection the atmosphere was ready for the Word of God it would not happen until after the "B" selection was sung by the choir. The pulpit leader would not deviate from the norm. The Holy Spirit did not guide the service, human tradition did.

The commentary of E. C. Marsh regarding Matthew 15:1-20 gives an example of tradition over the Word of God.

What's wrong with tradition? Only one thing; it vitiates God's word. Any harm in it? Take the case presented here, relative to washing hands ceremonially, which was the basis of the Pharisee's assault on Christ. That ceremony was harmless in a sense, perhaps even helpful as cleanliness or hygiene; but it had been forced into the worship of God, solely by human authority, and eventually blinded the eyes of men so completely that they could not even see the Son of Righteousness. The tradition of washing hands was fortified by the unanimous consent and approval of religious leaders, it was supported by all the established institutions; it was honored by the most widespread and extensive observance of it by all the people; and it had been

in vogue for many centuries; yet all this did not and could not make it right to inject even so innocent a thing as washing hands into the worship of God. Why? God accepts only those things as worship which he himself has authorized and commanded. Furthermore, given a choice between the Word of God and human tradition, the universal experience of the human race is to the effect that the tradition wins acceptance and the Word of God is violated.<sup>3</sup>

The Baptist Church has for centuries failed to acknowledge or even teach the “whole Bible”. They would only teach the books, Scriptures, and ideas that had been preached and taught before. The Baptist church has experienced “Spiritual Apartheid.” Members have always had the right to be born again. The usage of spiritual gifts, heavenly language, the power to cast out demons, laying on of hands, and other signs and wonders that were afforded to others in the body of Christ, but were denied to the Baptist. The gospel is the good news, authoritatively attested in the biblical text, that God is making all things new in Christ. “The church is God’s culture and God’s building project—a new way of life, a new temple—that is being built up into Christ. In the meantime, we must heed the Johannine exhortations: Do not follow antichrist (1 John 2:18); Test the spirits (1 John 4:1); Keep yourselves from idols (1 John 5:21)”<sup>4</sup> Many churches of the Baptist denomination, even today, ignore or stay away from, the “gifts of the Spirit.”<sup>5</sup>

On May 2, 1971 ground breaking ceremonies at 3232 Nebraska were held, which commenced the construction of the Educational Building for FBC. It was the determination that this facility would serve the needs of all age groups, all races and nations, in Christian standards and education. In 1993, seventeen acres of land was

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<sup>3</sup> E. C. Marsh, *Geneva Study Bible* (Nashville: Nelsonword Publishing Group, 1995), 1083.

<sup>4</sup> Vanhoozer, Kindle Reader e-book, location 722.

<sup>5</sup> 1 Corinthians 12:4-11 [NKJV].

purchased at 5301 Nebraska, which is the church's present location. The purpose was to build a new facility with a new vision. FBC built a new facility, with a seating capacity of 1500, but did not forget its roots. FBC is easily recognized as a church of God and has maintained its Christian identity by its appearance.

In 1995, FBC began to shift from traditional to non-traditional. In this year FBC joined the Full Gospel Baptist Church Fellowship International (FGBCF). After joining FGBCF, Friendship Baptist Church changed the titles of some of its ministerial staff. The title reverend was replaced by the title elder. The reason is that the word reverend is not found in the Bible. The birth of the FGBCF is in essence the story of a tremendous move of God in the last decade of the twentieth century. Since 1994, when over twenty-five thousand people attended the first FGBCF conference in the Louisiana Superdome, the spiritual religious freedom that makes FGBCF unique has impacted Christian men and women across the world.

Full Gospel Distinctives and Baptist Doctrines are the founding beliefs and doctrines by which the Full Gospel was established. (See Appendix A and B) "The Right to Choose" is based on the belief that the Gospel of Jesus Christ must be promoted by recognizing the free expression of the gifts of the Spirit as a viable part of the body of Christ. The FGBCF is convinced that the choice to exercise these special gifts is imperative for the local New Testament church to fully function as the dynamic organism God has intended. The Full Gospel Baptists are using those keys to take full authority over the devil. The Word of God states that the church can legally use gifts in the name of Jesus! It does not matter how strange it may look to the natural man or to the

denomination. In 1996, tradition takes a back seat, the first women were licensed as ministers, and in 1998, the first women were ordained at FBC.

In the twenty-first century, many megachurches are now being built. Even though FBC is not large enough to be considered a megachurch, it is larger than most Baptist churches in this area. The community sees FBC as a megachurch. Megachurches seem to offer many different options in order to meet the seeming needs of everyone. In a way, it's "all about me" and getting it "my way", the way and time I prefer it. This is in opposition to people being formed in Christ.

Megachurches are typically defined as churches with a weekly attendance of at least 2,000 people and a strong commitment to reaching their communities for Christ. "Church leaders readily admit that the megachurch has adopted mall-style architecture from the culture. Many times these structures left out a few key items or symbols: crosses, stained-glass windows, altars, and steeples. Instead these items/symbols are replaced with food kiosks, water fountains, cappuccino carts, convenient parking lots, and a shopping mall feel."<sup>6</sup>

The cross represents the ultimate demonstration of God's power. The purpose of the steeple was twofold: (1) to draw the people's attention to the heavens and therefore directing their minds to God and (2) to draw attention to the church. Stained-glass windows were used to help communicate the truth of the Bible in pictures and symbols to those who were illiterate. This mall-style architect can tempt one to squeeze the Spirit out of the scene and lean on the dynamics of performance. The larger the church "corporation" and its image, the greater the pressure is to maintain and promote its image and not Jesus Christ. According to Vanhoozer, "the mission of the church is to cultivate

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<sup>6</sup> Vanhoozer, Kindle Reader e-book, location 921.

the life of Christ in ourselves, our neighbors, and our neighborhoods. This means “inculturating” the way of Jesus Christ in concrete contexts. The church should be not only a “school of faith” but a “school of understanding” that trains the imaginations of its student-saints to see, judge, and act in the world as it really is in Christ”.<sup>7</sup>

Friendship’s (FBC’s) mission statement is “The community where saving the lost and cultivating Christ-like maturity is our priority”. Their theme is “Christian Maturity”. “When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child: but when I became a man, I put away childish things.”<sup>8</sup> FBC emphasis is “Spiritual Development and Economic Empowerment.” The church adopted a new church vision. The vision is quite simple and direct, “To Minister to the Total Person”. This vision will be accomplished through a ministry that encompasses the following core areas and disciplines, which include spiritual/mental, physical, economical, and social needs.

FBC’s spiritual/mental focus Scripture is “I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God that ye present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind.”<sup>9</sup> Ministering to the total person involves a transformation that begins with the process of renewing the mind. The mind is renewed as it receives new spiritual information from the Word of God as it is actualized by the Holy Spirit.<sup>10</sup> This spiritual information puts a person in the right relationship with God that is essential for being in the right relationship with others and ourselves. Therefore,

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<sup>7</sup> Vanhoozer, Kindle Reader e-book, location 1009.

<sup>8</sup> 1 Corinthians 13:11 [KJV].

<sup>9</sup> Romans 12:1-2a [KJV].

<sup>10</sup> Eph.1:17-23, 3:16-19; I Thess.1:2-5 [NIV].

our spiritual and mental state becomes receptive to biblical truth that is processed through the mind.

“Do not read Scripture merely to be in-the-know, but rather to be transformed by the renewing of our minds. Proverbs 1:7 appropriately begins with the declaration that the fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and discipline.”<sup>11</sup>

Christians should be interested not just in mere information, but in wisdom that finds its significance in obedience to God. “Information and knowledge, then, are to be conceived within the framework of equipping believers as cultural agents who, just as the men of Issachar, can discern the times and know what the church should do (1 Chronicles 12:32.) This is at the heart of what it means to influence culture.”<sup>12</sup>

FBC’s physical focus Scriptures are “So Jesus grew both in height and in wisdom, and he was loved by God and by all who knew him”<sup>13</sup> and “Or don’t you know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit, who lives in you and was given to you by God? You do not belong to yourself.”<sup>14</sup> Ministering to the total person, through physical wellness includes exercise, diet and a way of living (sleep, handling stress, and stop smoking). Physical awareness will bring about an awareness of fitness that increases the overall effectiveness in life.

FBC’s economic development focus Scripture is Matthew 25:14-30:

Again, the Kingdom of Heaven can be illustrated by the story of a man going on a trip. He called together his servants and gave them money to

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<sup>11</sup> Vanhoozer, Kindle Reader e-book, location 1299.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> Luke 2:52 [NLT].

<sup>14</sup> 1 Corinthians 6:19 [NLT].

invest for him while he was gone. He gave five bags of gold to one, two bags of gold to another, and one bag of gold to the last—dividing it in proportion to their abilities—and then left on his trip .... After a long time their master returned from his trip and called them to give an account of how they used the money. The servant to whom he entrusted the five bags of gold said, ‘Sir, you gave me five bags of gold to invest and I have doubled the amount.’ The master was full of praise .... let’s celebrate together! Next came the servant who had received the two bags of gold with the report, ‘Sir, you gave me two bags of gold to invest, and I have doubled the amount.’ The master said ‘Well done, my good and faithful servant .... Let’s celebrate together! Then the servant with the one bag of gold came and said, ‘Sir, I know you are a hard man .... I was afraid I would lose your money, so I hid it in the earth and here it is.’ But the master replied, ‘You wicked and lazy servant! .... Now throw this useless servant into outer darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

Ministering to the total person includes empowering and equipping individuals to be effective stewards over their time, talent, and resources through the development of measurable and achievable goals. When the church begins to occupy and take its place economically, it will influence the social, political, and economic factors relative to the city, state, and nation.

FBC’s social development focus Scriptures are “Ye are the salt of the earth...”<sup>15</sup> and “But ye shall receive power, after the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.”<sup>16</sup> The spreading of the good news to neighbors, community and to the nation is part of social development. The good news is a reflection of biblical truth embodied in the person’s witness. When biblical truth is shared, it fosters an image of the kingdom of God here on earth that emulates in outreach programs. The Holy Spirit becomes the power of change in individuals, families, communities and nations.

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<sup>15</sup> Matthew 5:13 [KJV].

<sup>16</sup> Acts 1:8 [KJV].

FBC emphasizes mostly on the needs of the community. Presently, they have two outreach programs. Philo New Concept Intensive Out-Patient Program (IOP) which focuses on the alcohol and drug rehabilitation. Their intensive substance abuse treatment includes the following:

- Assessment
- Individual Counseling
- Group Counseling
- Education
- Case Management
- Recreation
- Twelve-Step Meeting Attendance
- Crisis Intervention
- Transportation
- Urinalysis Screening
- Drug and Alcohol Education Classes

Non-Intensive Outpatient Treatment (Aftercare includes):

- Relapse Prevention
- Coping/Support System
- Family Systems
- Setting Boundaries
- Co-dependency
- Loss, Grief, and Guilt
- Anxiety Reduction
- Relaxation Exercises
- Community Resources
- Twelve-Step Meeting Attendance

Driver Intervention Program (DIP) is a 72-hour residential program certified by the State of Ohio. This program is offered as an alternative to incarceration for persons arrested and court ordered for operating a motor vehicle under the influence of alcohol or any drug of abuse. The purpose of this program is to provide intervention services mandated by the legal system for DUI offenders. The program helps members recognize the seriousness of DUI's and the need to stop drinking and driving. The program accomplishes this through education and referral services. The ultimate goal of this

program is to help reduce the number of DUI cases in the community by promoting safety through education. Discussion topics are:

- Physical and psychological aspects of the use of alcohol and other drugs
- Combining the use of alcohol and other drugs
- Social consequences of the use of alcohol and other drugs
- Signs and symptoms of abuse and dependence of alcohol and other drugs
- Dysfunctional behavior resulting from the use of alcohol and other drugs
- Progressive nature of alcohol and drug abuse and dependence
- Abstinence as a lifestyle and self- help programs such as Alcoholic Anonymous and Narcotics Anonymous
- Treatment alternatives and local resources
- Staffing for client education group sessions or alcohol and drug abuse shall not exceed and instructor to client ration of one to forty-eight<sup>17</sup>

The other outreach program is the Naomi House (New Attitude On My Image) which is engaged with helping bridge women from prison life to living in society. The Naomi House is a non-profit organization dedicated to providing shelter, support and beneficial services for women overcoming alcohol and substance abuse. “They help women recover from addictions, reunite with their families and children, find employment and permanent housing. Their mission and primary goal is to reintegrate their female clients back to a standard of living where they are self-supporting positive and productive influences to their families and communities.”<sup>18</sup> The same effort used to meet the needs of the community is not used to move members to maturity in Christ. Moving members to maturity in Christ is an everyday theology.

Everyday theology is the “mandate of every Christian who is actively trying to walk the way of truth and life. Theology serves the church by directing the people of

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<sup>17</sup> Philo New Concepts. “Drivers Intervention Program,” [www.friendship-toledo.org/philoneconcepts](http://www.friendship-toledo.org/philoneconcepts) [accessed May 17, 2012].

<sup>18</sup> NAOMI: *New Attitude on My Image*, [accessed May 17, 2012].

God, Jesus Christ, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit.”<sup>19</sup> There is a need for spiritual formation in our churches today.

Barton shares her insights on spiritual leadership:

True spiritual leadership hinges upon the capacity to lead from our own transforming center. Before implementing spiritual formation in our churches or organization, we as leaders and ministers first need to step back and give serious attention to our own process of spiritual transformation. As the disciplines of rest, solitude, silence and self-examination are cultivated in the lives of leaders, we will be brought back from frenetic activity and dissipation to a quiet alertness to guidance from God and be in a better position to facilitate spiritual formation in the lives of others.<sup>20</sup>

Scripture says that in the beginning man and woman were made in the image of God.<sup>21</sup> If the individual congregant is to be “what God intended in the creation, there must be a restoration of communion with God and the transformation of fallen humanity into the fullness of the likeness of God.”<sup>22</sup> The quantity of members on the roll should not outweigh the quality of growth in the individual congregant. “We can know people (and things) from a worldly perspective, but to be in-the-know for a Christian is to know and be known by Christ, and for this to transform how we see everything else.”<sup>23</sup>

Vanhoozer defined spiritual transformation:

Spiritual transformation is the process by which Christ is formed in us. It is an organic process that goes far beyond mere behavioral tweaks to deep fundamental changes at the very core of our being. In the process of spiritual transformation the spirit of God moves us from behaviors motivated by fear and self-protection to trust and abandonment to God,

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<sup>19</sup> Vanhoozer, Kindle Reader e-book, location 1313.

<sup>20</sup> Ruth Haley Barton. “It Begins with You! How the Spiritual Formation of the Pastor Effects the Spiritual Formation of the Congregation,” *Common Ground Journal*, no. 7 (2009): 26.

<sup>21</sup> Genesis 1:26-27 [NIV].

<sup>22</sup> Gary W. Moon and David G. Benner, *Spiritual Direction and the Care of Souls* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2004), 39.

<sup>23</sup> Vanhoozer, Kindle Reader e-book, location 1400.

from selfishness and self-absorption to freely offering the gifts of the authentic self, from the ego's desperate attempts to control the outcomes of our lives to the ability to do God's will even when it is foolishness to the world around us.<sup>24</sup>

The lack of spiritual development is an impediment to the overall ministry effectiveness, growth, and development. Cultural trends dictate their moral values to society. Tradition outweighs the Holy Spirit. Churches become so business oriented that they lose focus on what God intended for the church; to save souls, forming people to his image, meeting the needs of the people. It is his image that should be promoted not the church's image.

Barton describes spiritual transformation as, "The promise of spiritual transformation is intimacy with God that results in the satisfaction of the soul's deepest longings, the language of spiritual formation helps us name desires that are so deep and have so often been disappointed that many have given up trying to articulate them."<sup>25</sup>

FBC needs to formulate or follow a process which will aid in the maturing of the congregants to Christlikeness. Mulholland writes: "Spiritual formation is not an option. The inescapable conclusion is that life itself is a process of spiritual development. The only choice we have is whether that growth moves us toward wholeness in Christ or toward an increasingly dehumanized and destructive mode of being."<sup>26</sup>

## **II. Statement of the Problem**

Friendship Baptist Church does not have an effective spiritual formation process in place. FBC must develop a spiritual formation process that will aid in moving its membership from being saved to maturing Christians. Salvation is only the first step. It

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<sup>24</sup> Barton, 28.

<sup>25</sup> Barton, 27.

<sup>26</sup> Terry Wardle, *Draw Close to the Fire* (Grand Rapids: Chosen Books, 1998), 218.

begins the day the member accepts Christ. Christians must move from salvation to Christlikeness. Spiritual formation is the process used to grow into Christlikeness. God did not intend for Christians to stay as babes in Christ. “And I, brethren, could not speak to you as to spiritual people but as to carnal, as to babes in Christ. I fed you with milk and not with solid food; for until now you were not able to receive it and even now you are still not able”.<sup>27</sup>

Wardle describes the process of transformation as follows:

Christ-life is a vital and divine experience through the union of the soul with the living Christ Himself. Christian life may be an honest attempt to imitate Christ and follow His teaching and commandments, but Christ-life is the incarnation of Jesus Himself in your own life. It is the Christ reliving His life in you and enabling you to be and to do what, in your own strength, you never could accomplish.<sup>28</sup>

Spiritual formation is the “latest bandwagon that everyone is trying to jump on—and no one wants to be left behind—but what do you do if you are just not prepared?”<sup>29</sup> If I am to love my neighbor as myself and thus fulfill what Jesus calls the second greatest commandment (Matthew 22:39), then I have to work hard to understand him. “For I cannot love my neighbor unless I understand him and the cultural world he inhabits. Cultural literacy—the ability to understand patterns and products of everyday life—is thus an integral aspect of obeying the law of love.”<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> 1 Corinthians 3:1-2 [NKJV].

<sup>28</sup> Wardle, 37.

<sup>29</sup> Barton, 28.

<sup>30</sup> Vanhoozer, Kindle Reader e-book, location 1602.

### III. Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to take a detailed look at the factors causing a lack of spiritual formation of the individual member of the Friendship Baptist Church. The study will look at the spiritual formation process that is currently available at all age levels, and the spiritual formation process that needs to be improved or implemented at FBC in order to enhance their members in the direction of maturing saints. Terry Wardle says it this way, “Nothing is more important to your life than developing intimacy with God and communing with Him. Opening yourself to the instruction of the Holy Spirit will reshape your life. He will teach you that intimacy, not ministry, is to be the consuming passion of the believer.”<sup>31</sup> The study will provide insight on the areas of improvement that are needed in order to transform the mind, change the attitude, and heart of Christians who have a willing spirit to improve their walk and relationship with Christ. One must be a voluntary participant to surrender all to Christ.

Barton clarifies the basis regarding spiritual formation:

This renewed interest in spiritual formation speaks to our desire for more in the spiritual life: more than just head knowledge, more than rules that merely govern external behaviors, more than religious activity loaded onto lives that already feel unmanageable. News that makes us uncomfortable is that many leaders are seeking to respond to these longings by trying to lead their congregations into realities that they are not experiencing themselves. They apply the fresh language of spiritual formation to old discipleship methods that are for the most part dead in hopes that it will satisfy<sup>32</sup>

Issler’s deals with growing toward Christlikeness in a different way:

Christians know about Christian teaching but they do not believe them. They profess to believe them because they are expected to, but profession of belief doesn’t carry the action. Only real belief carries actions, and we are in a context where we have millions and millions of people who are

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<sup>31</sup> Wardle, 64.

<sup>32</sup> Barth, 27.

professing. Christians that do not believe what they profess because they've been taught the important thing is to profess it whether you believe it or not, and that God would like that. But it doesn't seize their lives, and so we have a very severe problem with this gap.<sup>33</sup>

Each person might be aware when the intended behavior change does not occur.

For example, at the beginning of each year, a typical American tradition involves making a New Year's resolution to turn over a new leaf. It is a perfect time to identify habits or conditions that block a person from a better lifestyle or closer relationship with God. Yet even with the best intentions our follow through often lack the power to needed to make necessary adjustments.

It is the purpose of this study to determine what cultural barriers and spiritual issues are holding back the membership at FBC from moving toward maturity in Christ. Are they lacking the power and belief to move toward maturity and/or is the leadership has not actualizing the experience where they are trying to move the congregation?

#### **IV. Research Methodology**

Descriptive research process will be used in this project. Vyhmeister defines this process:

Descriptive research does exactly what its name says: it describes, usually one or more characteristics of a group of people, technically called a population. The purpose of the descriptive research is to make reality known. As a result, conclusions may be reached and decisions made. This descriptive research process may be divided into four steps: defining the objectives, designing the approach, collecting data, and writing the results.<sup>34</sup>

The attainment of data concerning the above stated problem will include both quantitative and qualitative methods. An electronic survey will be used to identify

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<sup>33</sup> Klaus D. Issler, "Inner Core Beliefs Formation, Spiritual Practices, and the Willing-Doing Gap," *Journal of Spiritual Formation & Soul Care* 2, no.2 (2009): 179-180. *Academic Search Complete*, EBSCOhost [accessed May 10, 2012].

<sup>34</sup> Nancy Jean Vyhmeister, *Your Guide to Writing Quality Research Papers* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing, 2008), 151.

individual's situation, analyze spiritual practices, and assess spiritual development levels. The survey will be administered to the members of the Friendship Baptist Church. Those members that do not have a computer will be given a written copy of the survey. The survey will attempt to discover effective methods/practices that are being used or not used to enhance spiritual growth. The survey questions will be carefully designed to give the study adequate information to examine. Some examples of areas to be covered are as follows:

- Age and gender of the individual member
- Duration of church membership
- Disciplines used for spiritual growth
- Importance of spiritual growth to the individual member
- Spiritual formation process utilized by the member

The pastor, who has been there 26 years, will be interviewed, as well as four people in key leadership roles; the Overseer or Director of the Men's Ministry, Women's Ministry, Youth Ministry, and New Membership Ministry. The purpose of the interviews is to determine leadership's perspective on spiritual formation and what they are doing in their individual ministry to promote spiritual transformation. The interviews will be recorded and transcribed.

## **V. Research Questions**

The following questions will steer the researcher in collecting data from the Friendship Baptist Church for the purpose of this research:

1. How are adult members nurtured in their spiritual development? Spiritual development is done through training. The Researcher will look at the training at FBC and if the members are attending the training. Training dealing with spiritual

disciplines that help Christians develop spiritually such as studying, praying, fasting, solitude, attending bible study, submission, service, worship, and silence.

2. What are the obstacles or impediments that prevent Christians from moving toward spiritual growth? Obstacles like tradition, church structure, programs, laziness, busyness, priority, lack of knowledge, and attitude.

FBC is attempting to move from tradition to non-tradition to free its congregation from the barriers that have been holding them back. Many members are not on board and do not want change. Their attitudes are that change is not always good. In order to move toward Christlikeness some barriers need to come down so the congregation can experience the fullness of God. This research will identify these barriers and suggest alternatives to spiritual process. Why do you come to church? Are they coming to church because tradition has taught them this is the right thing to do or to praise and worship God corporately?

## **VI. Significance for the Broader Church**

Addressing spiritual formation will allow spiritual leaders to become aware of spiritual issues within their congregations. Dealing with these issues will allow their congregations to find their true identity in Jesus Christ and enable the body to be more effective in ministry. This awareness will offer an opportunity to fulfill the purpose, intent, and calling placed on their individual lives and collectively as a church. The effectiveness of a unified, healthy church in the community will be demonstrated as they touch lives and bring souls to Jesus Christ. “Where two or three gather together as my followers, I am there among them.”<sup>35</sup> This study will help pastors and spiritual leaders move their individual members and their congregation in the direction of spiritual

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<sup>35</sup> Matthew 18:19-20 [NLT].

disciplines: such as “disciplines of abstinence, disciplines of engagement”<sup>36</sup>, and spiritual maturity. Examples of “disciplines of abstinence” are solitude, silence, fasting, frugality, chastity, secrecy, and sacrifice. “Disciplines of engagement” include study, worship, celebration, service, prayer, fellowship, confession, and submission.

From an individual point of view, this study will provide information and techniques that can be used by the individual members to enhance their spiritual growth.

## **VII. Assumptions/Limitations in the Research Project**

This research project is for born-again Christians. Those congregants that have accepted Christ as their personal Savior are the target. After being under the leadership of this pastor, it is without doubt that he wants to move his congregation and sees a need for spiritual formation in the individual. However there is not a process in place or leaders trained to help make this happen.

Whenever a survey is given, you never get 100% participation. Some members will just not take the time to fill it out no matter how simple the survey. Some members will not understand the need for a survey and will not fill out. Denominational beliefs, tradition, such as teaching, and doctrines could limit the scope of the study. The older generation might not agree that formation is necessary.

### **A. Assumptions:**

1. FBC and their pastor are receptive to the need for spiritual formation.
2. FBC participants have a willing spirit and have accepted Christ as their personal Savior.
3. FBC does not have a spiritual formation process that is adequate.

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<sup>36</sup> Wardle, 226-227.

B. Limitations:

1. Not all individuals contacted will agree to participate in study.
2. Denominational beliefs could limit the scope of study.
3. Full impact of this study on FBC will be unknown due to duration of time.

### VIII. Definitions of Terms

“Spiritual Formation” is the process of being conformed to the image of Christ by the gracious working of God’s Spirit, for the transformation of the world. It is a gradual, life-long movement, not a momentous conversion. It is a process of awakening our desire for God.<sup>37</sup>

“Spiritual Direction” implies a relationship and process whereby a person’s particular spiritual gifts and graces are discovered, nurtured and developed, in association with another who is deemed to be expert in this aspect of pastoral ministry. Spiritual direction is largely concerned with the application of the central Christian doctrine to an individual life of prayer; the maintenance, for example, of a Trinitarian balance which avoids deism on one hand and pantheism on the other.<sup>38</sup>

“Spiritual Maturity” is a process whereby a person grows into a mature relationship with Jesus Christ. To be in Christ is to enjoy a vibrant, vital, organic relationship with him, so that his life flows into you and you share his very life. This is a relationship characterized by faith, love, worship and obedience.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>37</sup>William Chaney, *Making Disciples in an Emerging Culture*. “*Spiritual Formation is not Optional*.” Blog entry posted September 17, 2007, <http://making-disciples.wordpress.com/?s=spiritual+formation+is+not+optional> [accessed March 15, 2013].

<sup>38</sup>Rodney J. Hunter, *Dictionary of Pastoral Care and Counseling* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1990), 1213.

<sup>39</sup>Gwen Ebner, *Formed Holy in His Image Spirit, Soul, & Body* (North Charleston, SC: CreateSpace, 2001) Kindle Reader e-book.

“Holiness” in Christian theology describes God’s unblemished moral character and to Christians as consecrated to God’s service, and in so far as they are conformed in all things to the will of God. Personal holiness is a work of gradual development.<sup>40</sup>

“Church” is a local assembly of believers as well as the redeemed of all ages who follow Jesus Christ Savior and Lord. Church was derived from the Greek word *kupiakov* meaning belonging to the Lord.<sup>41</sup>

### **IX. Outline of the Research Project**

Chapter One will introduce the project. It will provide the framework and background information concerning the project. The problem will be identified and explained clearly. The necessity for spiritual transformation will be defined and the direction established for the project. The collection of research data and collecting methods will be discussed. A qualitative and quantitative explanation of the research methodology will be presented. The research methods will include a survey, as well as interviews of key spiritual leaders. Research questions are discussed to help manage and guide research. The impact the research will have on the church and the individual’s spiritual growth are described. Assumptions and limitations that are beyond the researcher control will be discussed. Definitions will be elucidated to help the reader with the understanding of context.

Chapter Two will provide a theological, biblical, historical, and spiritual support for the analysis of spiritual formation of FBC, and how this transformation can benefit the local congregation.

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<sup>40</sup> PC Study Bible Reference Library, CD-ROM, version 5.0, Seattle: Biblesoft, Inc., 2006.

<sup>41</sup> Trent Butler, *Holman Bible Dictionary*, Nashville: Holman Bible Publishers, 1991), 259.

Chapter Three will give a broad review of other resources assimilated with effective spiritual formation processes and how to move congregants from salvation toward Christlikeness. It will highlight existing literature available concerning spiritual formation.

Chapter Four will outline and explain the research process. The survey and interviewing instruments will be explained. Research instrument limitations will be defined. Results of the research will be presented in the following formats: graphs, charts, and interview summaries.

Chapter Five will allow the data to be presented along with an analysis of the findings. The research data will be accurately reported and analyzed from the data received. The research data will be generated from the electronic surveys and interviews.

Chapter Six will summarize findings clearly and offer recommendations for spiritual development in a unified order. Prospective areas for further research will be presented.

CHAPTER TWO  
BIBLICAL AND THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS

**Spirituality in the Biblical Texts**

The origins of the idea behind the word “spirituality” can be traced all the way back to an Old Testament use of *ruach* (spirit). In a spiritual sense, to talk about the spirit within the Old Testament as it relates to man is to talk about the inner life of man and what drives that life (Genesis 6:17; 7:22; 45:27; Judges 15:19; Psalm 51:10; Ezekiel 11:19). This idea is carried over in the New Testament through the use of the Greek noun *pneuma* (spirit) and the adjective *pneumatikos* (spiritual). “As it relates to the development of spirituality, the most significant meaning of *pneuma* is the indwelling presence of God’s Spirit and the life that flows from that presence”<sup>42</sup> (Romans 2:29; 8:1-17; 1 Corinthians 2:10-13; 3:16; 6:19-20; Galatians 3:13-14; Ephesians 3:14-19; 1 Thessalonians 4:8; 2 Timothy 1:14; Titus 3:4-8).

The spiritual life that proceeds from the indwelling work of the Holy Spirit is most common in Pauline literature. The idea of the Spirit-filled life continues through the early church in the West into the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. “The earliest record of the use of the word “spirituality” to date is from AD 410, where *spiritualitate* is used by an anonymous author urging his audience to live life in greater conformity to the Spirit.

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<sup>42</sup> Adam McClendon, “Defining the Role of the Bible in Spirituality,” *Journal of Spiritual Formation & Soul Care* 5, no. 2 (2012): 209.

This predominant meaning of “spirituality” in the church persists into the twelfth century.”<sup>43</sup>

The truth of God is the foundation of biblical spirituality. It unfolds throughout the history of revelation and is fully manifested in Jesus Christ. It does give meaning to the believer’s life, and implies that communication is essential for true communion. Biblical spirituality can be defined “in other ways using both biblical and non-biblical expressions: to walk with God (Genesis 5:24), to be the friend of God (James 2:23), to be one with the Father and the Son (John 17:21), to glorify God and enjoy him forever. The reciprocal intimacy between Creator and creature is the heart of Christian spirituality.”<sup>44</sup> Verbal communication is at the very heart of our communion with God. Meditating on the Word is a fundamental aspect of mystical union with the Lord. God, the Creator, reveals his truth to his creatures that have genuine faith and trust in him.

In the two testaments (Old and New), there are the requirements of the law (Deuteronomy 29), the renewal of the new covenant, and the fruits of the Spirit (Galatians 5:16-26). It is important to recognize the aspects of biblical spiritual experience. Hearing the Word and obeying it go hand in hand. It is in the midst of a corrupt and depraved reality, in the “nitty-gritty” of life lived in the shadow, that this spirituality brings meaning, substantial healing, and lasting hope. “Rather than seeking to escape the ugly brokenness of this world, it invites one to the mandate of the Creator

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<sup>43</sup> McClendon, 211.

<sup>44</sup> Pierre Berthoud, “Discerning Spirituality: Biblical and Reformed Perspectives,” *European Journal of Theology* 19, no. 1 (2010): 52.

which is to glorify and enjoy Him. As the creature yields to the living God, it is his very character that molds both the form and the content of the spiritual experience and life.”<sup>45</sup>

More people are realizing the need for spiritual guidance. This call for a mediating role of theology has a twofold task, “historical and critical”:

On one hand, a turn to history is desired for the sake of consulting well tested and creative ways in which people in the past lived their spirituality in particular historical, social, and religious contexts. This will help us better understand the present situation with more clarity and offer insight into authentic spiritual life. On the other hand, a critical and theological consideration of spirituality is needed so as to channel people’s spiritual impulses into a life project that would make genuine human flourishing possible.<sup>46</sup>

There are six characteristics of biblical spirituality, according to Berthoud:

(1) Spirituality of the Word. This spirituality has as its object the Word of God, written and incarnate. (2) Spirituality of the Psalter. The Psalter has been the book of the Church at all times (Acts 4: 23-31). To pray the Psalms, to sing the Psalms, to meditate on the Psalms is a specific characteristic of reformed spirituality. (3) Spirituality of the Lord’s Day. It is a blessed day of peace, of rest, and quietness, a day consecrated to prayer and charitable works. (4) Spirituality and Holy Communion. Holy Communion is a sign and a seal of divine grace. It is an invitation to renew and to strengthen the covenantal relationship between God and the community of believers. (5) Spirituality of stewardship. Daily, family, and professional activities are perceived as a divine calling. The development of an ethics of work in the Protestant tradition is conceived as a protection against poverty. (6) Spirituality of divine providence. This concerns meditation on the mystery of divine providence in relation to the existence of the believer. Believers know they are called to perseverance in the faith.<sup>47</sup>

According to Christo Lomboard, the academic discipline of biblical spirituality is constituted by two interrelated aspects: an exegetical and an experiential aspect. These two aspects are called “Spiritualities reflected in the Bible” and “Spiritualities that draw

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<sup>45</sup> Berthoud, 56.

<sup>46</sup> SJ Pyong-Gwan Pak, “The Relevance of Mystical Spirituality in the Context of Today’s Spirituality Phenomenon,” *Logos: A Journal of Catholic Thought and Culture* 15, no. 3 (Summer 2012): 110.

<sup>47</sup> Berthoud, 65.

on the Bible.” Spiritualities reflected in the Bible are analytical, historical, and normative. Spiritualities that draw on the Bible are existential, contemporary, and receptive. The inter-relation or interaction between these two aspects consists both “phenomenologically and theologically”:

In both aspects, the Spiritualities reflected in the Bible and the Spiritualities that draw on the Bible, constitute the triangular theory God-Bible-believer (faith) which lies at the base of the spiritualities. The spiritualities reflected on the Bible come from the Ancient world and are accessible through historical, imaginative exegesis. The Spiritualities that draw on the Bible are from the modern world and are experienced through transformative, existential encounter.<sup>48</sup>

The Holy Spirit is the essence, soul, and heart of “ecumenism” in its freest and fullest sense. None of believers as individuals or traditions embody the Spirit’s life fully. The Holy Spirit is always within and beyond the believer and will always go where it wills rather than where the believer wills. The Holy Spirit comes not just as the conqueror but as a companion.

Genesis 1:1-2 witnesses the Spirit and opens with the Spirit as a brooding companion to chaos, out of which, God calls rather than imposes creation:

This chaos-charming Spirit is the companion of salvation history: the Israelites are led through the wilderness by holy fires, the prophets are called by the Spirit, the presence and absence of God conveyed by her life all move creation’s life back in step with what God is doing, till we meet Christ the embodiment of the Spirit as companion. In Christ’s companionable spirituality, the dividing wall is torn down so that all can be called and included in the transformed life instituted by the Pentecostal gift of Christ’s Spirit to the world.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> Christo Lomboard , “The Mystifying Mosaic of Moses: On Pentateuch Theory and Biblical Spirituality,” *Hervormde Theologiens Studies Academic Journal* 67, no. 3 (2011), 3.

<sup>49</sup> Peter Cruchley-Jones, “Belonging to a Spirit of Life,” *International Review of Mission* 101, no. 2 (November 2012), 336.

The Spirit that Christ breathes on Christians bring forgiveness and new relationship in grace, joy and understanding.

When the word “spirituality” is used today, it generally falls into one of three different categories, according to McClendon; general, Christian, and biblical.<sup>50</sup>

Spirituality, in the general sense, is the life one reveals, to some extent, what one truly believes and has experienced in relationship to God. God is represented by the force from which someone bases his standard of living and values. Spirituality is the connecting point of someone’s beliefs, experiences, and practice. The category of general spirituality is the broadest and most comprehensive of the three degrees of spirituality. It encompasses both Christian and non-Christian expressions of faith in the sense that everyone has a standard, whether or not this standard is recognized by them, from which they derive value and meaning in life.

Christian spirituality is the process of general spirituality brought under the direction of and in submission to the Holy Spirit in the life of a professing believer in Jesus. This concept of spirituality is limited to the realm of Christian faith. It begins to recapture the New Testament origins and early church understanding of the Word up to the twelfth century. The goal is not to live one’s own way, but the Spirit’s way. For McClendon, the Spirit is to be the controlling influence in one’s life:

At the heart of Christian spirituality there is one central story of Jesus Christ: his birth, death, and resurrection. Christian spirituality is not about simply hearing the story and believing it to be true. It is also about experiencing relationship with Christ. This is one reason why it is difficult to explain Christian spirituality. Because ... there are many different ways of interpreting Christian faith in human experience.<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> McClendon, 220.

<sup>51</sup> McClendon, 220.

Biblical spirituality focuses on the individual believer and his personal experience and inner feelings instead of public worship.

### **Biblical Models of Spirituality**

Several biblical characters can be helpful for inspiring contemporary spirituality: Abraham, David, Job, and Peter are a few examples. These men have encouraged many in shaping their own spirituality. They all received personal restoration with God through their own sin.

#### **The Spirituality of Abraham**

In the New Testament, Abraham is mentioned several times as an example for those who believe in Jesus Christ. Paul presents Abraham as the father of all Christians. Hebrew 11 refers to Abraham as one of the witnesses who may inspire believers from the New Testament times to live by faith. Abraham practiced his relationship with God through his obedience. In Genesis 12:4, he obeyed God when told to leave his country and people and move to Canaan and in Genesis 17:23, when he was told to circumcise every male in his household. The climax of his obedience was reached when he listened to God's order to sacrifice Isaac as a burnt offering in Genesis 22. Abraham knew the power of prayer. By falling face down (Genesis 17), Abraham humbles himself before God and surrenders to him.

Abraham can be summarized as follows: "(1) When Abraham got orders from his God, he always readily obeyed. (2) If he doubted what God was about to do or about

what God has said, he expressed his concerns frankly. (3) His God did not blame him for expressing his doubts, but allowed him time to grow in faith and trust.”<sup>52</sup>

### The Spirituality of David

David functions as an example for everybody who wants to pray and praise God. He leaves judgment and revenge to God and patiently waits for the day when God will deliver him and make him king (1 and 2 Samuel). He accepts God’s counsels and orders, and carries them out willingly. When David, like many today, acted in accordance with his own views, without consulting the Lord, he often employed lies, deception, and tricks.

The analysis of the portrayal of David in the books of Samuel can be summarized as follows:

- (1) David was a man with many shortcomings who even committed very serious sins. Yet he knew that God was the only source of his strength.
- (2) He was willing to wait for the moment when the Lord would deliver him from his enemies and avenge him. Nevertheless, he had to go through a long learning process in which God taught him what it meant to serve him faithfully as the king of his people.
- (3) He differed from King Saul in that he obeyed the orders of the Lord and listened to the prophets. When he nonetheless had been disobedient, he confessed his sin wholeheartedly.
- (4) Unlike King Saul he did not hesitate to humble himself and to give up his royal honor and insignia before the Lord.<sup>53</sup>

All these were characteristics of him as a man after God’s heart and made him a model of spirituality.

### The Spirituality of Job

Job is mentioned once in the New Testament in James 5:11. In this text James refers to Job’s perseverance and the blessings of change in his life, which the Lord

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<sup>52</sup> Gert Kwakkel, “Models of Spirituality in the Bible: Abraham, David, Job, and Peter,” *European Journal of Theology* 19, no.1 (2010), 19.

<sup>53</sup> Kwakkel, 22.

brought about after a long period of affliction. The most important elements of Job's spirituality can be summarized as follows:

(1) Job was able to praise God even after he had lost everything, because he had always related his prosperity to God. He had trained himself in praising God in times when things were going well. (2) When Job was unable to praise God for a while, God did not condemn him for that but allowed him time to come to grips with what had happened. (3) Job should not have accused God of injustice, but he behaved better than his friends in that he expressed his critical questions frankly.<sup>54</sup>

### The Spirituality of Peter

The apostle Peter may be looked at as a model of spirituality. Peter received the honor to be the rock on which Jesus would build his church (Matthew 16:18). He is a model in his confession of Jesus as the Christ (Matthew 16:16). In his letters, he has provided all Christians with a model to be followed. He exhorts them to set their hope on the grace brought by Jesus Christ (1 Peter 1:13), to fear God (1 Peter 2:17), to be alert and on their guard (1 Peter 5:8), and to pay attention to the words of the prophets (2 Peter 1:19).

In Acts is found some information on the role of prayer in Peter's life. Acts 3:1 records that Peter and John went up to the temple at the time of prayer. In Acts 10:9, Peter went up to the roof on Simon's house in Joppa at noon in order to pray. Obviously, Peter loved Jesus so much that that he could not accept his suffering and death, even though Jesus had said that it would be this way:

Summing up Peter as a model of spirituality, (1) he shows that love and zeal for the Lord Jesus are important and indispensable elements of true discipleship; (2) in the course of his life he had to learn that suffering is also an inescapable aspect of Christian life; and (3) he likewise learned

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<sup>54</sup> Kwakkkel, 24.

that zeal can only be fruitful if combined with patience, modesty, and humility.<sup>55</sup>

In the New Testament, Jesus Christ himself is evidently the most outstanding model of spirituality. He exhorted his disciples to follow his example in various aspects of life, such as serving others and loving one another. He was without sin and was unique.

### **Biblical Transformation**

Christians believe Scripture provides inspiration and guidance in Christian faith and practice. The Bible does more than just inform, it also transforms believers. Christians are to develop appropriate avenues to enable them to grow as faithful disciples. According to Maddix and Thompson, there is a wide range of avenues by which Scripture forms and transforms faithful disciples. Three major methods in which Scripture functions formatively are: lectio divina, inductive Bible study, and worship, (preaching, Scripture reading, and communion):

Christians have been taught to read Scripture to master the text or to properly divide the word of truth. However, reading Scripture as formation requires a reorientation of how to approach and encounter Scripture. Since Scripture is primarily formative in nature, any person, regardless of his or her level of biblical expertise, can read the Bible and encounter God. In this regard formational reading includes opening oneself up to the biblical text to allow it to intrude into one's lives, to be addressed and encountered by it. Instead of mastering the text through study, formational reading invites the text as sacred Scripture to master and read. Faithful readers come to the text open to hear, to receive, to respond, and to serve.<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>55</sup> Kwakkel, 25.

<sup>56</sup>Mark A. Maddix and Richard P. Thompson, "Scripture as Formation: The Role of Scripture in Christian Formation," *Christian Education Journal Supplement* 9, no. 3 (2012), S84.

The historical and critical analysis does not always lead to transformation, but the subjective reader may be transformed when God speaks through Scripture by the work of the Holy Spirit. When Christians read the Bible as formative Scripture, they find new excitement and energy in the text they once viewed as boring and irrelevant. Spiritual reading is a meditative approach to the written word. It requires unhurried time and an open heart.

Christians can engage Scripture through the preaching of the Word. The proclamation of Scripture emphasizes the spoken Word of God that bears witness to the incarnate Word of Jesus Christ. Through the proclamation of Scripture, the spoken Word becomes a fresh expression of the living and active Word of God. “The preacher speaks for God, from the Scriptures, by the authority from the church, to the people. God speaks through the proclamation of the Word, through the inspiration of Scripture, to provide healing and reconciliation.”<sup>57</sup>

For many Christians, the Bible has become irrelevant, boring, and disconnected from their faith. This may be caused by the church’s inability to educate and model for congregants that Scripture is less about information and more about formation and transformation.

### Christian Spirituality Origins to the Twelfth Century

The birth of Christian Spirituality began with the historical event of the exodus of the Hebrews from Egypt under the leadership of Moses and the covenant they made with Yahweh on Mount Sinai. This event gave rise to and defined Jewish religious experience. But a pivotal event that inaugurated and shaped Christian Spirituality was undoubtedly

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<sup>57</sup> Maddix and Thompson, S88.

the resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth. From that moment, Christianity was distinct from Judaism, “even though it would be some sixty years (ca. 90 CE) before the break between the synagogue and the newly consolidated Christian community would be definitive.”<sup>58</sup>

Without the resurrection, the apostle Paul declared, Christian preaching and belief are meaningless (1Corinthians 15:14). So significant is the resurrection of Jesus that without it there would be no church or Christianity, and believers would still be in their sins.

The Christian Church was born out of the history and the expectations of late Judaism as the fulfillment of the destiny of the people of God announced by the Prophets:

Unlike the pagan religions—and the Hellenistic mysteries in particular—which sought salvation in escape from time and history through myths leading to extra-temporal experiences, Christian spirituality, under the influence of the scriptural mentality, was from the beginning focused on history. Unlike the Greek and pagan religions of that time, the church’s outlook was not cosmological but historical; it was based not on the observation of nature (seasons, cyclical movement of stars, etc.) but on events. Creation, far from being eternal and divine, was an event with a beginning. Its existence was contingent and constantly dependent on the will of God. Humanity’s relation with God did not pass through nature but through obedience to the will of God, a fact that gave to Christian spirituality an ethnical character (“doing the truth”) and a strongly personalist dimension: it was through personal relationships that the human person’s union with God was realized.<sup>59</sup>

The factors that shaped Christian spirituality in the postapostolic age from the end of the first century until the beginning of the third century can be grouped into four topics: (1) the gradual formation of the structure of the church on a Eucharistic basis, (2) the challenge of Gnosticism and the “patristic” response to it, (3) the emergence of a Christian Gnosticism and its importance for spirituality, and (4) martyrdom as a form of

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<sup>58</sup> Benard McGinn and John Meyendorff, *Christian Spirituality: Origins to the Twelfth Century* (New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 1989), 1.

<sup>59</sup> McGinn and Meyendorff, 23.

spirituality and as an answer to Montanist spirituality. Ignatius emphasized the Eucharistic leadership of the Bishop:

The dominant influence in the formation of spirituality around the axis of the structure of the church came from Ignatius, bishop of Antioch (d. 110 CE). In his seven letters, which are commonly accepted as authentic in their brief version (there is also a later longer version), Ignatius forcefully developed the view that salvation and spiritual or eternal life are realized and experienced through faithful communion in the Eucharistic body of Christ. This body is ‘formed’ in the community of church, which brings together all the faithful under the leadership of the president of the Eucharistic assembly, the bishop surrounded by the college of the presbyter and assisted by the deacons. Ignatius insisted that no one can claim a relationship with God giving eternal life unless there is a constant participation in this Eucharistic community and, therefore, unless there is obedience to its head, the bishop.<sup>60</sup>

Ignatius’ emphasized the bishop as a “*sine qua non*” (essential or indispensable), for one’s participation in eternal life. Whoever disobeys the bishop also disobeys God, who is the true bishop of the church. For Ignatius, eternal and true life is an eschatological reality and is granted only through participation in eschatological community, which is manifested in the Eucharistic community. His views continued to dominate the church’s life in the first century, “as is evident from other documents, such as the Syriac “*Didascalia Apostolorum* and the *Apostolic Tradition (Traditio apostolica)* of Hippolytus of Rome from the beginning of the third century”.<sup>61</sup>

In the first centuries, the church still meant the same thing as in Paul’s letters to the Corinthians, the actual Eucharistic gathering was as follows:

It should be paraphrased as follows: without participation in the Eucharistic communion, there is no salvation. This is another way of saying what the Fourth Gospel stresses—that unless we eat the flesh and drink the blood of the Son of Man we cannot

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<sup>60</sup> Gerhard May, *Christianity Origins to Constantine* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 434.

<sup>61</sup> McGinn and Meyendorff, 32.

have life; but according to the same Gospel it is the Spirit that gives life and it is the communion and the community of the Spirit, the church, that offers the context of spiritual life. The bishop is essential since he is the head of this Eucharistic community.<sup>62</sup>

The tendency to approach spirituality through the intellect and to treat salvation primarily as a matter of revelation did not disappear altogether from the life of the early church. Two names stand out in this respect; Clement of Alexandria and Origen. They agreed in some areas and disagreed in others. Both Clement and Origen had the following in common:

1. They operated with the idea of the “logos” and used revelation as their starting point and primary “motif” in theology and spirituality. They identified spiritual perfection with true knowledge, which is the Word of God.
2. They made a clear distinction between the “simple” Christian, the “educated”, or “Gnostic” Christian.

The simple Christians were ones who followed Jesus but did not have access to the mysteries of the kingdom. The educated or spirituals were Jesus’ disciples who knew the mysteries of the kingdom. Origen presented a mystical dimension to spirituality.

Unlike Clement, Origen wanted to be *ecclesiasticus*, a man of the tradition of the church, and not a philosopher. Yet in fact he interpreted the Scriptures and the tradition of the church in such a way as to allow philosophy to dominate his theology. He was mystical in his approach, and this made him a most influential force in the formation of Christian spirituality in the early church. His influence, however, accounts for many serious deviations from the early biblical mentality. He also insisted on studying the scriptures and, above all, on prayer as ways of asceticism. The essence of all asceticism for him was the liberation of the soul, which he regarded

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<sup>62</sup> McGinn and Meyendorff, 34.

in a true Greek fashion as immortal and even eternal—hence the highest and most precious thing—from the influences of matter and the body.<sup>63</sup>

Clement was a native of Athens and was converted to Christianity by Pantaenus.

Clement also was the founder of the Catechetical School at Alexandria. Clement stressed that faith and knowledge must coexist to produce the perfect Christian. Clement believed that faith is something superior to knowledge. Faith involves knowledge of essentials. Knowledge allows and penetrates deeply into the understanding of what Christian believes, and this is the making of perfect and complete faith.

The main Christian theologians of the fourth and fifth centuries are called “fathers of the church” because they conceived the “dogmatic” foundation of all Christianity down to our times. A few of these theologians and their beliefs are mentioned next.

#### Athanasius of Alexandria

Athanasius was the founder of what may be called the “fourth-century spirituality” in the Christian church. He argued that Christian faith starts with the gospel revelation itself. Athanasian notion of faith seems institutional, resting entirely on the historical revelation of God as communicator by the gospel narratives. There is a shift here from the “Origenian” focus on a supreme Savior known through scrutiny of the mysteries of the invisible cosmos and through the general assimilation of the general rules of human knowledge. Athanasius’s spiritual message seems to lie in his perception of the immediate access provided by God for everyone in the church to the realities of the divine presence in the gospel revelation.

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<sup>63</sup> Wayne A. Meeks, *History of Christianity* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 145.

The first doctrinal “treatise” published by this young bishop of Alexandria was entitled, *en the Incarnation*:

He took to Himself a body, a human body even as our own ... For the solidarity of humankind is such that, by virtue of the Word’s indwelling in a single body, the corruption which goes with death has lost its power over all. ... When, then, the minds of men had fallen finally to the level of sensible things, the Word submitted to appear in a body, in order that He, as Man, might center their senses on Himself....<sup>64</sup>

#### Basil of Caesarea

Basil was baptized at the age of twenty-seven, chosen as a priest of Caesarea at the age of thirty-two and consecrated as a bishop at the age of forty. On both his mother’s and father’s side were generations of Christians, priests, and bishops. He combined the Origenian mysticism, inherited through his family tradition, with the practical ecclesiology of his time. Due to Basil’s wealthy and political background, he initiated the tradition of bishops assuming the role of rich patrons in helping the poor, the sick, and the refugees. This was due to a severe famine and economic distress.

It was from Basil’s pastoral and liturgical practice that he claimed a more explicit “formulation” of Trinitarian faith. “We can tell the Spirit’s divine nature by examining the Spirit’s activity in the economy of salvation: the Spirit is holy like God and is truly divine, because a creature cannot sanctify others. The liturgy, through norms and rites, and the Scriptures, through the writing of both Testaments, are the immediate sources of Christian spirituality because they are inspired by the Spirit.”<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>64</sup> McGinn and Meyendorff, 64.

<sup>65</sup> Meeks, 60.

### Hilary of Poitiers

Born in Poitiers, Hilary shows in writing of *Homilies on Psalms* a genuine acquaintance with the wealthy Gallo-Romans upper class of his time. Hilary emerged suddenly on the Gallo-Roman scene as a spiritual power who acted on the whole “imperial” Christianity of the time. “Before him the Latin-speaking churches of the West had produced Tertullian and Cyprian in North Africa and Novatian in Rome as creative leaders who oriented Christian spirituality in a way appropriate to Western culture.”<sup>66</sup> He learned a lot from the Africans in ethical matters and in basic Christian catechesis.

Hilary represents the first mediator between the Old Latin versions of the Bible and the Septuagint. He started as a mediator between the Greek East and the Latin West in the Roman Empire focusing on Christology and ethics in his pioneering contribution to Western spirituality.

### Eastern Christianity (Monasticism and Asceticism)

Eastern Christianity refers to east of the Greek world. From 311 CE, the peace of Constantine took effect and the Christian population started to adjust itself to the social and cultural structure of the empire. A movement started that expressed a rejection of the conventional worldly values. The earliest beginning of this movement can be found in the distant past among Syrians and Copts. This evangelization goes back to Judeo-Christian traditions, which were less formal but more disciplined such as celibacy, asceticism, fasting, periods of prayer, and poverty in general.

There appeared Christian “papyri” in Egypt. It was written that the monks sacrificed all. The papyri testify that the monks had a religious reputation that they could

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<sup>66</sup> McQinn and Meyendorff, 78.

bless and make intercession as well as intervene in church politics. These monks appeared in the Egyptian desert. Great biblical events that happened in the desert are the exodus, the life of the prophet Elijah, John the Baptist's journey, and the testing of Jesus Christ's forty days.

Monasticism gradually developed into a well-defined state with its' territories, departments, laws, characteristic "garb, and its architecture." "To the masses monasticism offered strength through its prayers, good example in practicing Christian virtues, and its' theological and literary culture. The Orthodox layperson attached great importance to this model of obedience to the Gospel teaching, an icon of love for God and one's neighbor, of inner peace and true bliss".<sup>67</sup>

Jesus asked his disciples a question about his identity: "Who do you say I am?" The answer came from Peter, declaring that Jesus was the "Messiah" or "the Son of the Living God". All the doctrinal debates on Christian history can be reduced to a debate on Christ's identity:

In the period between apostolic times and the high Middle Ages, various Christological positions were brilliantly expressed and passionately defended. However, if one envisages the fate of the historic catholic or orthodox Christian tradition, no Christological stand was as decisive, in terms of the nature of spirituality as that of two eminent bishops of Alexandria in Egypt: Athanasius and Cyril.<sup>68</sup>

The place of Maximus the Confessor in the history of Christian doctrine is primarily associated with his defense of Chalcedonian orthodoxy against Monothelism, which is the belief that Christ had only one divine-human will. "Indeed, for Maximus,

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<sup>67</sup> Frances M. Young, *Monotheism and Christology* (New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 1985), 452.

<sup>68</sup> Owen Chadwick, *A History of Christianity* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1995), 18.

real humanity is dynamic, creative, and endowed with a proper energy: this was, indeed, the case with the humanity of Christ, who being a man, possessed a human will distinct from the divine. This human will of Christ was restored in conformity with the original and eternal purpose of God, established before the fall.”<sup>69</sup>

The doctrine of deification, as understood by Athanasius, the Cappadocian fathers, Cyril, and finally Maximus is not based on a limited or narrow understanding of Christology. It reflects the trinitarian, salvation, and the Holy Spirit:

According to Maximus, Jesus himself has taken this choice in his humanity. Of course, the doctrine of hypostatic union implies that the subject of the choice was still the Logos, not a separate human individual named Jesus, but the choice was human. Having reminded his reader that, according to the Genesis account, the man was first formed from clay in his physical reality and that afterwards God breathed the Spirit into him, Maximus recalls the birth of Christ in Bethlehem and then the descent of the Spirit at his baptism by John. Both of these two births were assumed by Christ.<sup>70</sup>

Central to the Christology endorsed by the early councils was the vision of Christ as both the eternal logos and the “New Adam”, who restored humanity with himself as the divine model because in the beginning man was made in God’s image. This restoration could not automatically or magically happen but required free human response to the Spirit and cooperation with the believers of the church. Being “in Christ” involves sharing through the power of the Holy Spirit, “in Christ’s glorified humanity—a humanity that remains fully human even after its glorification”.<sup>71</sup> In Christological terms the Eucharistic actions imply that the Son of God, who assumed human nature “hypostatically, brings that nature to his Father in a sacrifice, offered once for all, and

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<sup>69</sup> McGinn and Meyendorff, 240.

<sup>70</sup> Young, 471.

<sup>71</sup> McGinn and Meyendorff, 244.

that those who have received the same glorified nature by adoption or by grace, are joining that one High Priest, through the power of the Spirit who anointed him as Christ.”<sup>72</sup> That same Spirit anoints all the faithful within the communion of the Body of Christ, which they joined through personal acts of faith.

#### Western Christianity (Monasticism and Asceticism)

In all the territories where the church existed, both the East and the West, the fourth century witnessed the transition from a pre-monastic asceticism to an organized monasticism. In the latter half of the fourth century there was an invasion by the “barbarians”. Wars and political rivalries ascended everywhere. In spite of all of these troubles in the west, the transformation of independent monasticism and gradual institution of the church took place. The West followed the course outlined by the East. From the fourth to the seventh century, more texts gave witness to the existence and evolution of monastic institution in the West.

There were ascetics in Rome, Milan, and many other Italian cities during the second and third centuries. What was most original about these Italian monasteries was the fact that they were developed largely in cities close to the basilicas. Many bishops protected and founded these clerical communities. Monasticism was gradually integrated into the structures of the church and became assimilated into Roman culture. Around the fifth and sixth century three important historical documents appeared: *Rule of the Master*, *Rule of St. Benedict*, and *Life*. These documents dealt with exercises of prayer, the divine office, Eucharist, reading, silent prayers, blessings, rites, and ceremonies. Many of the same disciplines are used today. These documents gave witness to the concerns and

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<sup>72</sup> Ibid., 246.

thoughts of the monks, all the activities of their day, and how to enter the presence of God.

*The Rule of St. Benedict* stands out as a masterpiece of practical wisdom and doctrine. It presents itself as a modest document written for ordinary monks who were living in a difficult time when their institution lay open to dangers and gave rise to abuses. Gregory the Great has always shown great interest in the monasteries; he founded six of them on his properties in Sicily. On one hand, he stressed the contemplative nature of the life that the monk has to lead; on the other hand, he did not hesitate to entrust to them pastoral duties, even missionary work. “And so, little by little, after a long crisis precipitated by wars and the vicissitudes of politics, a monastic renaissance became visible at the beginning of the second half of the seventh century.”<sup>73</sup>

The soaring increase in the number of monastic foundations, which had not ceased to increase under the first Carolingians, continued. There were approximately 600 monasteries throughout the empire in the beginning of the eighth century. To facilitate the implementation of the program of standardization and extend it to the entire empire, Benedict of Aniane compiled a collection of earlier rules, the *Book of Rules*, which he used his *Concordance of Rules* in order to produce a kind of commentary on the *Rule of St. Benedict*. At the same time, he continued to preserve and develop the customs inherited from the earlier tradition. All the work undertaken by Charlemagne and by Benedict of Aniane to reform the abuses that had come into the monasteries resulted into legislation in 816.

The traditional ideal had survived, “the quest for union with God through prayer and asceticism had preserved its priority, a quest that led the saints to successes which

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<sup>73</sup> Chadwick, 74.

sometimes, from a human perspective looked like failures, but which realized to a very high degree what was aspired by all.”<sup>74</sup> At the beginning of the tenth century, monasticism had almost disappeared altogether. The secular powers (kings and feudal lords) continued to control the wealth to serve their interests and whom they wished to reward.

It was at this time that a whole series of reforms appeared and were implemented throughout the tenth century. Although these reforms were independent of one another, there were similarities among them because the saintly “abbots” who inspired them traveled around, met one another, came to know one another, and kept up a friendly relationship and exchanged ideas and texts.

The earliest reform was that of Cluny, founded in Burgundy in 909; it was the direct extension of the reform of Benedict of Aniane. It was known as one of the most important of this time. Cluny prospered in the tenth century, owing its wealth to the influence of great abbots who were saints. They contributed simultaneously to the consolidation of institutional liberty and internal organization and to the elaboration of the doctrine. The identity and role of monasticism was clarified by Odo:

The long poem of Odo entitled *Occupatio* was a major accomplishment. The piece situated monasticism within the history of salvation insofar as it embodied a common life lived in charity, detachment, and purity of heart and insofar as it helped sinners (for whom it existed) to achieve for themselves and to give witness to the goal of all reform in individuals and in the church—namely to return to the state of grace as symbolized by the Garden of Eden, to rekindle the fervor of the Jerusalem Christians after the resurrection of Christ, to actualize as fully as possible the mystery of Pentecost, and to anticipate, in a certain fashion, the celestial city.<sup>75</sup>

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<sup>74</sup> Chadwick, 75.

<sup>75</sup> McGinn and Meyendorff, 127.

The general characteristics of this reform, both in monasticism and in other areas, was to give an institutional and theoretical status to the reformist movement, which previously had been self-determined and had assumed a practical character. The means that were employed in the eleventh century at Cluny were “an austerity tempered with discretion and, striving for continuous prayer, which was manifest in the time devoted to spiritual reading, devotional exercises, and the celebration of the liturgy.”<sup>76</sup>

The central issues of belief and practice in both Eastern and Western Christianity during this whole period was not the question of God but the question of salvation—not “Is there a God?” but “How are we to be saved?”:

God’s anointed one, brought humanity not only the message of salvation but its very reality in his person and in his life, death, and resurrection. Debate and definition about the constitution of Jesus as the incarnate God-man were never pursued for purely speculative reasons but always because of the connection with the essential issue of redemption. In looking at Latin Christian attitudes toward Jesus as redeemer we can best see the distinctive traits of Western Christological spirituality.<sup>77</sup>

In the crucial period of the tenth through the twelfth period, developing and understanding the mystery of redemption began. Jacques Riviere shows three essential themes contributed to this period: “(1) divinization, conceived of as restoration of immortality; (2) the notion of humanity; and (3) the importance of the remission of sins, which emphasized Christ’s death as primarily a sacrifice of reconciliation.”<sup>78</sup> The remission of sins and the communication of new life to the believer involved not only internal attitudes but also the grace of redemption through the sacramental life of the church.

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<sup>76</sup> McGinn and Meyendorff, 128.

<sup>77</sup> Harold W. Attridge, *Johannine Christianity* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006),

<sup>78</sup> McGinn and Meyendorff, 254.

### Christian Spirituality in High Middle Ages and Reformation

The Dominican Order was founded by Dominic Guzman in 1216. This order was also known as “The Order of Preachers.” In the early thirteenth century, preaching was recognized as a need of the church. Dominic envisages his friars (members of the mendicants order) going out in pairs. Christ sent his disciples out in pairs. The preachers were categorized as poor preachers, educated preachers, apostolic preachers, obedient preachers, active preachers, and reformed preachers. The Dominicans responded that “Christ was not a black monk or white monk, but a poor preacher, and they were content to follow his examples. Preaching must take priority over all other spiritual practices, even prayer and the celebration of the sacraments.”<sup>79</sup>

Thomas Aquinas was an Italian Dominican priest of the Roman Catholic Church. He was an influential philosopher and theologian in the tradition of scholasticism. Thomas insisted that Christian perfection means the perfection of charity and that this is possible only in heaven. “Here on earth there is a minimum that is required for salvation; beyond this there is a kind of image of perfection enshrined in the evangelical counsels.”<sup>80</sup> Thomas’s doctrine of prayer offers a “magisterial exposition” of the significance of prayer in its traditional sense of petition. “By formulating our purposes precisely as petition, we are sacrificing our planning intellect of God. We are acknowledging that all good comes from God and that all plans must be subject to him.”<sup>81</sup>

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<sup>79</sup> Jill Raitt, *Christian Spirituality: High Middle Age and Reformation* (New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 1988) 16.

<sup>80</sup> Attridge, 140.

<sup>81</sup> Raitt, 27.

The writings of St. Francis of Assisi are the primary source for Franciscan spirituality. The foundation of his conversion was his experience of the Lord leading him to open his heart to the outcast. As he was led to the lepers, Francis was led to Christ. In the first lines of his *Testament*, he reflects on his life's journey: "The Lord granted me, Brother Francis, to begin to do penance in this way: While I was in sin, it seemed very bitter to me to see lepers. And the Lord himself led me among them and I had mercy upon them. And when I left them that which seemed bitter to me was changed into sweetness of soul and body; and afterward I lingered a little and left the world."<sup>82</sup>

This Franciscan style of Christian life was developing successfully among women, who included not only "Angela of Foligno, but also St. Elisabeth of Hungary, St. Rose of Viterbo, St. Margaret of Cortona, St. Clare of Montefalco, and St. Dauphine of Puimichel." Elisabeth followed in the tradition of Gospel service to the poor, but among the others there was a shift toward the "mystical" with a focus on the inner life. Through mystical experience, these women, who were not allowed to preach the Word, became spiritual masters for their confessors and directors and became teachers of the spiritual life.

The Later Middle Ages, especially the period from the late twelfth century to the early fourteenth, witnessed a significant increase in opportunities for women to participate in the types of roles available. "For the first time in Christian history, we can identify a woman's movement (the Beguines) and can speak of specifically female influences on the development of piety."<sup>83</sup>

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<sup>82</sup> Hubert Jedin, *History of the Church*, vol. 4 (New York: Crossroad Publishing Company, 1982), 177.

<sup>83</sup> Kurt Aland, *Luther and the Beginning of the Restoration* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1985), 60.

At the start of the twelfth century, some women in the Low Countries lived alone and devoted themselves to prayer and good works. These single women tended to live on the fringe of towns, where they attended to the poor. About the beginning of the thirteenth century, some of them grouped their cabins together to form a community, called Beguinage.

The Beguines were not nuns, they did not take vows, could return to the world and wed if they chose, and did not renounce their property. If one was without means, she neither asked nor accepted alms, but supported herself by manual labor, or teaching children. These communities were varied in terms of the social status of their members; some of them only admitted ladies of high degree; others were exclusively reserved for persons in humble circumstances; others opened their doors wide to women of every condition.

This semi-monastic institution was adapted to its age and spread rapidly throughout the land. The women influenced the religious life of the people. As the thirteenth century progressed, the women tended to become mystics. This shift toward mysticism caused problems for the Beguines. Many were burned at the stake by civil authorities.

By the fourteenth century, some communities were absorbed by monastic and mendicant orders. Most of these institutions were suppressed during the Protestant Reformation of the sixteenth century or during the stormy years of revolutions and social unrest of the French Revolution.

The spirituality of the first Carmelites was that of the medieval Latin tradition, a tradition that would soon give way to the rising “mendicant” movement. Like hermits of

the other Middle Ages, the Carmelites lived a life of prayer, silence, and solitude in a communal setting and penance with a special emphasis on the intense relationship with Jesus. Each of the brothers was to remain in his cell or near it, meditating day and night on the law of the Lord, watching in prayer.

The spirituality of the Augustinians was “stamped decisively” from the very beginning by the spirit of Augustine and his *Rule*. “The *Rule of St. Augustine*, deeply inspired by the Bible, is especially directed toward, the love of God and of neighbor. The real goal of the monastic life as seen by Augustine is the actualization of a community of love founded in God according to the model of the first Christian community.”<sup>84</sup> Four characteristics of the Augustinians are (1) loving, a basic characteristic of Christian perfection, (2) emphasizing the activity of God, (3) believing that human beings are weakened because of the fall, and (4) stressing the lack of good works and warning against false self-righteousness.

#### Martin Luther

In July, 1505, Luther had a life-changing experience that set him on a new course. Caught in a terrible thunderstorm where he feared for his life, Luther cried out to Saint Anne, the patron saint of sinners, “Save me, St. Anne, and I’ll become a monk!” the storm subsided and he was saved. “Most historians believe this was not a spontaneous act, but an idea already formulated in Luther’s mind. The decision to become a monk was difficult and greatly disappointed his father, but he felt he must keep a promise.”<sup>85</sup>

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<sup>84</sup> Raitt, 55.

<sup>85</sup> Aland, 77.

At the juncture between the Middle Age and modern times, Luther and his message had considerable impact on Christianity. He commented “successively” on the Psalms, to the Romans, to the Galatians, to the Hebrews, and “at the same time presided over the inspired important academic disputes.”<sup>86</sup> He realized the key to spiritual salvation was not to fear God or be enslaved by religious dogma but to believe that faith alone would bring salvation. This period marked a major change in his life and set in motion the Reformation. In January 1521, Martin Luther was excommunicated from the Roman Catholic Church because he refused to recant his statements and was placed under the ban of the empire.

Luther accented two themes of faith: “the proper subject of theology is the man accused for his sin and lost, and the God who justifies and saves the sinner.”<sup>87</sup> Baptism and the Lord’s Supper retained their full importance. Luther made explicit the action of baptism: “It being about the remission of sins, free from death and the devil and gives eternal happiness to all those who believe that which the words and promise of God express.”<sup>88</sup> The liturgy of the Lord’s Supper in Lutheran churches follows the traditional order of the Mass which was established in the West in the Middle Ages.

Martin Luther is one of the most influential and controversial figures in the Reformation movement. His actions fractured the Roman Catholic Church into new “sects” of Christianity and set in motion reform within the church. A prominent theologian, his desire for people to feel closer to God led him to translate the Bible into

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<sup>86</sup> Ibid., 79.

<sup>87</sup> Raitt, 274.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid., 275.

the language of the people, radically changing the relationship between church leaders and their followers.

### John Calvin

John Calvin was an influential French theologian and pastor during the Protestant Reformation. He was a principal figure in the development of the system of Christian theology later called Calvinism. Calvin defined a sacrament as an earthly sign associated with a promise from God. He only accepted sacraments as valid under the New Covenant: baptism and the Lord's Supper (in opposition to the Catholic acceptance of seven sacraments). He defined faith as the firm and certain knowledge of God in Christ. The immediate effects of faith are repentance and the remission of sin. He states that the sum of human wisdom consists of two parts: the knowledge of God and of ourselves. Calvin argues that the knowledge of God is not inherent in humanity nor can it be discovered by observing this world. The only way to obtain it is to study Scripture.

Calvin's doctrines of providence and predestination can be understood only in the context of his positive mode of experiencing God. Calvin insisted that God can never rest; he sustains the world by his energy, he governs everything, however remote. Calvin's skill in laying bare human sinfulness combined with the familiar Calvinist practice of self-examination "to break down those attachments to self-image that have often been identified, in the tradition of Christian spirituality, as the greatest obstacle to spiritual growth."<sup>89</sup>

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<sup>89</sup> Aland, 171.

### Post-Reformed and Modern

The beginning of the nineteenth century in England saw major shifts in the way people earned their living. It was the time of the industrial revolution. The population all over Europe had greatly increased toward the end of the previous century. Technological advances were made in industries, for example, “the steam engine which contributed dramatically to increased production. Capitalism as an economic system ran unchecked so that an urban working class, a proletariat, often living in sub-human conditions, exploited and unprotected, arose. The factory replaced the field.”<sup>90</sup>

The Anglican or established Church of England failed to respond immediately to the new urban world. An evangelical or gospel-based renewal movement began to pick up the pieces. This movement in England promoted not only evangelistic activity, but a strict morality as well.

Evangelical groups, such as the Methodists, became popular with the working, poorer classes. Their message was clear—salvation came by faith in the passion and death of Christ. The movement stressed the authority and inspiration of the Bible. “The evangelism or gospel preaching of the Methodists as well as Calvinists and evangelical Anglicans attempted to effect change in the moral world of England.”<sup>91</sup>

### Historical Overview of the Baptist Church

From the days of John the Baptist until now, a great army of these witnesses for the truth, and martyrs for its sake, has illumined and honored the march of Christian history:

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<sup>90</sup> Thomas D. McGonigle and James F. Quigley, *A History of Christian Tradition: From the Reformation to the Present* (New York: Paulist Press, 1996), 91.

<sup>91</sup> McGonigle and Quigley, 91.

They were true to conscience and to principle, and loyal to Christ, at a cost to which we are strangers. They went gladly to prison and to death in defense of the Gospel which they loved. Social ostracism, bonds and imprisonment, confiscations and fines, whippings, drownings, and burning at the stake, not only in solitary cases, but by hundreds and thousands are certified to, even by their enemies.<sup>92</sup>

Baptists have contended and suffered not for toleration, but for liberty in religion.

They do not place much value on written history, as on present “conformity to the teaching of Christ, a maintenance of doctrines, and an imitation of the lives of the Apostles and first Christians. It matters little whether a Church can trace its lineage back one century or twenty.”<sup>93</sup>

Baptists trace their lineage, not through corporate designations, or forms of organic life, but by principles avowed, maintained, and defended. The doctrine they professed, and the lives they lived, gives them title to the inheritance they claim in their history.

The principal points in which Baptists differed from the dominant churches, and for which they were persecuted, were those which Baptists have emphasized, and in respect to which they still differ from other Christian communions. They held that none but regenerated persons ought to be received into membership in the churches; they rejected infant baptism; they baptized by immersion, as did all Christians during those ages; they re-baptized converts received among them from the Roman Church, and were then called Anabaptist.

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<sup>92</sup> Edward T. Hiscox, *Principles and Practices for Baptist Churches* (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 1992), 492.

<sup>93</sup> Hiscox, 493.

However, there were some similarities with the Baptist and Quaker spirituality. Baptists and Quakers inherited a substantial tradition that they molded and shaped in ways that would accommodate some of their own special perceptions and preferences. Both, reacting “vigorously” against efforts to impose uniformity in worship through the Book of Common Prayer, manifested a powerful concern for voluntariness in religious matters:

For Baptists this concern exposed expressed itself visibly in rejection of baptism of infants and Quakers in repudiation of sacraments. The key to the devout life, both insisted, lay in sincere, heartfelt, responsiveness to the Holy Spirit. They differed sharply, however, regarding the issue of immediacy of experience of the Spirit. Quakers yearned for direct and unmediated revelation, whereas Baptists insisted on squaring all claims in some way with Scripture, a difference of views that generated fierce controversy between the two groups in the late seventeenth century.<sup>94</sup>

### The Seventeenth Century

From the early days of the Baptist movement, ecclesiology was central to unity. Baptists united around a vision of the church as a community of believers, celebrating baptism and the Lord’s Supper, preaching the gospel, and organizing congregational life. The authority for the church’s mission and ministry came from Christ as mediated through the community of believers.

Covenantal relationships were essential to early Baptist ecclesiology. The covenant theology of the “Separatist” group at Gainsborough, England had significant influence on the Baptists who came from them. This community, like the Baptists who would follow, constituted of a church gathered around a covenant or solemn agreement

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<sup>94</sup> Glenn Hinson, *Baptist and Quaker Spirituality* (New York: The Crossword Publishing Company, 1989), 324.

both with God and with each other. Paul S. Fiddes describes four ways in which Baptists understood the meaning of covenant:

First, it described God’s “covenant of grace” with human beings and angels for their salvation in Jesus Christ. Second, it could mean a transaction inside the Godhead in which the Son is envisaged as consenting to the will of the Father to undertake the work of the salvation elect. Third, it was an agreement God makes corporately with the whole church or specific congregations. Fourth, covenant could mean an agreement by believers who formed a particular congregation and required of all who joined that community of faith.<sup>95</sup>

The seventeenth century Baptist church required a profession of faith (conversion) of all who would receive baptism and church membership. Candidates for membership were asked to declare their experience of “grace” in the presence of the congregation. They believed that true church was composed of believers only.

By the mid-seventeenth century, Baptists in England had accepted immersion (or dipping) as the primary mode for believer’s baptism. Immersion is an outward sign of an internal transformation made possible by the works of Christ. “The initial baptismal rituals involved triune affusion—pouring water three times on the head of the professing Christian in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.”<sup>96</sup>

Children created something of a theological dilemma for the early Baptists. Since infants were not candidates for baptism but were subject to a high mortality rate, Baptists were compelled to address their salvific state. From the beginning, General Baptists excluded children from church membership and baptism:

John Smyth dismissed the idea of the church as parish, since it was a company of covenanted believers, not a mixed group of believers and

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<sup>95</sup> Bill J. Leonard, *Baptist Ways* (Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 2003), 44-45.

<sup>96</sup> Michael J. Walker, “The Relations of Infants to Church, Baptism, and Gospel in Seventeenth Century Theology,” *Baptist Quarterly* 21 (April 1966): 244.

unbelievers alike. He rejected infant baptism because in the New Testament it was associated with conversion and with initiation into the church. Baptism required repentance, Smyth believed, and since infants could not repent, they could not receive the rite.<sup>97</sup>

The early General and Particular Baptist confessions affirmed the importance of both baptism and the Lord's Supper. "The Short Confession of 1610 noted that there are two sacraments appointed by Christ, in his holy church, the administration of the Holy Baptism and the Holy Supper."<sup>98</sup> These two sacraments/ordinances are still recognized at FBC and most Baptist churches today.

From the beginning, Baptists recognized the importance of an ordained ministry and established procedures for shaping ministers. Seventeenth-century British Baptists often followed three stages leading to the appointment of ministers: "(1) election by the church (General Baptist Confession 1678); (2) approbation (approval) by the church (General Baptist Confession 1611); and (3) ordination by the elders of the church."<sup>99</sup>

General Baptist worship practices centered around prayers and preaching. A letter dated around 1609 by Hugh and Anne Bromheade described the worship practices of Smyth's earliest congregation of Baptists:

The order of worshippe and government of oure church is 1. we begynne with a prayer, after reade some one or tow chapters of the bible gyve the sence thereof, and confer vpon the same; that done we lay aside ourebooks, and after a solemne prayer by the 1. speaker, he propuundeth some text owt of the Scripture, and prophecieth owt the same, by the space of one hower, or thre quarters of an hower. After him standeth up A 2. speaker and prophecieth owt of the of the said text the like tyme and space, some tyme more some tyme less.<sup>100</sup>

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<sup>97</sup> Leonard, 49.

<sup>98</sup> Ibid., 50.

<sup>99</sup> William L. Lumpkin, *Baptist Confessions of Faith* (Chicago: Judson Press, 1959), 330-31.

<sup>100</sup> Champlin Burrage, *The Early English Dissenters in the Light of Recent Research (1550-1641)*, vol. 2 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1912), 177.

Hymns taught doctrine, nurtured spirituality, and united the faithful in a common liturgical endeavor. The psalms were sung, without accompaniment from musical instruments, as lined out by the presenter, who sang a phrase that was repeated back by the congregation. Musical instruments were added much later. Baptists in the United States began in colonial America as a marginalized sect of radical religionists, often exiled, jailed, or otherwise harassed by the prevailing religious establishments. Two centuries later, they had become one of the nation's largest groups. "In 1640, Baptists comprised approximately one-tenth of 1 percent of the colonial population. By 1760, they had risen to one-half of 1 percent, with one Baptist in every 180 colonial inhabitants. By the twentieth century, Baptists had become the largest Protestant tradition in the United States, numbering more than 30 million members represented in over forty discernible groups."<sup>101</sup>

The Calvinist "dogmas" of Massachusetts believed in informed covenant theology and the necessity of regenerate church membership. This reformation theology was defined by a covenant, the basis for the relationship between God and the elect. Such an agreement had individual and communal implications. It was understood that God initiated a covenant with sinful persons by means of irresistible grace offered to the elect. Conversion was a personal experience of divine grace and was necessary for all who would claim Christian faith and membership in the church. The church was a community of "visible saints" who had professed faith in Christ and agreed to live according to a covenant in faith and practice.

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<sup>101</sup> Leonard, 70.

The Baptist movement in the colonies began with Roger William (1603-1683) and John Clark (1609-1676) in Rhode Island, a colony that offered religious liberty for its inhabitants.

Baptists in America entered the eighteenth century as a small but determined community, celebrating hard-won victories to secure their freedom but struggling to maintain their identity in the face of external harassment and internal turmoil. During this century they continued to encounter persecution, particularly in New England and in the South. Religious awakenings increased the number of conversions, rejuvenated churches, and fostered controversies. Baptists, like other religious Americans, took part in both the Revolutionary War and the westward migration.

The middle colonies—“New Amsterdam (New York), New Jersey, Delaware, and Pennsylvania—offered a very different environment for Baptists and other religious minorities. Generally, these colonies provided greater toleration to religious people who settled there.”<sup>102</sup>

Many of the early Baptist churches met in the home of members. Meetinghouses finally were constructed, often years after the formation of the congregation they housed. During the colonial period, no musical instruments were used to accompany the singing. The Lord’s Supper was celebrated monthly or quarterly, using bread and a cup of wine, presided by an ordained minister.

Morgan Edwards published a handbook on church order—the first such book for Baptists in America—delineating some of the tasks of the ministers:

Among them were these: to convene the church; pray; read Scriptures; preach; break bread; dismiss and bless the people; govern in conjunction with the ruling elders; take into the church; bind or retain sins; admonish;

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<sup>102</sup> Leonard, 113.

cast out of the church; loose or remit sin; lay on hands; baptize; visit; give examples; anoint the sick; bury the dead; perform marriage; catechize; bless infants; defend the faith; assist at associations and other public meetings, and etc.<sup>103</sup>

Like some of their British counterparts, American Baptists utilized the office of deaconess to set aside women for particular ministries in the church. Morgan Edwards gave some description of the function of these women in certain eighteenth century congregations. According to Edwards, they were present among a small number of Baptist Congregations in Virginia, North Carolina, and South Carolina.

Baptists in the United States came of age in the nineteenth century. Once a persecuted minority of the colonial era, they became one of the new nation's largest denominations. During this period, mission societies flourished, churches moved west, schools were established, and controversies raged, particularly over the question of human slavery. The Baptist family is sometimes spoken of in three sectional divisions: first, Baptists of the North; second, White Baptists in the South and Southwest; and third, Negro Baptists.

The second half of the nineteenth century was a time of both trauma and promise in American religious and social life. The Civil War created an almost unbearable national crisis evident in loss of life, devastation of property, and division that endured well into the twentieth century. With the outbreak of Civil War, Baptists North and South enlisted, ministers became chaplains, and denominational groups rallied in support of their respective nations. The war's aftermath witnessed the increasing industrialization of the North, and the long road to "reconstruction" in the South. The surrender at Fort

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<sup>103</sup> Ibid., 125.

Sumter on April 12, 1861 and of Lincoln's call for 75,000 troops, is when the South embraced religion as its defense and its motive force was born.

Religion stood at the center of the Civil War for both sides. Both the North and South looked to God for meaning, and each side believed, with equal fervor and certitude, that God was on its side. Many ministers, generals, leaders, and editors proclaimed that God had ordained the war and would determine its length, its damages, and its outcome. With husbands, sons, and fathers off at war, women filled the pews. The preachers filled the women's hearts and minds with a new sense of the place in both politics and public action.

Nineteenth century Baptist life was characterized by the wide use of "church manuals". These manuals provided guidance for the organizational life of the churches. These included "William Crowell's *The Church Member's Manual* (1845), Edward T. Hiscox's *The Baptist church Directory* (1859), and J. M. Pendleton's *Church Manual* (1897). By 1946 Pendleton's manual had sold at least 150,000 copies."<sup>104</sup>

Hiscox's work later entitled *Principles and Practices for Baptist Churches* was republished well into the twentieth century. FBC uses both the J.M. Pendleton's manual and the Hiscox's manual. The Hiscox's manual provides basic introduction to Baptist history, doctrine, and practice, offering instructions for churches and individuals in the ways that Baptist churches believe and function. For example, Hiscox delineated three ways in which persons united with Baptist churches:

Admission by baptism upon profession of faith, by letter, or by experience. The letter from the church where the individual was a member certifies to his good Christian character and regular standing, and commends him to the confidence of, and membership in, the other church. Once the individual

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<sup>104</sup> Leonard, 216.

commitment was confirmed, a vote of the church was necessary for formal admission to membership.<sup>105</sup>

FBC uses these modes of admission today minus the voting of the church. This was stopped when FBC joined the Full Gospel Fellowship. In the traditional Baptist church, the congregation would vote as to whether a person was admitted to the church. The reality after joining the Full Gospel Baptist International Fellowship, is that the congregation does not have that right since it is Jesus' church. Jesus accepted everyone.

#### African-American Baptists

The connection between white and black Christians in slavery time and throughout American history revealed deep tension, contradictions, and racial strife. Concerted attempts to evangelize slaves were slow in developing in the late eighteenth century. Many clergy were compelled to assure slaveholders that conversion to Christianity changed only the external status of the Africans, with no effect on the earthly situation.

Slaves participated in revival meetings and camp meetings that fostered awakenings in the colonial and frontier periods. Once the slaves were converted, many were drawn to the Baptist way of religious experience and ecclesial organizations. Walter Pitts suggested that the Baptist "ethos" appealed to blacks for several reasons:

First, Baptists incorporated magical power into church doctrines, creating a mystical community that enabled a convert to heal and prophesy. Second, baptismal immersion appealed to African-Americans because of its similarity to African water rites. Third, and perhaps most significant, was the autonomous nature of Baptist church polity that permitted the formation of a congregation without permission or jurisdiction from other ecclesiastical tribunals. Pitts asserted, the single most important outgrowth of the Great Awakening was that blacks who had been converted at the

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<sup>105</sup> Hiscox, 73-74.

revivals formed their own independent congregations, thereby beginning the political, social, and economic autonomy of the Afro-Baptist church.<sup>106</sup>

Until the Civil War, most Black Baptists in the South, worshipped either in a racially mixed church under white ministers or in black led secret “conventicles” (the invisible institution) or both. These gatherings of slaves sometimes known as “hush arbors”, took place outside the sight and control of their white masters. Peter Randolph, a nineteenth century slave in Virginia, described such a scene:

Not being allowed to hold meetings on the plantation, the slaves assemble in the swamps, out of reach of the patrols. They have an understanding among themselves as to the time and place of getting together.... They first ask each other how they feel, the state of their minds, etc. The male members then select a certain space, in separate groups, for their division of the meeting.... then praying and singing all around, until they generally feel quite happy.... The slave forgets all his sufferings, except to remind others of the trials during the past week.<sup>107</sup>

After the emancipation, African-Americans in many white-dominated congregations came to feel that their second-class status was perpetuated in the church. Because of this, African-American Baptist churches were formed, and with them new mission boards and denominational configurations. With these actions, Baptists became the largest denominational configuration of African-Americans in the United States.

Black Baptist churches also were founded in the North; Boston (1804), New York (1808), Philadelphia (1809). Prior to the Civil War, African-American Baptist churches were organized in cities such as Cleveland, Columbus, and Cincinnati in Ohio as well as Detroit and Chicago. In 1836, Ohio formed the Providence Baptist Association, the first such organization of African-American congregations.

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<sup>106</sup> William F. Pitts, *The Old Ship of Zion* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 45.

<sup>107</sup> Pitts, 38.

African-American Baptist Conventions were organized. Many are still operating today: American Baptist Missionary Convention (1840), Consolidated American Baptist Missionary Convention (1866), American National Baptist Convention (1886), Foreign Mission Convention (1880), National Baptist Convention of America (1895), and the Progressive National Baptist. Many of the conventions were born out of other conventions due to controversy with leadership. Friendship Baptist Church had belonged to the American Baptist and National Baptist prior to joining the Full Gospel Baptist International. Due to many challenges facing African-American Baptists and their churches, Manis noted that many younger blacks were “abandoning” the civil rights legacy and entering numerous factions:

Some, benefiting from the earlier movement, gained upward mobility but became indifferent to the continuing racism around them. Others found new community among non-Christian movements, especially the Nation of Islam. Still others have been influenced by Pentecostal spirituality, often participation in “Full Gospel” Baptist churches. Questions of ministerial authority, women ordination, and female leadership also provide significant challenges for African-American Baptists.<sup>108</sup>

As the twentieth century drew to a close, leadership in African-American churches passed to a new generation of clergy and laity. Female preachers such as “Suzan Johnson Cook, pastor of Bronx Christian Fellowship, Carolyn Knight, professor of homiletics at the Interdenominational Theological Center, Atlanta, and Prathia Hall, director of the African-American Studies at Boston University”<sup>109</sup> and many more gained prominence in Baptist pulpits and classrooms.

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<sup>108</sup> Andrew Michael Manis, *Southern Civil Religions in Conflict: Black and White Baptists and Civil Rights, 1947-1957* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1987), 61-62.

<sup>109</sup> Leonard, 282.

People can be touched by an immense power within themselves. They become committed to a particular cause or a movement towards bringing positive change in their homes, communities, and in the world. This immense power that touches their core being is what some call “transformative spirituality.”

Transformative spirituality is life-energy. It is a breath of fire. It is an ember that sustains the flame of one’s heart. It is restlessness. It is something that calls the person to go beyond himself or herself to have concern for and to enter into relationships with others and into a relationship with God.

Transformative spirituality enables a person to stand outside of himself or herself and consider the meaning of his or her actions. It enables a person to comprehend the complexity of his or her motives and the impact they have on the world. Transformative spirituality is a process of becoming, but is never an achievement. It is a potential rather than a possession. Transformative spirituality is finding the truth of one’s existence and discovering the fire within their heart.

Embracing a transformative spirituality challenges one to discover and uncover which spiritual images contribute to oppression and injustice. The question asked is how a message of hope can be offered to oppressed people. One can take a cue from an incarnational, liberative, and transformative spirituality:

What Jesus actually proclaimed was the kingdom of God. And this kingdom of God demands personal transformation and restructuring of the human world. It demands a complete turn-around of a person’s lifestyle, which in turn affects the world around that person. The conversion that Jesus demanded was a complete liberation from legalism.<sup>110</sup>

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<sup>110</sup> Rico Palaca Ponce, “Transformative Spirituality and Mission,” *International Review of Mission* 1, no. 2 (November 2012): 324.

Transformative spirituality may be risky because it can provoke the ire of the “powers that be.” However, if one wants to be a collaborator with the divine power, which dynamically interacts with the human person in order to effect positive transformation in the world, and if one wants to be true to his calling as Christ’s disciple, he should be willing to take the risk.

A few years ago, there was a study/dissertation entitled, “Quest for Spiritual Community: Reclaiming Spiritual Guidance for Contemporary Congregations” by Angela Reed. The study found no correlation between high involvement in the normal activities of congregational life and the parishioner’s growth toward spiritual maturity. The researcher discovered that although congregations generally fostered growth in the early to middle range of spiritual maturity, they were not doing much to further continuing growth in their most spiritually mature members.

Friendship Baptist Church members fall right in this category also. The desire is for congregations to become flourishing greenhouses, but few pastors or leaders have any idea what nutrients might lead to the kind of growth they are hoping to gain. Reed, professor of practical theology and spiritual formation at George W. Truett Theological Seminary, maintains that congregations provide the best greenhouses for authentic spiritual guidance. She conducted interviews with church members and collected observations by participating in worship and other communal activities.

Reed teaches practical theology and spiritual formation at Baylor University’s George W. Truett Theological Seminary. She also discovered that pastors in these congregations consistently imagined their role to be that of spiritual guide. The results was: (1) They (pastors) listened more than talked. (2) They had right-sized rather than

out-sized views of themselves. (3) They helped others notice God's fingerprints in daily life. (4) They developed a congregational culture of spiritual conversation. (5) They understood success as a matter of surrendering to God rather than fixing problems.

Rather than laying out a rigid programmatic agenda, Reed offers a way to understand the congregation as God's primary locus for spiritual guidance, "one that fosters spiritual maturity through one-in-one spiritual direction, spiritual friendships, and small-group spiritual directions."<sup>111</sup>

It is important for all pastors and/or other congregational leaders to be trained in ministries of spiritual guidance. At the same time, Reed nudges training programs to imagine ways of not only training the classic model of one-on-one spiritual direction, but also preparing students to lead spiritual direction small groups and to guide whole congregations as corporate bodies. Everything a congregation does from worship to mission, affects the spiritual formation of participants.

### Summary

Spirituality goes back to the beginning of creation; when God created man. In the Old Testament it dealt with the inner life of man and what drives that life. However, in the New Testament the meaning of spirituality is expanded. It includes development and the indwelling presence of God's Spirit and the life that flows from that person. The truth of God is the foundation of biblical spirituality. The heart of spirituality is intimacy between God the Creator and his created imagers.

The Bible gives us several biblical models of spirituality to use as our example: Abraham, David, Job, Peter, and Jesus. This is a small representation of examples

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<sup>111</sup> Angela Reed, *Quest for Spiritual Community* (New York: T & T Clark International, 2011), 106.

presented in the Bible. Their struggles are struggles all Christians face at one time or another. The stories of these models become motivating facts and guidelines for Christians today. Transformation Spirituality is a process of becoming like Christ but a process that is never fully achieved on this side.

Leaders must become transparent to those they lead. Christians need to know that they are not the only ones going through and that their leaders can be of help to them. Transparency leads to transformation. If leaders have not been transformed, then they are unable to help those they serve.

## CHAPTER THREE

### REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The first priority in Christian ministry is that of spiritual formation, which is the cultivation and acquisition of the values and perceptions of reality that are consistent with the will of God as revealed in Jesus Christ. Too often spiritual formation is regarded as a catch-all category that conveys little specific information. Gerald G. May writes, “Spiritual formation is a rather general term referring to all attempts, means, instructions, and disciplines intended towards deepening of faith and furtherance of spiritual growth. It includes educational endeavors as well as the more intimate and in-depth process of spiritual direction.”<sup>112</sup> According to Galatians 4:9, spiritual formation can be defined as “the whole person in relationship with God, within the community of believers, growing in Christlikeness, reflected in a spirit-directed disciplined lifestyle, and demonstrated in redemptive action in our world.”<sup>113</sup> Dallas Willard states: “Spiritual formation, without regard to any specifically religious context or tradition, is the process by which the human spirit or will is given a definite Christlike character.”<sup>114</sup>

Spiritual formation focuses on human participation and obedience to Jesus Christ. Spiritual formation is comprised of intentional and deliberate actions whereby a

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<sup>112</sup> Gerald G. May, *Care of Mind, Care of Spirit: Psychiatric Dimension of Spiritual Directions* (San Francisco: Harper-Collins, 1992), 6.

<sup>113</sup> James R. Estep and Jonathan H. Kim, *Christian Formation: Integrating Theology and Human Development* (Nashville: B & H Publishing Group, 2010), 241.

<sup>114</sup> Dallas Willard, *Renovation of the Heart: Putting on the Character of Christ* (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 2002), 19.

person is being transformed into the image of Christ. It is a lifelong process that takes place in the context of community. Today, the Western church has become fragmented and individualistic, which makes spiritual formation more difficult. Christian faith is often practiced, in void of the community. The Christian life is best lived in community where worship, fellowship, small groups, and service are practiced. In this context, spiritual formation takes place in the community.

Many in the field of spiritual and faith formation use the metaphor of a journey to describe the life of faith. Hagber and Guelich state, “A journey involves process, action, movement, change, experience, stops and starts, variety, humdrum, and surprises. Whereas a trip focuses on a destination, a journey has significance when seen as a whole.”<sup>115</sup> Believers’ journeys of faith connotes the process and passages in their response to God’s overture to him.

The path to spiritual formation includes joys and successes as well as struggles and disappointments. Much of the history of Christianity focuses on struggle and suffering based on the suffering of Christ as a necessary aspect of growth and maturity. Mulholland says: “Life itself is a process of spiritual development. The only choice one has is whether that growth moves them toward wholeness in Christ or toward an increasingly dehumanized and destructive mode of being.”<sup>116</sup>

Occasionally, today one also finds those who think of spiritual formation in terms of practicing spiritual disciplines. This is a relatively recent development. The disciplines are regarded as part of the process of spiritual formation—which is not an

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<sup>115</sup> Janet O. Hagberg and Robert A. Guelich, *The Critical Journey: Stages in the Life of Faith* (Salem, WI: Sheffield Publishing Company, 2005), 5.

<sup>116</sup> M. Robert Mulholland Jr., *Invitation to a Journey: A Road Map for Spiritual Formation* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1993), 24.

altogether bad idea—or as the practice of spirituality. Formation is regarded as whatever it takes to be Christlike. Christians are able to engage rightly in a life of spiritual disciplines. “In any case, one way of thinking about spiritual formation is to identify it by references to certain specific religious practices. Often such practices are spoken of today as a spirituality.”<sup>117</sup> Individuals do not have the human capacity to transcend God; only through the gift of God’s grace can every person experience God.

Spiritual formation may be thought of as the shaping of the inner life, the spirit, or the spiritual side of the human. The formation of the heart or will of the individual, along with the emotions and intellect, is therefore the primary focus, “regardless of what overt practices may or may not be involved. What is formed is explicitly the spiritual dimension of the self.”<sup>118</sup> The first component of the kind of persons Christians are is a sense of identity. Who Christians are, is rooted in understanding whose they are. Loyalties shape and define one’s perceptions of reality, one’s interests and allegiances. Christians are those who live in conscious and consistent relationship with God. The initial step for the formation of ethical consciousness is commitment to Christian discipleship.

Integrity is the second focus for understanding ethical formation. The Word refers to wholeness, entireness, or completeness. The process of ethical formation involves the convergence of the outer and inner life, achieving harmony of thought and act. The Greek term is *teleios*, which means whole, mature, or complete.

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<sup>117</sup> Todd W. Hall and Mark R. McMinn, *Spiritual Formation, Counseling, and Psychotherapy* (New York: Nova Science Publishers, Inc., 2002), 4.

<sup>118</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.

The opposite of integrity is deceit, deviousness, dishonesty, or pretense. The devious person lives in contradiction; without an integrating core, one's conduct is marked by inconsistency. Christ is the Christian's model of integrity. His will was so integrated with that of the One whom he called Father that there was no division of mind or heart. Henri Nouwen says, "The goal of the Christian is to be a living reminder of God ... by seeking a life of total integrity."<sup>119</sup>

Ethical formation is clearly a learning process of both understanding the ethical imperatives of biblical faith and learning to put those imperatives into practice in the real world. Bill Leonard explains integration of faith and praxis:

The processes of ethical formation call for integrative approaches that unite thought and action. Seminaries and churches have generally done well at the task of imparting the conceptual knowledge needed for forming ethical consciousness. They have not been as successful at the equally important task of preparing persons to apply such insights in action.<sup>120</sup>

The spirit or heart may even be eager, but unless the flesh or embodied personality as a whole is trained to go with it and support it, the follow through action will not occur, or will not reliably happen, or may even be in direct conflict with the spirit or will: "What I hate I do!" (Rom 7:15). While the spirit or heart is the ultimate source of life, humans do not live there. People live in their body and the world. Christian spiritual formation works from the spirit or will and from its new life "from above". Its work is not done until Christians have put off the old person and put on the new. Efforts to develop ethical behavior, without the foundational work of biblical teaching, and the historical understandings of the Christian tradition will prove ultimately to be inadequate.

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<sup>119</sup> Henri J. M. Nouwen, *Creative Ministry* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Co., Image Books, 1978), 97.

<sup>120</sup> Bill Leonard, *Becoming Christian: Dimensions of Spiritual Formation* (Louisville: Westminster/John Press, 1990), 71.

Faith is the active trust in and steadfast loyalty toward God. These grow from a living tradition. Faith in God establishes the center of value around which all other loyalties are structured.

This is an active, not passive, process; one that requires clear-headed and relentless participation. It will not be done for believers, however, they cannot obey Christ, or even trust him, by direct effort. “The Holy Spirit is the indirect means that allow the believer to cooperate in reshaping the personality—the feelings, ideas, mental processes and images, and the deep readiness of the soul and body—so that believers whole being is poised to go with the movements of the regenerate heart that is in the believer by the impact of the Gospel Word.”<sup>121</sup>

Growth is a sign of health; lack of growth is a signal that something is wrong. Organisms of all kinds go through stages of development. With growth, biological and spiritual, comes change and that can be unsettling. One can run into growing pains, both literally and figuratively. The Bible often speaks of spiritual progress in terms of growth. The comparison to physical development breaks down if it is pushed too far. Physical maturation continues through adolescence and into early adulthood, and then one is grown up—development is over and done. But spiritual maturation is lifelong, and believers are never done growing this side of heaven. “What’s more, spiritual development can plateau and stagnate or even slide backward, while biological growth relentlessly moves us toward physical maturity.”<sup>122</sup>

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<sup>121</sup> Hall and McGinn, 6.

<sup>122</sup> Peter K. Nelson, *Spiritual Formation: Ever Forming, Never Formed* (Colorado Springs: Biblica Publishing, 2010), 74.

Growing in Christlikeness, progressing in faith and holiness—this is what spiritual maturity looks like:

We aim at holiness and aspire to walk in the steps of Jesus, and by God’s help, in this way we grow. In fact, it’s implied, as John Calvin correctly asserts “So long as there is daily progress there cannot be perfection”. In other words, even if one is advancing in spiritual growth by leaps and bounds, the fact is that there will still be room for improvement tomorrow means that perfection is not yet reached.<sup>123</sup>

God’s Word in Hebrew 5:11- 6:3 challenges believers to grow deep in faith and knowledge, strong in wisdom and discernment, and steady in the application of truth as a daily practice. Growing up in Christ means leaving certain things behind, not in the sense of abandoning them, but by building on them. Believers are summoned to graduate from the basic facts of faith and repentance and the elementary truths of Christ’s death and resurrection.

Spiritual formation involves a transformative learning experience. When intellectual understanding of God and his kingdom is transferred from head to heart, changes take place in one’s relationship with God and with others. Spiritual development is a lifelong and differentiated process, with individuals growing spiritually at different rates, different times, and under differing circumstances. It is a process of selflessness, denial of self, and of cross bearing. It is willing to make any sacrifice necessary to become more Christlike. “It is the exchange of self-management for surrender to a life lived in Christ, no longer to please one’s self, but to be well pleasing to God. It requires

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<sup>123</sup> Peter K. Nelson, *Spiritual Formation: Ever Forming, Never Formed* (Colorado Springs: Biblica Publishing, 2010), 74, 82.

our dying for his living in us.”<sup>124</sup> Gwen Ebner in her book *Formed Holy in His Image*, says:

Becoming like him in his death gives us power to live a holy life but will involve a daily dying to ourselves. And what will this becoming like him involve? (1) Acceptance of what Christ did for us on the cross which opens the door for us to know Christ. (2) Deny ourselves, surrender, and submit to his will, allowing him to be in control of our lives. (3) We will be different than the world, transformed by the renewing of our minds by God’s empowering. (4) We will need to suffer trials and problems, so that our faith may be proved genuine, may become mature and complete, lacking anything.<sup>125</sup>

Adult educator Patricia Cranton suggests that transformative learning occurs when, through critical self-reflection, an individual revises old or develops new assumptions, beliefs, or ways of seeing the world:

She believes that all learning is transformative. God calls us to be transformed, to adopt life-affirming rather than death-dealing ways of living. God desires our transformation from people who lack self-worth to people who recognize our worth as God’s beloved. We are called from individualistic to communal ways of being, from serving self to serving others, from despair to hope.<sup>126</sup>

A congregation can be a place to encourage transformative learning through critical reflection on their experiences.

The Commission on Christian Formation for the Episcopal Church describes it as learning, transforming, and changing. Deep learning is an experiential process, and one lives into faith through practices that engage and excite:

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<sup>124</sup> James M. Houston, “The Future of Spiritual Formation,” *Journal of Spiritual Formation & Soul Care* 4, no. 2 (2011): 132.

<sup>125</sup> Gwen Ebner, *Formed Holy in His Image: Spirit, Soul, & Body* (2011), location 177 Kindle.

<sup>126</sup> Abigail Johnson, *Shaping Spiritual Leaders: Supervision and Formation in Congregations* (Herndon, VA: Alban Institute, 2007), 36.

Formation begins first in the individual who must encounter God in a personal relationship. One must learn who God is and how he is calling one to serve him in their life. Second, spiritual maturity is enhanced as the individual hones and refines understanding of God's call by experiencing the living God in the community of faith. Finally, when a solid foundation has been established, believers validate, express, and augment their growth by extending Christ's love into the world.<sup>127</sup>

There is no universal formula for encouraging spiritual development in individual church members. Everyone is at different points in their faith journey, and comes to know and love God through a variety of venues both intellectual and practical.

The way one enters into a conversation depends greatly on who the other person is. The content of the conversation varies from one situation to another. Conversation with God is not a discussion between equals. On one hand, there is the eternal, glorious, all-powerful Maker and Master of the universe. On the other hand, there are humans, dependent creatures, made in God's image but damaged through sin. Humans are needy and weak and prone to rebellion and foolishness. This is also not a conversation between peers.

Encountering God requires that one begins by building a relationship with him. Individuals cannot enter into intimate relationship with God unless they know God personally. A relationship with God is no cozy experience of God as a good buddy. On the contrary, it points to the centrality of Jesus' own "Abba" relationship to God in the Synoptic Gospels: to the intimate images of abiding in Jesus and the Holy Spirit. Spirituality may mean many things, but it cannot be understood apart from a deep sense of communion with God. The communion may be peaceful and serene, or it may be

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<sup>127</sup> Michael F. Junkin, "An Active Approach to Spiritual Formation: Encountering, Experiencing, and Extending God," *Common Ground Journal* 7, no. 1 (Fall 2009): 86.

turbulent and disquieting. In either case, the center of spirituality has personal and relational dimensions. Leonard describes these inter-related facets:

While this relationship may not be the sufficient condition for authentic spirituality, it is fundamentally necessary for it. A relationship with God forms the center of the web of spirituality from which all other aspects are channeled and shaped. The relationship is experienced both individually and corporately. It is not just a personal relationship, nor is it merely the relationship one experiences as part of a group.<sup>128</sup>

Locating the center of spirituality provides a point of reference within the mystery. If the center is relationship to God, then God is best understood as the source of spirituality; virtues are seen as fruits and outcomes of this relationship; deeds of ministry are best construed as expressions of this relationship; and spiritual disciplines are vehicles for nurturing that relationship.

Relationship with God grows in direct proportion to the time one spends with God and to the effort willingly made to build that relationship. John writes in 1 John 4:19, “we love because God first loved us”. First, one experiences God’s grace and then is enlivened by God’s acceptance of him. Gordon Smith informs believers, “Nothing is so fundamental to the Christian journey as knowing and feeling that we are loved. Nothing.”<sup>129</sup> While encouragement and support of the faith community is essential to spiritual formation, development begins in the singular with the individual intentionally seeking to know God.

Nelson Ellis, in his book, *Growing Up Christian: A Congregational Strategy for Nurturing Disciples*, looks at the patterns of social influence in the 1800s, 1900s, and 2000s, and draws specific conclusions regarding how the local congregation must adapt

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<sup>128</sup> Leonard, 22.

<sup>129</sup> Gordon Smith, *The Voice of Jesus* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2003), 74.

to meet the current needs for Christian nurture because social influence connotes a relationship between people as well as direct instruction. Nelson states “A person’s image of God is more important than that person’s religion.”<sup>130</sup> He proceeds to show how that image is formed and matured—or not matured—throughout the lifetime of socialization in the culture, the family, and the local congregation. Once the believer understands the concept of a person’s image of God as being at the heart of their spiritual growth, that image will grow and mature as the Christian experiences the truth of God’s Word in everyday life. Experience must be the bridge between belief and practice.

Parents are the first patterns on which an understanding of God is formed in a child’s mind. Parents themselves have a conception of God that has been formed by their parents and the “spirit of age” in which they grew up. The secondary source for children’s image of God is the family and community.

Nelson suggests that “belonging to a group empowers members to live according to the beliefs and values of the group.”<sup>131</sup> The premise is that congregations help to shape the “image of God” simply by group socialization. Nelson offers that one of the beliefs to be taught by the congregation is that knowing about Christianity is not the same as knowing God as revealed by Jesus. Mature faith is not a stage of life or an attainment but is a relationship with Christ. Through this relationship, a person grows up into a Christian lifestyle.

Listening is at the heart of all relationships including one’s relationship with God. Prayer is a vital means of growing in grace. It is a primary way one resists the Devil and

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<sup>130</sup> Ellis C. Nelson, *Growing Up Christian: A Congregational Strategy for Nurturing Disciples* (Macon, GA: Smyth & Helwys Publishing, Inc., 2008), 35.

<sup>131</sup> *Ibid.*, 77.

draws near to God. Prayer is not merely a one-way form of communicating with God. One hears God in the quiet moments when one is receptive to understanding his will and his direction for their lives. In one's most intimate moments with God, in times of private prayer, spoken and unspoken words are transmitted by the Holy Spirit. In his letter to the Romans, Paul writes, "The Spirit helps us in our weakness for we do not know how to pray as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with sighs too deep for words."<sup>132</sup> God address the quiet heart, speaking in a still, small voice.

In prayer one must be stripped of self-assurance and ego-centered righteousness and left spiritually naked before the Lord:

Within the fellowship of believers, then, it's not hard to imagine that true spiritual openness and honesty involve painful self-disclosure. But we resist allowing others to see us as feeble, needy, and depraved even though there simply is no way forward in spiritual maturation apart from laying down our arms, admitting we have no leverage with God, and laying bare our sinful souls.<sup>133</sup>

It may be painful to admit that human hearts are prone to wander and bend toward magnifying self rather than the One worthy of all praise. But there is no way ahead into spiritual health and growth apart from this humbling self-recognition. While pain should not be glorified or sought for its own end, it is usually a part of the process of formation into Christlikeness.

Since time can put prayers under pressure, about where God is or why he has not answered, the battle for spiritual maturation will mean seeking a wise biblical balance of strong hope and humble receptivity. The Bible contains many examples of answered

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<sup>132</sup> Romans 8:26 [NIV].

<sup>133</sup> Peter K. Nelson, 122.

prayers, so there is every reason to be confident that, if he sees fit, he will certainly provide the blessings.

Michael Gemignani has a different view on spiritual formation and prayer. He feels that the first stage of spiritual growth is called by some the “purgative way.” Those who have no desire to please God have not even entered this stage. Generally, a stage of spiritual growth is characterized by the attitudes, actions, and forms of prayer of those involved in it. “In the purgative way the soul recognizes the necessity of trying to obey the will of God, but the motive for doing so is either the fear of punishment for disobedience or the hope for a rich reward. God is primarily a distant and powerful authoritarian who demands that followers behave according to the rules set forth.”<sup>134</sup> The soul in the purgative way wants rules to follow that show what to do to avoid divine punishment or what to do to gain divine favors. This soul wants clear guidelines, much like an unruly child must have, to know exactly what it can get away with. The idea of God as a God of love and mercy is still very abstract and difficult to grasp.

Persons in the purgative way may be judgmental in their attitude toward others. They assume that anyone who does not follow the same rules they are following must be sinning. Prayer in the purgative way is usually according to some formula. Either rote, read from Scripture, other inspirational sources, or following a particular pattern, generally using stock phrases even when it seems to be spontaneous. The reason these forms of prayer are used is because they are safe.

The illuminative way is the second stage of the spiritual life. Instead of being primarily concerned with avoiding sin in order to avoid punishment or gain reward, the

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<sup>134</sup> Michael Gemignani, *To Know God* (Valley Forge: Judson Press, 2011), 49.

soul wants to do good because doing good gratifies the soul and pleases God, who is now seen more as a dear friend than a vengeful judge.

Prayer in the illuminative way is more from the heart. One speaks to God as one would to a friend. The soul is willing to bare its deepest emotions, hopes, fears, and longings to God. The mind begins to dwell more on God in meditative prayer.

Spiritual formation should not call us back to the kind of emphasis on behavior that left so many feeling brutalized by the church. Believers are able to maintain the outward righteous façade but if that mask slips, however, they will often be met with rejection. Dallas Willard clarifies these issues as he

argues that indirect means are necessary to reshape our character so that we are prepared to participate in the work of the Holy Spirit in the regeneration of our hearts. These indirect means, include the spiritual disciplines, not in a legalistic sense but in a use that is more inwardly focused. Richard Foster and others within the Renovare ministry have awakened the church to the importance of these disciplines, not for the sake of outward conformity, but for their power in transforming the inner life. Christian psychologists are not primarily in the position of being “teachers” of the spiritual disciplines. Despite what some might claim, psychology is not in the business of spiritual formation.<sup>135</sup>

Deploying various spiritual disciplines is also important for the divine human conversation. “Richard Foster has helped lead a resurgence of appreciation for the disciplines in recent decades, especially in his well-known book *Celebration of Discipline*.”<sup>136</sup> He speaks of three categories of disciplines: inward, outward, and corporate. Foster’s outward disciplines (simplicity, solitude, submission, and service) are

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<sup>135</sup> Dallas Willard, *The Divine Conspiracy: Rediscovering Our Hidden Life in God* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1998), 10.

<sup>136</sup> Richard Foster, *Celebration of Discipline: The Path to Spiritual Growth*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1988), 2-7.

practices grounded in and inspired by the inward disciplines (meditation, prayer, fasting, and study).

Practicing the disciplines is a way to exercise faith and hope. They are a gift from God. “The disciplines allow us to place ourselves before God so that he can transform us.”<sup>137</sup> Corporate disciplines include those actions that encompass the church, such as: bear the burdens of one another, forgive one another, pray for one another, encourage one another, love one another, and be kind to one another to name a few. An old African proverb says, if you want to go fast, go alone; if you want to go far, go together. Quick-fix approaches to spiritual life driven by impatience and animated by bursts of energy can bring about impressive outward effect, but they do not last. Without diminishing the importance of individual believers’ personal faith, all too often Christians fail to see the vital place of growing together in corporate discipleship. The body of Christ needs the spiritual contribution of each member, and each member needs the support of the body.

Prayer goes beyond language. Christians can also pray with their bodies—and fasting is one such gesture. Fasting is a kind of prayer in which the person says, to God, using body language, that they long for his presence working in their lives more than they long for their next meal. Practicing the spiritual disciplines expands the vocabulary for interaction with God and enriches the experience of resting in his presence. Donald Whitney gives a helpful caution: “Fasting without a purpose can be a miserable, self-centered experience. Fasting for strategic reasons can contribute to deep spiritual growth.”<sup>138</sup>

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<sup>137</sup> Foster, 7.

<sup>138</sup> Donald Whitney, *Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life* (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 1991), 165.

The good news about spiritual formation is that this renewed interest in spiritual formation speaks to the desire for more in the spiritual life: more than just head knowledge, more than rules that merely govern external behaviors and, more than religious activity loaded into lives that already feel unmanageable. “The promise of spiritual transformation is intimacy with God that results in the satisfaction of the soul’s deepest longings; the language of spiritual formation helps us name desires that are so deep and have so often been disappointed that many have given up trying to articulate them.”<sup>139</sup>

The bad news (or at least news that makes some uncomfortable) is that many pastors are seeking to respond to these longings by trying to lead their congregations into realities that they are not experiencing for themselves.

True spiritual leadership hinges upon the capacity to lead from one’s own transforming center. Before implementing spiritual formation in churches and organizations, leaders and ministers first need to step back and give serious attention to their own process of spiritual transformation. As the disciplines of rest, solitude, silence, and self-examination are cultivated in the lives of leaders, then leaders will be brought back from frenetic activity and dissipation to a quiet alertness to guidance from God and be in a better position to facilitate spiritual formation in the lives of others. Thomas Merton says it this way: “If you attempt to act and do for others or for the world without deepening, you will not have anything to give others. You will communicate to them nothing but your delusions and ends and means.”<sup>140</sup> Ruth Barton says, “the best thing any

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<sup>139</sup> Ruth Haley Barton, “It Begins with You! How the Spiritual Formation of the Pastor Effects the Spiritual Formation of the Congregations,” *Common Ground Journal* 7, no. 1 (Fall 2009): 27.

<sup>140</sup> Thomas Merton, *Contemplation in a World of Action* (Garden City, NY: Image Books. 1965), 179.

of us have to bring to leadership is not our preaching, our education, our strategic thinking, or our pastoral skills. The best thing any pastor and church leader have to bring to leadership is our own transforming selves!”<sup>141</sup>

Unfortunately, it is all too easy for believers to rub shoulders and fail to enter into deep communion with God together. Perfunctory prayers to introduce meetings or official prayers by pastors do not constitute a corporate culture in which people keep up on each other’s spiritual needs and practice joint prayer. “Wise church leaders will teach from the Word and give practical guidance in building the member’s relationship around prayer. A praying fellowship, in which there’s a strong commitment to love, patience, and confidentiality, is an environment where shared holiness thrives.”<sup>142</sup>

Everyone receives spiritual formation, just as everyone gets an education. The only question is whether spiritual formation is a good one or a bad one. Christians need to take a conscious, intentional hand in the development process of their spiritual lives. They need to understand what the formation of the spirit is, and how it can best be formed as Christ would have it done. “This is an indispensable aspect of developing a psychology that is adequate to human life.”<sup>143</sup>

The reason for the recent abrupt emergence of the terminology into religious life is a growing suspicion or realization that Christians have not done well with the reality. They have counted on preaching, teaching, and knowledge or information to form faith in the hearer, and counted on faith to form the inner life and outward behavior of the

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<sup>141</sup> Barton, 28.

<sup>142</sup> Peter Nelson, 125.

<sup>143</sup> Todd W. Hall and Mark R. McMinn, *Spiritual Formation, Counseling, and Psychotherapy* (New York: Nova Science Publishers, Inc., 2002), 3.

Christian. “But, for whatever reason, this strategy has not turned out well. The result is that multitudes of professing Christians who well, may be ready to die, but obviously are not ready to live, and can hardly get along with themselves, much less with others.”<sup>144</sup>

One of the basic issues today for spiritual transformation is perhaps the source for identity. In the past, identity was a relational given—the son of so-and-so. Increasingly, your culture has been about self-creating identity, largely because of the central importance given to professions. No doubt this trend of “self-making identity” will intensify. As Robert Mulholland succinctly puts it: “transformation in the spiritual life is the process of growth from a false identity as a pervasively self-reference being to a true identity of a pervasively God-reference being.”<sup>145</sup> Therefore, as culture becomes more “narcissistic” and individualistic with the Electronic Revolution, the focus on source of identity will intensify “narcissistically.”

The demographics of an aging population in the urbanized world are challenging believers with all new cultural issues. Lowering fertility rates, with advances in science to extend the lifespan, are doubling the growing rates from youth to aging seniors. Yet, living longer without growing spirituality for such longevity only intensifies the problem of the old today: feeling useless, marginalized, bored, lonely, and depressed. As pointed out in a book entitled *A Vision for the Aging Church*:

Our churches and seminaries are not prepared for this on-coming tsunami of a disproportionate, aging population. The quantity of individuals growing

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<sup>144</sup> Hall and McMinn, 3.

<sup>145</sup> M. Robert Mulholland Jr., “Spirituality and Transformation,” in *Dictionary of Christian Spirituality*, ed. Glen G. Scorgie, Simon Chan, Gordon T. Smith, and James D. Smith III (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2011), 221.

old as “seniors” far outstrips quantifiably “elders” who in the biblical sense are mature persons wholly motivated to the community. Since in our culture of achieving “functional identities,” many of our denominations do not recognize the biblical role of “the elder;” instead all they have are “deacons” who are doing things. This dysfunctional mind-set, in a youth culture afraid of aging, presents already a huge challenge to the soul care of whole people of God, old and young.<sup>146</sup>

The New Testament is not concerned with mere conversion, but rather with formation and transformation, with “life in Christ”, or “walking in Christ”, or “abiding in Christ”, or “walking in the Spirit.” These all describe what is done after one has chosen to follow Christ. The New Testament sees human souls as an ongoing and comprehensive battleground. Much work is left to be done on souls even after they are saved. Christian obedience is not merely behavioral obedience, but a loving obedience of heart, mind, and soul. In 1 Thessalonians 5:23, Paul instructs his believers that God sanctify them through and through and may their whole spirit, soul, and body be kept blameless.<sup>147</sup> Ebner explains this verse as:

When Paul uses the word sanctify he is implying a process of growth that will lead to holiness, not an event or state of being. In his use of spirit, soul, and body, he is not referring so much to distinct parts of a person as to the effect that this wholeness will have on those parts in relationship to one’s entire being. This is his way of saying that God must be involved in every aspect of our lives, not in just part of our lives.<sup>148</sup>

There is a depth and complexity to obedience in the New Testament that reflects a thicker understanding of salvation grounded in a thicker understanding of the human soul. Desires, attitudes, and affections are all objects of Christian formation. “This deeper and

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<sup>146</sup> James M. Houston and Michael Parker, *A Vision for the Aging Church* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2011), 138.

<sup>147</sup> 1 Thessalonians 5:23 [NIV].

<sup>148</sup> Ebner, location 195.

richer understanding of salvation has been an essential and welcome feature of the spiritual formation movement, and a helpful corrective to the rather thin notions of the soul and salvation that have characterized much of evangelicalism in the past decade.”<sup>149</sup>

A corrective to spiritual “cognitivism” has been a tendency to pursue a rather cognitive form of discipleship in the latter part of the twentieth century that has been especially prevalent in campus-based evangelical ministries. These influential movements have emphasized a version of Christian discipleship that calls people to believe, teaches disciples to study the Bible, and passes on “transferrable concepts.” They train students to present arguments for the reasonableness of the Christian faith, and highly value verbal defenses of the Gospel. Faith is expressed in spiritual law. Discipleship is done by curriculum, and spiritual growth by Scripture memorization. A strong cognitive thread runs throughout these various activities. It is the sort of discipleship that James K. A. Smith criticizes in his recent work, *Desiring the Kingdom*:

We could describe this as “bobble head” Christianity, so fixated on the cognitive that it assumes a picture of human beings that like bobble heads mammoth heads that dwarf an almost nonexistent body. In sum, because the church buys into a cognitivist anthropology, it adopts a stunted pedagogy that is fixated on the mind. Augustine, for example, believed the most important thing about people is not what they know, but what they love. The spiritual formation movement has constituted at least a partial turn toward a more affective and Augustinian view of spiritual growth. It seeks to inculcate not mere knowledge of God but also love of God.<sup>150</sup>

The spiritual formation movement has persistently argued for the value of silence, solitude, contemplation, meditation, and prayer. It suggests that disciplines of abstinence are essential to a healthy spiritual life. It also resisted the “unbridled” consumerism that

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<sup>149</sup> Rick Langer, “Points of Unease with the Spiritual Formation Movement,” *Journal of Spiritual Formation & Soul Care* 5, no. 2 (2012): 184.

<sup>150</sup> James K. A. Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2009), 42.

has been characteristic of American culture for many decades. In pushing back against these tendencies of culture, it has consistently maintained that there is also an intrinsic value to spiritual disciplines. They are not merely to be practiced as a means to be productive at work or ministry or in one's family. Tending one's spiritual life is justified in terms of benefits received within the soul itself, not just because it might energize the disciple to further action:

The spiritual formation movement has been helpful in correcting, a near Gnostic spirituality affirming that things done with one's body will affect one's soul, and that what happens with one's soul will affect one's body. It has, for example, helped Christians recover spiritual disciplines like fasting that involves denial of the body for the sake of building up one's spirit. It has made us aware of the importance of place, of posture, of sound, and smell. It has been a helpful corrective to a tradition that seems to affirm that though one can do things with one's body to hard one's soul (prostitution, drug addiction, etc.) there is little or nothing that one can do with one's body to build up one's soul.<sup>151</sup>

It has become a commonplace of spiritual formation literature to strongly distinguish between knowing, being, and doing. This "rhetorical" strategy is deployed to confront the wearied "frenzy" of modern American life. It is sometimes expressed in "pithy" phrases about human "doings" rather than human "beings", and other times embedded in extended discussion such as the following quotations from Kenneth Boa:

The world tells us that what we achieve and accomplish determines who we are, but the Scriptures teach that who we are in Christ should be the basis for what we do.

The dynamics of growth are inside out rather than outside in.

The world defines who we are by what we do, but the Word centers on who we are in Christ and tells us to express that new identity in what we do.

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<sup>151</sup> Langer, 186.

Being and doing are interrelated, but the biblical order is critical: what we do should flow out of who we are, not the other way around. Otherwise our worth and identity are determined by achievements and accomplishments, and when we stop performing, we cease to be valuable.

The focus of the Christian life should not be deeds and actions but a relationship; it is centered not on a product but on a person.<sup>152</sup>

Throughout these quotations, there is a strong claim that the biblical order of things values being above doing. A similar rhetorical strategy is found written by Robert Mulholland:

We live in a culture that has reversed the biblical order of being and doing. Being and doing are integrally related, to be sure, but we have to have the order straight. Our doing flows out of our being. In spiritual formation, the problem with being conformed is that we have a strong tendency to think that if only we do the right things we will be the right kind of Christian, as though our doing would bring about our being.<sup>153</sup>

Boa clearly affirms that being and doing are interrelated, and Mulholland states they are integrally related. So it is clear that these authors agree that doing is unimportant. Both affirm that being and doing are both positively valued. Doing is the focus of the world; being is the focus of the Word. The inside comes first, the outside comes second. The world starts with doing, and the Gospel starts with being. Taken together, these quotations seem to constitute a very deep and hierarchical division between being and doing. It is easy to schedule something that you “do”, but difficult to schedule “being”—it has no obvious place on your calendar.

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<sup>152</sup> Kenneth Boa, *Conformed to His Image: Biblical and Practical Approaches to Spiritual Formation* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2001), 255.

<sup>153</sup> M. Robert Mulholland, Jr. *Invitation to a Journey: A Road Map for Spiritual Formation*, 30.

Being is the primary concern of formation since it is from being that action flows. “The specific functions of ministry derive from growth in virtue. The authenticity of ethical actions is a consequence of Christian nurture.”<sup>154</sup>

“Humanity and Christianity are in need of a foundational theory for ongoing, in-depth spiritual formation. A factor that must be considered in the process of crafting Christian formation anthropology is the working of grace.”<sup>155</sup> From a Christian perspective, the foundational transformation of human life by grace does not represent destruction but rather a healing and elevation of its created, distinctively human foundations. This transformation enables women and men to attain not only growth in their Christian faith but also their full potential as persons. “The necessity of revelation (or divine information) should never be underestimated for a fuller understanding of human formation, nor ought the necessity of grace be mitigated for the attainment of as perfect as human form of like as possible.”<sup>156</sup>

Due to what tradition identifies as the “Fall of Man”, human understanding has been veiled and obscured; by the same token the power of formation has been rendered vulnerable and weak. It would be impossible to attain the ideal form to which individuals are called by creation without the grace of redeeming Christian formation, either implicitly or explicitly. A fuller understanding of the anthropology of human formation requires a subtle or overt reference to Christian revelation.

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<sup>154</sup> Leonard, 61.

<sup>155</sup> Susan Muto, “The Unfolding Project: Science, Anthropology, and the Theology of Human and Christian Formation,” *Journal of Spiritual Formation & Soul Care* 4, no. 1 (2011): 93.

<sup>156</sup> *Ibid.*, 94.

Spiritual formation in Christ is oriented toward explicit obedience to Christ. The language of the Great Commission, in Matthew 28, makes it clear that the aim, the job description as Christ's people, is to bring disciples to the point of obedience to "all things whatsoever I have commanded you." This assumes that Christ's people are in obedience, having learned how to obey Christ. Though the inner dynamics are those of love for Christ, he left no doubt that the result would be the keeping of his commandments. "Those who have my commandments and keep them, they are the ones who love me. And they who love me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love them, and will manifest myself to them."<sup>157</sup> Hall and McGinn state:

I know of no current denomination or local congregation that has a concrete plan and practice for teaching people to do "all things whatsoever I have commanded you." Very few even regard this as something we should actually try to do, and many think it to be simply impossible. That is why it is hard to identify a specifically "Christian" version of spiritual formation among Christians and their institutions. As we depart from the mark set by the Great Commission, we increasingly find it harder to differentiate ourselves in life from those who are non-or even anti-Christians.<sup>158</sup>

### **Spiritual Formation in Sports**

Spiritual formation can come in all forms, activities, individuals, and surprisingly for some, in sports. The form used is not important. The important strategy is that lives are spiritually changed to the likeness of Christ. The view of spiritual formation has to be broadened; think out of the box. Some followers of Christ claim that sports are pointless activities and even spiritually dangerous, given some of the values that are present within them. Other Christians look more favorably upon the value of sports. Sports can be a means of honoring God. There is value in developing the athletic potential given

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<sup>157</sup> John 14:21 [NIV].

<sup>158</sup> Hall and McGinn, 5.

by him. The Bible utilizes the imagery of sports. In many Scriptures, it refers to runners and racing. For instance, Acts 20:24, “However, I consider my life worth nothing to me, my only aim is to finish the race and complete the task the Lord Jesus has given me—the task of testifying to the good news of God’s grace.”<sup>159</sup>

Historically, some Christians have had a negative view of the body and of sports. A negative view of sports can also be grounded in a desire to be distinct from the pagan religions that are historically connected with some sports. Over the past hundred years, the connection between sports and Christianity in the United States has grown stronger in a variety of ways. Churches and Christian organizations use sports to attract new members and as a means of outreach and evangelism. Christian athletes employ their faith as a way to reduce the pressure they feel, enhance their relationship with teammates (though this can and sometimes does have the opposite effect), and for moral guidance.

One consideration in favor of the view that sports possess value from a Christian perspective is the notion that God’s image can be reflected through sports. A crucial insight that Wayne Grudem offers, in his *Systematic Theology*, about God’s nature from his examination of this doctrine is that as a Trinity, God has both unity and a diversity within himself. Particularly relevant is Grudem’s application of this facet of God’s nature to our daily lives. He notes that unity and diversity are present in and reflected by a variety of human relationships. Marriage is one key example of this. The church is another. Sports create a need for self-discipline. In 1 Corinthians 9:25, Paul states “Do you know that in a race all runners run, but only one gets the prize? Run in such a way as to get the prize.”

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<sup>159</sup>Acts 20:24 [NIV].

Consider still other examples offered by Grudem:

On a more everyday level, there are many activities that we carry out as human beings (in the labor force, in social organizations, in musical performances, and in athletic teams, for example) in which many distinct individuals contribute to a unity of purpose or activity, allowing us both unity and diversity. We can see a faint reflection of the glory of God in his Trinitarian existence.<sup>160</sup>

Many individuals and teams are more accurately characterized as exemplifying selfishness, discord, violence, and greed. Unfortunately, so are many marriages, companies, and churches. There is no reason to abandon these institutions. “Rather it gives one reason to pursue their redemption. The same holds for sports. Sports have some value, from a Christian point of view, insofar as they are ways humans can reflect God’s nature in their relationships and other common activities and goals.”<sup>161</sup>

There is also a straightforward biblical argument that sports have value within a Christian worldview. In 1 Timothy 4, Paul offers a set of instructions to Timothy regarding how he should carry out his duties as a minister of Christ. After exhorting Timothy to train himself to be a godly person, in 1 Timothy 4:8 Paul says that “... physical training is of some value, but godliness has value for all things, holding promise for both the present life and the life to come.”<sup>162</sup> Given that sports are one form of physical training, and one the Paul was familiar with, sports possess some value. Of course, their value is comparatively overshadowed by the value of godliness. Sports can have instrumental value for the followers of Christ.

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<sup>160</sup> Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994), 257.

<sup>161</sup> Grudem, 68.

<sup>162</sup> 1 Timothy 4:8 [NIV].

How can sports be conducive to spiritual formation? Individual and team sports can provide a context that is quite suitable for practicing the classical spiritual disciplines, such as solitude, prayer, and meditation on passages of Scripture. By practicing these disciplines as one runs, bikes, or swims, the follower of Christ can detach from one's other concerns for a time and be alone with God, attentive to him and in his presence.

Initially, it might seem that sports are not conducive to Christian spiritual formation. The type of spiritual formation that actually occurs in sports can be quite negative, and this might give cause to think of sports as practices that cannot make one more like Christ. The spirit of an individual may be formed in a way that fosters sin. But this is similar to other common human activities such as marriage, business, and church. Spirits may be formed in ways that make disciples less like Christ, and so one must be alert to this danger in all of these activities.

The moral and spiritual impacts of participation in sports are dependent upon the beliefs, attitudes, intentions, and character of the participant. When athletes adopt a proper approach, sports can help further the process of spiritual formation:

Christian spiritual discipline is a repeated bodily practice, done in dependence on the Holy Spirit and under the direction of Jesus and other wise teachers in His way, to enable us to get good at certain things in life that we cannot learn to do by direct effort. The intent is that by engaging God via such disciplines, Christian spiritual formation occurs. The individual's character becomes more like the character of Christ.<sup>163</sup>

One reason that sports can be spiritually formative practices has to do with some of the positive values that are embedded within the structure of their traditions. In order to clarify this point, consider that sports can be thought of as practices, in Alasdair

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<sup>163</sup> Mike W. Austin, "Sports as Exercises in Spiritual Formation," *Journal of Spiritual Formation & Soul Care* 3, no. 1 (2010): 71.

MacIntyre's sense of the term. According to MacIntyre, a practice is

any coherent and complex form of socially established cooperative human activity through which goods internal to that form of activity are realized in the course of trying to achieve those standards of excellence which are appropriate to, and partially definitive of, that form of activity, with the results that human powers to achieve excellence, and human conceptions of the good and ends involved, are systemically extended.<sup>164</sup>

When a person decides to participate in an established practice, one at least tacitly agrees to be governed by the standards of excellence and traditions within that practice, even as those practices sometimes undergo change. As philosophers of sport, Mike McNamee and Carwyn Jones note, many influenced by MacIntyre think of sports as practices, and hold that in developing skills such as speed, strength, and tactical imagination:

the cultivation of certain virtues, such as trust, courage, and fairness, is paradoxically both a necessary condition and a consequence of proper engagement. In such an account one can think of sports in terms of a human, or moral, or character laboratory ... where one tests oneself and one's competitors in order to find one's limitations in pursuit of the ends of the game.<sup>165</sup>

The important point at present is that many sports possess and demand standards of excellence that include moral values and virtues, such as sportsmanship, courage, "magnanimity", and fairness. In many sports, the standards of excellence in operation include not only the physical and athletic skills relevant to the sport, but also moral and spiritual virtues. This can also foster humility in the athlete, who must submit oneself to these standards if one wishes to excel or simply participate in the chosen sport.

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<sup>164</sup> Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1984), 187.

<sup>165</sup> Carwyn Jones and Mike McNamee, "Moral Development and Sport: Character and Cognitive Developmentalism Contrasted," in *Sports Ethics*, ed. Jan Boxill (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2003), 42.

Given both the values embedded in sports and the opportunities sports can provide for moral and spiritual growth, it is clear that sports can serve as a form of behavior therapy. Spiegel explains this process:

This form of therapy is a practice that used to be popular among Christians. For example, in order to develop patience, a person might inflict themselves with an annoying tedious task, such as scattering 50 coins on the floor and then slowly picking them up and stacking them in a pile. While such an activity is in a certain sense pointless, in another sense it is not. The tedious nature of this type of activity helps one practice and therefore develop a virtue of patience.<sup>166</sup>

Sports can serve a similar function. Rather than being annoying and tedious, they can be enjoyable and invigorating. Sports become spiritual disciplines in which to practice and develop virtue. “For example, an athlete has numerous opportunities to develop a variety of forms of courage. There are opportunities for physical courage, to be sure, but of particular relevance for Christians is a different sort of courage which includes an indifference regarding what others think.”<sup>167</sup> Sports provide a context in which an athlete risks failing before others and can learn to deal with this in constructive ways. By repeatedly taking the risk, one can develop a form of courage which then will potentially smooth the way for courage in other contexts. A Christian may become willing to risk rejection or be mocked by others for staying true to ones convictions through his words and actions if one has developed a similar sort of courage via sports. For individuals who struggle with having to be in control of how they appear to others, or who struggle with seeking to please other people, sports provide a way to practice

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<sup>166</sup> James Spiegel, *How to be Good in a World Gone Bad* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2004), 49.

<sup>167</sup> Austin, 72.

courage that can undermine such fears and struggles. “Additionally, it is often the case that growth in one virtue includes growth in one or more other virtues as well.”<sup>168</sup>

Sports can also provide numerous opportunities to practice self-denial. In the context of team sports, a player may take a secondary or supporting role that facilitates others scoring the points and getting the majority of the attention from fans or coaches, which is a key component to develop a team versus individual focus.

A trait that is often connected to self-denial is the virtue of perseverance. James 1:2-4 instructs as follows: “Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance. At anything.”<sup>169</sup> Sports provide an excellent context for developing perseverance. For athletes at the elite level, success in part depends on years of dedicated training and sacrifice. Non-elite athletes can develop perseverance as they work towards more modest goals.

Interestingly, sports can also be a means for the development of intellectual virtues related to critical thinking and practical wisdom, which are also aspects of spiritual formation in Christ. In William Morgan’s book *Why Sports Morally Matter*, he argues that one reason sport deserves to be taken seriously is that through arguing about sports, many people first learn to generalize, form arguments, and respond to counter-arguments. Morgan explains:

These are important intellectual skills, and are useful to the follower of Christ who seeks to build and advance the kingdom of God. Most sports have important components related to tactics, training, and decision making during the competition. They provide the follower of Christ with the chance to develop the mind. One way for the Christian to make moral value and

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<sup>168</sup> Austin, 73.

<sup>169</sup> James 1:2-4 [NIV].

significance of sports more seriously is to put them to work for the purpose of spiritual formation.<sup>170</sup>

In using practices such as sports as vehicles for spiritual formation, one may fall into what John Coe called the temptation of moral foundation. “Athletes give in to this temptation when they seek growth in their own power, independent of the empowering and life-changing work of the Holy Spirit. Spiritual disciplines should be used as a means of opening athletes up to God and his transformative power.”<sup>171</sup>

Disciplines such as prayer, fasting, and meditation are all means of abiding in Christ and opening hearts to be changed by him, rather than activities by personal own power. A key practical point is that one’s approach to these activities must include dependence upon the Holy Spirit as one co-laborer with God to become more Christlike.

“Literature suggests that there are three broadly held views about the relationship between participation in sports and moral development: positive view, neutral view, and negative view.”<sup>172</sup> The positive view is the belief that there is a clear connection between the playing of team sports and the development of social and moral values. This belief, “which emanated from the English public schools of the nineteenth century”, gave birth to two theories. The first theory was that participation in sport was educationally useful in that it led to desirable social and moral outcomes. In particular, it was thought to lead to an ability to cooperate with others on a basis of understanding and mutual respect, as well as, an ability to strive to the utmost in a cause without recourse to personal bitterness or vindictive meanness. It was thought that such qualities as generosity, magnanimity,

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<sup>170</sup> William Morgan, *Why Sports Morally Matter* (New York: Routledge, 2006), 208.

<sup>171</sup> Joe Coe, “Resisting the Temptation of Moral Formation: Opening to Spiritual Formation in the Cross and the Spirit,” *Journal of Spiritual Formation and Soul Care* 1 (2008): 54-78.

<sup>172</sup> Peter J. Arnold, “Sport and Moral Education,” *Journal of Moral Education* 23, no.1 (1994): 75.

courage, and steadfastness could be cultivated and developed in sport. The second theory was that such training could not only be provided for on the playing fields but that its effects were transferable into the world at large and could be called upon if necessary in battle or service.

The neutral view arises from the conceptual “cum classificatory” position that sport is a form of play and that because of its self-contained and separate nature, is discontinuous with the business of life and is therefore, when compared to life’s concern, morally unimportant. What goes on in sport, in other words, morally speaking, is relatively inconsequential. It is essentially non-serious rather than serious.

The negative view is one that largely arises from the findings of empirical studies, which are often based upon professional or high-level competitive sport where winning is deemed of crucial importance. Studies point to the fact that not only does cheating and foul play occur, but that to be successful one must possess such traits as dominance, assertiveness, and non-sociability. It would seem that the qualities often associated with sportspersonship, such as generosity and magnanimity, are more likely to be disregarded by high-level participants than by low-level ones.

Immanuel Kant’s view on the relationship between education and the formation of character is important to sport in at least three respects:

First, it is seen as a moral view based upon reasoned and universalistic principles. Second, it emphasizes the giving of respect to others as well as having respect for oneself. Third, it draws attention to the fact that the development of character is not a passive process but an autonomously active and purposeful one having to do with self-formation.<sup>173</sup>

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<sup>173</sup> Immanuel Kant, *Education*, ed. Jan Burwell (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1960), 4.

Sport can be good, clean, and fun. One underappreciated aspect of sports is the genuine potential as both a context and means of Christian spiritual formation. Sports can challenge the convictions and character of the follower of Christ, and Christians must be cognizant of this fact. If the involvement of the Christian athlete in sport is in some sense an extension of her life and identity, if it expresses who the athlete is in Christ as God has made the athlete to be, then that sport is not only a means and context for spiritual formation. It is also a unique way to glorify the God who made the athlete not merely a spiritual creature, but physical as well.

FBC has a few athletic teams in the church. Are these teams being used to grow an athlete spiritually? Is this an avenue that could be examined to help this congregation grow spiritually?

### **Spiritual Journey**

Time is the earthly playing field on which the church competes for spiritual growth. “The passing of time brings to light dim and hidden corners of our souls that need to be cleaned out and given over to the lordship of Christ. In Robert Boyd Munger’s booklet, *My Heart—Christ’s Home*, he envisions the life of spiritual formation as the process which Jesus Christ progressively takes over in every room of the house—the house of one’s heart.”<sup>174</sup> Munger wants the reader to feel the tension when all the major rooms of the house have come under the oversight of Christ, but one obscure closet remains a holdout for sin.

In Philippians 3:8-10, Paul talks about his present longing and knowledge of Christ that isn’t just something acquired at conversion. It is his present and ongoing

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<sup>174</sup> Ellis Nelson, 86.

passion to “gain Christ”, “be found” in Christ, and “know” Christ. Such fervor, however, is often lacking in the visible church today. A. W. Tozer laments the spiritual immaturity of believers who do not pursue God. Being born again is not an end but a beginning:

for now begins the glorious pursuit, the heart’s happy exploration of the infinite riches of the Godhead. To have found God and still to pursue Him is the soul’s paradox of love. Hanging everything in the Christian life on the initial act of accepting Christ and then craving no further revelation of God to our souls is based on a false logic which insist that if we have found Him we need no more to seek Him.<sup>175</sup>

If one returns to the idea of spiritual formation as a journey, yet another paradox surfaces when people assume the path of progress should be relatively straight with gentle but steady incline. Maturation commonly follows a twisting road with sharp turns and unanticipated switchbacks along the way. If there were a graph to track growth in holiness, it would show various dips and spikes over time. But that line should have at least a generally upward trajectory, suggesting some greater insight and godliness for believers with the passing of life’s seasons.

Numerous Christians through the ages have encountered that on the spiritual journey, that “the more you mature in Christ, the more you become more aware of your lingering immaturity and indwelling sin. In other words, an effect of meaningful progress in holiness is becoming aware, possibly brutally aware, of sin’s pervasive presence in one’s own heart and lifestyle—hideous impulses and attitudes that previously had gone unnoticed.”<sup>176</sup>

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<sup>175</sup> A. W. Tozer, *Pursuit of God* (Harrisburg, PA: Christian Publication, Inc., 1948), 14-16.

<sup>176</sup> Peter Nelson, 97.

Gerald May says it this way:

To guide us toward the love that one most desires, one must be taken where one could not and would not go on their own. And lest we sabotage the journey, we must not know where one is going. Way beneath one's senses, God is instilling another, better love and deeper, more urgent longings that empower one's willingness for all the necessary relinquishments along the way.<sup>177</sup>

Many believers recognize that progress in sanctification is not simple or straightforward. Expectations of neat and tidy stair-step advancement have to be challenged. When following Jesus, the way up is down, loss is gain, and death is the doorway to life. In Jesus' upside-down plan of spiritual formation; the last shall be first.

As the true child of God battles against sin and seeks the Lord's help to grow stronger in faith and obedience, there must and will be signs of life transformation. When real faith exists in the human heart, it leads to changed living. "The absence of change and the absence of growth and battling and laboring and running to win the prize are signs of the absence of Christ in a person's life."<sup>178</sup>

May writes that the goal of transformation consists of three precious gifts for the human soul:

First, the soul's deepest desire is satisfied. Freed from the idolatries of their attachments, individuals are able to be completely in love with God and to love their neighbors as themselves. Second, the delusion of separation from God and creation is dispelled; slowly one consciously realizes and enjoys the essential union that has always been present. Third, the freedom of love and realization of union leads to active participation in God. Here one not only recognizes one's own beauty and precious nature, but also shares God's love and compassion for others in real, practical service in the world.<sup>179</sup>

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<sup>177</sup> Gerald G. May. *The Dark Night of the Soul* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 2004), 73.

<sup>178</sup> Tozer, 101.

<sup>179</sup> Gerald G. May, *The Dark Night of the Soul*, 74.

It remains true that when believers draw nearer to Christ, in the light of his glorious presence, their sin becomes increasingly visible and detestable to them. A traditional graph that plots sanctification over time does not bring this out. Even if the general upward trajectory of the line is marked with occasional dips and setbacks, this way of charting spiritual growth cannot reveal the soul dynamic that makes progress feel like its opposite.

Jerry Bridges offers an alternative portrayal. This depiction suggests that while “believers may advance in the practice of holiness, their knowledge of the perfect holiness to which they are called increases at a faster rate, so there is an ever-widening gap between the two.”<sup>180</sup>

The topic of power is often avoided in relational conversation because of a common understanding that power is negative, abusive, hierarchical, and imposed. A quick glance at a thesaurus offers the following alternatives for the word, “power”:<sup>181</sup> authority, control, influence, supremacy, rule, command, clout, muscle, sway, dominance. These words indicate the typical images that come to mind when we hear the word power. However, power is neutral, neither negative nor positive. Power becomes good or bad in the way it is used, abused, received, and perceived.

The way one looks at their personal power can affect his transformation and the transformation of their church. Janet O. Hagberg suggests that six stages of power characterize individuals and organizations, moving from a feeling of powerless to a feeling of empowerment. Stage One is a feeling of powerless:

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<sup>180</sup> Jerry Bridges, *The Transforming Power of the Gospel* (Colorado Springs: Navpress, 2011), 77.

<sup>181</sup> *Roget's II The New Thesaurus* (New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1995), 117.

People feel trapped, angry, and unable to make things happen for themselves. They feel that things just keep piling up, and there is nothing they can do. They are, in a word, victims. They become dependent on others, and as a result they have low self-esteem. They are not actually trapped or helpless, but believing makes them so.<sup>182</sup>

In Stage Two people seek power by association, looking toward others who seem to have more experience, agency, and ability to cope. These people are seen as mentors, coaches, and teachers. “A number of female theological students have found a greater sense of agency in working with female supervisors, in seeing women in ministry leadership.”<sup>183</sup>

People in Stage Three seek power through symbols and achievement. For example, a student minister, a young man with little sense of power in his life, likes to wear a clerical shirt and collar because it offered him a symbol of identity as a minister that he did not feel within himself. He worked hard at his studies, and upon graduation and ordination he felt a great sense of power from his achievement. Symbols and achievements offer people an external status that they may not feel inwardly.

The movement from Stage Three to Stage Four is a movement from external to internal power. In this stage people are able to let go of a need to control, and personal ego is less at the forefront. Hagberg explains, “As they proceed through this stage, their sense of power emerges from the ability to touch others’ lives by modeling integrity and sound judgment.”<sup>184</sup>

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<sup>182</sup> Janet O. Hagberg, “Sharing Power as an Expression of Faith,” in *Faith in Leadership: How Leaders Live Out Their Faith in Their Work—and Why It Matters*, ed. Robert Baks and Kimberly Powell (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2000), 97.

<sup>183</sup> *Ibid.*, 78.

<sup>184</sup> *Ibid.*, 79.

As individuals moving toward Stage Five, people demonstrate a further relinquishment of ego by embracing both strengths and vulnerabilities, so that a sense of purpose greater than themselves motivates their service to others.

In the final Stage Six, people access power through wisdom. This is the stage at which individuals operate from a more grounded place of wisdom:

These people are simple yet complex, personally powerful yet apparently powerless. They fear nothing, and as a result they can act on principles that require deep courage. They are on the fringe and easily misunderstood, and yet they are highly respected by others. They are calm and peaceful inside, even when they are active or stressed.<sup>185</sup>

Stage Six is where pastors and church leaders need to move their congregations. Stage Six shows spiritual growth and progress toward Christlikeness.

In congregational life, many types of power are at work. See the power of God's Word, the power of the biblical story, and the power of religious symbols. Relational power begins with both personal and positional power. Cranton, from her wisdom and experience, observed that

personal power is based on expertise, friendship, loyalty, and charisma. It is partly based on the personal characteristics of the individual and partly on the relationship the individual develops with others. On the other hand, positional power is based on how people perceive a position of authority and on control over resources and rewards, control over punishment, control over information, and ecological or environmental control. All relationships are a blend of personal and positional power.<sup>186</sup>

Although churches are becoming more aware of abuse of power through physical, emotional, psychological, and sexual harm, most congregations have given little consideration to spiritual abuse. David Johnson and Jeff VanVonderen, in their work

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<sup>185</sup> Janet O. Hagberg, 79.

<sup>186</sup> Johnson, 73.

respectively as minister and therapist, have explored spiritual abuse as another element in our duty of care and lack of spiritual progress in the church. They define spiritual abuses as: “treatment of an individual that wounds or scars his or her capacity to be in relationship with God. When people are vulnerable, needing support or spiritual nurture, and a leader weakens, undermines, or decreases an individual’s spiritual agency, then abuse has occurred.”<sup>187</sup>

In defining spiritual abuse, Johnson and VanVonderen offer some distinctions. A spiritual leader is not abusive when making responsible leadership decisions using his or her best judgment and abiding by the polity of the denomination and the transparent policies of the congregation. Sometimes those decisions may be contrary to individual member’s opinions. Using a difference of opinion to devalue a person’s spirituality is abusive. Also, correcting a person’s behavior is not abusive if framed within the transparent polity of the denomination in a desire to heal and reconcile, as opposed to shame or discredit. Congregations are not perfect, and feelings get hurt. In a spiritually healthy environment, however, talking about problems, hurt feelings, and system abuse is permissible. Spiritual abuse occurs when individuals are made to feel spiritually lacking or outside God’s love and care because they question policies or point out problems.

Johnson and VanVonderen point out elements of abusive system:

1. Power posturing. A leader spends a great deal of time and energy focused on developing and maintaining his or her own power and authority.
2. Performance Preoccupation. Along with power posturing among leaders, a congregation is consumed by the performance of its members.

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<sup>187</sup> David Johnson and Jeff VanVonderen, *The Subtle Power of Spiritual Abuse: Recognizing and Escaping Spiritual Manipulation and False Spiritual Authority within the Church* (Minneapolis: Bethany House, 1991), 13-21.

3. Unspoken rules. Rather than setting transparency policies and making them available for all members to read and understand, spiritually abusive systems control people's lives through unspoken rules. Members do not know the rules until they are broken.
4. Lack of Balance. An unbalanced approach to living our faith is shown in two extremes: extreme objectivism and extreme subjectivism.
5. Paranoia. A paranoid system is a closed society in which a few enlightened leaders hold the secrets to the faith. Others outside the enclave will not understand, because they are not enlightened.
6. Misplaced loyalty. In a spiritually abusive system, disagreement with the leaders is seen not only as disloyalty but also as disobedience to God.
7. Secretiveness. Keeping confidence within clearly outlined guidelines and policies for the sake of community and vulnerable individuals is not the same as secret-keeping in which power is cloaked in secrecy and vulnerable individuals are put at risk when information concerning the health and welfare of a vulnerable individual is kept secret.<sup>188</sup>

Trust is not something that can be demanded or legislated. It is gained or lost on the basis of integrity and honesty. People who say what they mean and live consistently with their ideals are people you can trust, and more consistency is required of spiritual leadership as a demonstration of spiritual authenticity.

Attachment theory has been utilized as a framework for understanding relationships across the life span, beginning in infancy. Attachment styles have been utilized to predict and explain the way in which people tend to approach relationships: with fear or confidence, with skepticism or trust, with anxiety or comfort, with inconsistency or steadiness. As individuals approach human relationships with unique styles and attitudes, individuals also approach divine (God) relationships with unique styles.

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<sup>188</sup> Johnson and VanVonderen, 79.

As human beings created in the image of God, individuals are made for relationships. Johnson and Weber describe “the primary relationship humans are oriented to as image-bearers: our origin, nature, and purpose of existence are all intertwined with God. Human beings are divinely dependent beings”.<sup>189</sup> Hoekema suggests that “a human being’s relatedness to God is his or her primary relationship, all his or her life is to be lived *coram Deo*—as before the face of God.”<sup>190</sup> The central characteristic of the *imago Dei* is the human person’s inherent need for relationship with God. Mankind created in the image of God, is not created to be solely in relationship with God. Mankind is also created for relationship with others. Mary Stewart Van Leeuwen in her discussion of the *imago Dei* writes “We are so unshakably created for community that we cannot develop as a full person unless we grow up in nurturing contact with others.”<sup>191</sup> Being created in the image of God implies a built-in need for both relationship with God and relationship with others.

These two relationships, toward God and toward others, are avenues for the expression of the *imago Dei*. A third relationship, one’s relationship with him or herself, is not traditionally included in discussions of the *imago Dei*. Hoekema suggests, however, “that one’s relationship with self-underlies all the others, and makes possible a person’s proper relationship toward God and others. Through the redemptive work of Christ, one can see oneself not just as by nature, but as one by grace.”<sup>192</sup> Thomas Merton

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<sup>189</sup> A. F. Johnson and R. E. Weber, *What Christians Believe: A Biblical and Historical Summary* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1989), 190.

<sup>190</sup> A. A. Hoekema, *Created in God’s Image* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1986), 76.

<sup>191</sup> M. S. Van Leeuwen, *Gender and Grace: Love, Work, and Parenting in a Changing World* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1990), 49.

<sup>192</sup> Hoekema, 102.

writes, “I cannot discover God in myself and myself in Him unless I have the courage to face myself exactly as I am, with all my limitations, and to accept others as they are, with all their limitations.”<sup>193</sup>

It is not enough to know what people think about God; the way in which people experience God in relationship is much more important according to *imago Dei*. It is not enough to know how people relate to God alone; it is also essential to understand how people relate to and experience themselves and others. Only then will people understand the true picture of faith and be able to grow in the image and likeness of Jesus Christ who is the source and perfecter of our faith. This is part of the spiritual formation process.

Neil Anderson, after working as an aerospace engineer, served in ministry for twenty years and was formerly chairman of the Practical Theology at the Talbot School of Theology. He developed the Neil Anderson Approach to what he is calling “Freedom in Christ.” Anderson states:

It is my deep conviction that the finished word of Jesus Christ and the presence of God in our lives are the only means by which we can resolve our personal and spiritual conflicts. Positive mental health outcomes stem from a correct understanding of God and the reality of what it means to live “in Christ”. Living “in Christ” involves more than just correcting maladaptive beliefs about self and God. It involves the process of incorporating a new spiritual identity as a child of God.<sup>194</sup>

This process leads to knowing and embracing the presence of God in one’s heart and daily life and utilizing his presence as the primary source of empowerment to live a life that is obedience to Scripture.

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<sup>192</sup> Thomas Merton, *Contemplation in a World of Action* (Garden City, NY: Image Books, 1965), 195.

<sup>193</sup> Neil Anderson, *The Steps to Freedom in Christ* (New York: Gospel Light, 1996), 1 & 35.

The steps to "Freedom in Christ" focus on seven conscious decisions that serve as important starting points for reducing spiritual and emotional stress. "Freedom in Christ" also enhances the spiritual formation process of the individual or helps to eliminate those things that hinder spiritual formation. As described in the following process:

Step 1: Counterfeit versus Real involves an inventory in which one confesses and renounces any other religions outside the historical Christian faith traditions or any demonic access.

Step 2: Deception versus Truth recognizes and exposes any lies of self-deception and self-defenses. Self-deception involves denying personal sin and hearing God's Word but not doing it. Self-defenses occur when one defends him or herself instead of trusting God.

Step 3: Bitterness versus Forgiveness invites the Holy Spirit to reveal the names of any individual, including oneself, that need to be forgiven. The Christian can then make a conscious choice in faith to forgive and release the hurt to God.

Step 4: Rebellion versus Submission acknowledges that rebellion is an offense to God. Believers are encouraged to confess and repent all past or present acts of rebellion to God. Believers are then invited to make a declaration of submission to the Lord and to His Word.

Step 5: Pride versus Humility encourages Christians to examine personal areas of pride. As independence from God is renounced, a desire for humility and full dependence on God is proclaimed. Poor self-esteem and humility are differentiated by defining humility "confidence properly placed" in God rather than in man or in the world.

Step 6: Bondage versus Freedom focuses on addressing areas of habitual sin and addictions. These behaviors are confronted and disempowered through confession and prayer of repentance asking God to orchestrate the action needed to break dysfunctional patterns and receive God's healing.

Step 7: Acquiescence versus Renunciation involves breaking and renouncing what are regarded as generational curses and family sin patterns seen throughout the generation. This step includes a formal declaration and rejection of all ancestral iniquities.<sup>195</sup>

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<sup>195</sup> Anderson, 164-166.

God's priority in spirituality has several implications. It encourages believers to continue down paths, even when the going is arduous. God's priority also enables. At times people desire to follow God but do not know how. God will empower and enable people in the midst of these and other problems. It also guides them. There is a direction in the spiritual journey. It is not just a walk with God, it is a path that leads somewhere. The destination is no other than Jesus Christ, the human face of God. Dale Moody points out "that our movement should be from the image of God in creation, in which all begin, to the image of God in Christ, in which all are invited to end."<sup>196</sup> God's priority also cautions. A human tendency is to run ahead of God's guidance. If one's spirituality is dependent on God's initiative, one must wait on God and learn to trust in God and resist human craving for certainty.

Spirituality exists in the midst of influences, but influences do not determine its course; they do not control its energy. Responding to the initiative of God inevitably leads to transformation. The presence of God in the Christian's life leads to new horizons, new habits, and new responses. It means Christians become more like Christ, a continuing process.

The transformation occurs within individuals, but it extends into corporate dimensions as well. For example, "a part of being spiritual is being political. The life of faith brings people into community, and people live in community with public virtues, not merely personal ones."<sup>197</sup> The transforming character of Christian spirituality brings

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<sup>196</sup> Dale Moody, *The Word of Truth: A Summary of Christian Doctrine Based on Biblical Revelation* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1981), 226.

<sup>197</sup> Leonard, 28.

together what has all too often been torn asunder: inner contemplation and outward action.

Spiritual formation has to do with giving form to a discipline process. It provides a perspective by which Christians grasp and stabilize that which shapes one's experiences. This form giving influences what one sees and the meaning one draws from his perspectives. The environment leads an individual to see, feel, and believe certain things. "It powerfully influences certain patterns of the behavior. Briefly, the environment consists of those conditions that promote and stimulate or hinder and inhibit the characteristic activities of a living being."<sup>198</sup>

Form giving has to do with the assumptions individuals make about space. This learning space may be anywhere people meet together for spiritual formation. It influences the way individuals think, feel, and discover meaning. Architectural forms are allowed to restrict and determine boundaries of one's involvement. Leonard describes:

Fixed space becomes a way of predicting and controlling the activities of people. Unconsciously individuals let their surrounding define what they are going to do. But the setting is often unhelpful and detrimental to what one's purpose is. Formation is a very fluid process, whereas settings are often locked in place. Needs and settings hardly ever have a good fit, since the needs of the individual change faster than their settings".<sup>199</sup>

One might feel that there are more important things to be concerned with than the arrangement of space. But some issues in spiritual formation cannot be shaped unless this issue is settled. "Perhaps the confusion surrounding spiritual formation and direction is directly related to the assumptions made about space. A people in the process of spiritual

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<sup>198</sup> Leonard, 106.

<sup>199</sup> Ibid., 106.

formation are in motion. Strength is found in the performance of all people and validated itself in the process of building communities”.<sup>200</sup>

In too many instances, mainline churches and denominations have failed to actualize genuine liberation of the oppressed but have instead chosen the traditional mode called “religious freedom.” J. Deotis Roberts, James Cone, E. Franklin Frazier, and others are correct “when they assert that authentic spirituality involves an understanding of the church as that community of and for the abused, neglected, forgotten, rejected, and oppressed.”<sup>201</sup> The spirituality expressed in the minority church, especially the Black Church, has always been from the posture of vindication of “the poor over against the rich, the weak against the strong, the excluded against the included, and the rejected against the accepted.”<sup>202</sup>

Spirituality undoubtedly means a number of different things according to the culture and background of a particular individual. The way God’s Spirit interacts and intersects with the human spirit surely is a primary emphasis and focus. “Living in the spirit is an active disposition—a formation of faith and a practice of gratitude and remembers God and shares His presence with others.”<sup>203</sup>

Faith development plays an important part of spiritual formation. Estep and Kim feel spiritual growth is not the result of movement through a static series of stages in which the individual discards one perspective and progresses to another.<sup>204</sup> Growth

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<sup>200</sup> Leonard, 107.

<sup>201</sup> J. Deotis Roberts, *Roots of a Black Future: Family and Church* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1980), 39.

<sup>202</sup> Leonard, 173.

<sup>203</sup> Don E. Saliers, *Worship and Spirituality* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1984), 12.

<sup>204</sup> Estep and Kim, 194.

begins with and is driven by personal allegiance to God as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit coupled with assent to specific truths about God’s self-revelation in Jesus as revealed in Scripture. This two-sided coin of allegiance and assent is what the “Scholastics identified as *fides explicita*. The believer does not leave behind his or her initial faith in the process of sanctification. This faith remains a fixed and permanent core throughout faith development.”<sup>205</sup>

It is important to see the role played by this developmental theory in the process of spiritual formation. Ted Ward compared the process of spiritual formation to an ecological system of human development. He asserted that five empirical domains of human development—(a) physical, (b) intellectual, (c) emotional, (d) social, and (e) moral serve as “input and output functions to and from the spiritual core. Ecology refers to the interdependence of each component in the creation with respect to each other component. Each of these components is an interrelated system of development.”<sup>206</sup>

Ward uses the illustration of the human hand to identify the six dimensions that represents the human person. These six dimensions give humans some solid empirical information about the complex factors that form who humans are as complete persons. The thumb on the hand represents the physical dimension with particular attention to the human body with all that it entails. The index finger represents the emotional dimension or affect. The middle finger represents social dimension and the ability to communicate and interact with others in a variety of social settings assuming a variety of social roles. The ring finger represents the intellectual dimension or cognitive functions, that enable humans to think. The little finger represents the moral dimension where matters of

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<sup>205</sup> Estep and Kim, 195.

<sup>206</sup> Ted Ward, *Forward, Nurture That Is Christian* (Wheaton: Victor Books, 1995), 14.

morality and ethics are entertained and considered. The palm of the hand represents the spiritual dimension that is made alive through a personal encounter with Jesus Christ. However, it is potentially present in every human being as a consequence of having been created in the image of God. The New Testament teaches that this capacity, or creational human structure, is dead because of sin but is “quickenened” or made alive through faith in Christ.

A holistic approach to spiritual formation mirrors the whole measure of the fullness of Christ. In the New Testament, specific aspects of this wholeness are specified for purpose of analysis and emphasis. For instance, Paul calls upon the Christian community to “present your bodies as a living sacrifice”<sup>207</sup>. On another occasion, he calls upon the church to be “renewed in the spirit of your minds”.<sup>208</sup> Jesus reminds Christians of the summary of the Old Testament law: “Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength. The second is: Love your neighbor as yourself.”<sup>209</sup> This whole person commitment is not an atomized dissection of the various ways in which believers are to love God and neighbor. Effective spiritual formation requires the development of all aspects of the human person.

### **Summary**

Spiritual formation is a very important element in Christian living. Christian living is a 24/7 process. As believers in Jesus Christ, it is necessary to use all means, disciplines, and instructions to help move toward Christlike attitudes, behaviors, and

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<sup>207</sup> Romans 12:1 [NKJV].

<sup>208</sup> Ephesians 4:23 [NKJV].

<sup>209</sup> Mark 12:31 [NIV].

character. In order to move forward, believers must be obedient to the Word of God. Spiritual formation is a voluntary process. The Christian life is best lived and nurtured through the community of worship, fellowship, small groups and services.

Along this journey (process), there will be joys and successes as well as trials, struggles, and disappointments. During this journey, spiritual development and growth take place. One is able to take information learned about God and his kingdom and transfer this information from head to heart.

Spiritual formation effect three essential facets of the believer's life: spirit, soul, and body. Many church leaders choose to ignore the body, the physical. It is time for church leadership to start thinking out of the box and use every opportunity to move the congregation toward Christlikeness. One way to do this is through sports. Many churches recruit, have, or sponsor sport teams. There are some characteristics of Jesus Christ that can be nurtured or developed through sports such as: self-discipline, self-denial, teamwork, training, and perseverance. It is a way of developing moral and social standards. Sports are also a way of glorifying God our creator.

Mulholland summarizes spiritual formation with this quotation: "Life itself is a process of spiritual development. The only choice one has is whether that growth moves them toward wholeness in Christ or toward an increasingly dehumanized and destructive mode of being."<sup>210</sup> What is the church doing to help congregants make the right choice? Are congregants aware that they even have a choice? Do congregants realize that a choice is being made regardless of the actions one makes? The right choice is to be whole in Christ.

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<sup>210</sup> M. Robert Mulholland Jr., *Invitation to a Journey: A Road Map for Spiritual Formation*, 24.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND PROCEDURES

The attainment of data for this project will include both quantitative and qualitative methods. When developing quantitative studies, the decisions researchers make before collecting the data are the most important decisions. There is most often no remedy for poor data other than starting over and correcting mistakes.

According to Jerry Trusty, the researcher's first task is to define the area to be researched. There are two major parameters that require definition: "(1) what will be researched? and (2) who will be the target population? The "what" involves the variables to be studied and the "who" involves determining the parameters of the participants and population to be studied."<sup>211</sup> In this project, the "what" explores the question: Is there an effective spiritual formation process in place to move the congregation at FBC toward Christlikeness? The second parameter, "the who", denotes the target congregation as the adult membership of the Friendship Baptist Church. To connect the study to the larger knowledge base, researchers must first become intensely knowledgeable about the literature in the research area. The literature review will define the what and the who of the study.

Research problems are knowledge gaps that exist in the literature, and these gaps are identified through the literature review. Research problems often exist around

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<sup>211</sup> Jerry Trusty, "Quantitative Articles: Developing Studies for Publication in Counseling Journals," *Journal of Counseling & Development* 89 (Summer 2011): 261.

population subgroups. For example, a particular research finding might not hold true for both men and women, for various age groups, cultural groups, and so forth.

The next decision to be made is “whether a quantitative or qualitative (or perhaps a mixed-method) study is needed, and research problems are the driving force behind research methods.”<sup>212</sup> Generally, the more subjective the research problem, the more appropriate a qualitative method would be; inversely, the more objective the research problem, the more appropriate a quantitative method. If little is known about a research area or target population, it is likely that a qualitative study would be needed first.

The following definition, taken from Aliaga and Gunderson describes quantitative methods this way: “Quantitative research is explaining phenomena by collecting numerical data that are analyzed using mathematically based methods (in particular statistics).”<sup>213</sup> Looking at the definition above, “phenomena” is a key element of all research; quantitative or qualitative. Researchers are always looking to explain something. The specificity of quantitative research lies in the collecting of data. This is closely related to the final part of the definition; analysis using mathematically based methods. In order to be able to use mathematically based methods, the data has to be in numerical form. This is not the case for qualitative research.

Some data that does not naturally appear in quantitative form, however, can be collected in a quantitative way. The researcher can do this by designing research instruments aimed specifically at converting phenomena that do not naturally exist in quantitative form into quantitative data. This can be done by developing a questionnaire

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<sup>212</sup> D. Silverman and A. Marvasti, *Doing Qualitative Research: A Comprehensive Guide* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2008), 25.

<sup>213</sup> Martha Aliaga and Brenda Gunderson, *Interactive Statistics* (New York: Prentice Hall, 2000), 10.

that ask participants to rate a number of statements. For example this project poses the question, “How often do you study your Bible? almost never, once or twice a month, once or twice a week, 3-5 times a week, almost every day, and every day.”

The last part of the definition refers to the use of mathematically based methods, in particular, statistics to analyze data. This is what people usually think about when they think of quantitative research, and is often seen as the most important part of quantitative studies. Denzin states:

This is a bit of a misconception, as while using the right data analysis tools obviously matters a great deal, using the right research design and data collection instrument is actually more crucial. The use of statistics to analyze the data is, however, the element that puts a lot of people off doing quantitative research, as the mathematics underlying the methods seems complicated and frightening.<sup>214</sup>

Qualitative studies often identify critical phenomena and illuminate important research problems. Subsequently, quantitative studies might be used to support or disconfirm theoretical formulations resulting from qualitative studies. Creswell noted that “qualitative studies are more inductive in approach (researcher decisions arise from the data), whereas quantitative studies are more deductive (researcher decisions are based on theory or previous empirical findings), and the research design is set before data are collected.”<sup>215</sup>

Research questions, when stated clearly and explicitly, set the framework for the research design and for data analysis procedures. “It is important for researchers to be aware that the design of the study and the nature of the variables determine the statistics

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<sup>214</sup> Norman Denzin. “Introduction to Quantitative Research,” *American Journal of Evaluations*, (August 25, 2010). <http://www.sagepub.com> [accessed April 20, 2014].

<sup>215</sup> J. W. Creswell, *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design* (Thousands Oak, CA: Sage, 2007), 262.

to be used and that the statistics used does not determine the design of the study.”<sup>216</sup> The nature of the specified variables and the nature of the specified model are the major criteria that determine the statistical analysis model or method.

There are two schools of thought around the relative complexity of statistical models. Some researchers assert that the simplest possible analysis method should be used; others argue for the most complex and robust statistical model. If a more complex model offers no advantages, then the simpler model is best. If a simpler model produces more straightforward results than a more complex model, the advantage lies with the simpler model. More complex models, however, often offer particular advantages, including more statistical power, more flexibility and control over the analysis, and more appropriate analysis methods.

There are several methods for congregational study: direct observation, interviewing, questionnaires, and surveys. Focus for investigation should shape both the methods used and the forms these methods take. Scott Thumma states:

The first step of a congregational self-study is to define and clarify the precise problem to be addressed. One must decide what information is needed, why one wants it, who will undertake the study and how the gathered information will be used. Secondly, is to adopt the appropriate methods of investigation.<sup>217</sup>

A disciplined perspective is required to follow a discipline investigation, an ordered system of examination and exercises that can lead to insight and self-understanding. Following this disciplined approach entails “the adoption of a different perspective, in other words, reviewing the old situation with new lenses. A novel view of

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<sup>216</sup> Jerry Trusty, 263.

<sup>217</sup> Nancy T. Ammerman, Jackson W. Carroll, Carl S. Dudley, and William McKinney, *Studying Congregations* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1998), 197.

a familiar subject helps the observer become constructively reflective, critical, and analytical.”<sup>218</sup> Direct observation may be the most comfortable and readily embraced method.

One of the methods used in this study is the interviewing method. Choosing the people to be interviewed is a crucial task in congregational study. Every faith community has several members who are most vocal about their opinions but whose views may not accurately represent the entire group. Those chosen to be interviewed should adequately reflect the distinctive subgroups within a congregation. In this study, the pastor of FBC and part of leadership staff will be interviewed. Leaders to be interviewed are over primary ministries in the church such as: New Membership, Christian Education, Singles Ministry, Couples Ministry, Men’s Ministry, and Women’s Ministry.

When the focus is a needs assessment or problem analysis then most of the interview questions would specifically address that issue. In this study, the questions will pertain to the spiritual growth or lack of spiritual growth in the membership at FBC and if there is a process in place to move membership toward Christlikeness. The questions will be more specific and direct in order to obtain more precise and detailed answers.

Ammerman, Carroll, Dudley, and McKinney explain:

The format for asking questions of this sort often takes a structured form, with each question planned. Written in advance, and asked in exactly that form during each interview. These set questions may ask for a simple yes or no answer or a choice between predetermined options, or they may be open-ended, thus allowing for expansive and nuanced responses. The questions do not vary, however, once their form is established.<sup>219</sup>

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<sup>218</sup> Ammerman, Carroll, Dudley, and McKinney, 198.

<sup>219</sup> Ibid., 206.

Other options for interviewing are the scheduled-structured form and the semi-structured form. Scheduled structure is asking questions with a choice of a few fixed responses. Semi-structured is a combination of structured form and schedule-structured form.

The pastor's interview consist of seven (7) initial questions and the semi-structured form will be used. Follow-up questions will be prompted depending on the pastor's answers. This pastor has witnessed many changes in the congregation over the past twenty-nine years. The purpose of this interview is to see where the pastor stands on spiritual formation. It is believed that everything flows from the pastor down; from the pastor to his leadership and from the leadership to the congregation. Questions that will be asked of the pastor are as follows:

### **Qualitative - Pastor's Interview Questions**

Spiritual Formation – conformed to Christ-like characteristics for the sake of others.

1. What major changes have you seen in the congregation besides growth in membership since you have been pastor?
2. What is your perspective on spiritual formation?
3. Based on the above definition, rank how important spiritual formation is in the ministry of FBC? (Not at all, small degree, moderate degree, high degree, do not know)
4. Has the membership grown spiritually in the last ten years? If yes, in what ways?
5. Is there a process in place for helping members at FBC grow in spiritual formation? If yes, please describe the process.
6. Is there a process in place for training leadership in moving their ministries toward spiritual growth? If yes, please describe the process.
7. During the yearly leadership training is spiritual formation discussed? If so in what way?

Each individual question and the purpose each individual question will be discussed.

Question One – because of the pastor’s longevity with this congregation, it is important to get feedback from him from his viewpoint. What does he see? Question Two – It is necessary to know what the pastor’s view is on spiritual formation because he is the deciding factor as to what direction the church will go. Question Three – is asking the pastor to rank the importance of spiritual formation. The purpose is to see how high on the priority list spiritual formation lies with the pastor.

Question Four – FBC has grown in number of congregants but have they grown spiritually as well or in the same proportion. Question Five – the Statement of the Problem deals with whether or not an effective process is in place. This question is to get the pastor’s perspective and a description of the process if it exists. Question Six – is very similar to question five, except it is dealing with leadership instead of membership. The leaders are the ones in direct contact with the membership on a consistent basis. At least those members that are active in the individual ministries. Question Seven – in the past FBC has conducted a Leadership Training in January of each year. This question is looking for information as to the curriculum that is taught and whether spiritual formation is included. The interview will be taped and permission from the interviewee will be obtained prior to the interviewing process.

The second group, to be interviewed, is leaders (overseers) who have direct contact with the members in their perspective ministry. They represent a core group at FBC. This second group consists of three leaders. One of the overseers is responsible for (four) 4 ministries. These interviews will also be taped after receiving permission from the interviewee.

Each of the leaders interviewed will be asked to sign an Informed Consent Form (Appendix D). This form consists of the researcher's name, institution, address of institution, and e-mail address of researcher. The form states the purpose of the research and how the research will benefit the church. It informs the interviewee that he/she has freedom not to answer a question or the freedom to stop the interview at any time. The interviewee will sign the form acknowledging their voluntarily participation in the study and with understanding consents to participate in the study.

They will be asked the following seven (7) questions. The purpose of this Interview (part 1) is to get the opinion of the leadership who directly interact with the members. These leaders also have the authority to make vital decisions regarding the growth of their members.

### **Qualitative - Leadership Interview Questions**

1. How long have you been a member of FBC?
2. How long have you been Overseer or over \_\_\_\_\_?
3. What is your perspective (viewpoint) on spiritual formation at FBC?
4. Based on the definition I read to you defining spiritual formation, how important is spiritual formation in the ministry you oversee?  
(Not at all, small degree, moderate degree, high degree, high degree, do not know)
5. Do you feel you have been trained/prepared to move your ministry toward spiritual formation? If yes how?
6. Is spiritual formation a priority in your ministry? If yes or no why?
7. At any time in the ministry you oversee, is there a discussion or process in place to help your members mature in Christ? If yes how?

Question One – will allow the researcher to know if the interviewee has been at FBC long enough to evaluate the church's progress. Question Two – allows the researcher

to know if the leader has been in the position long enough to make any changes or to assess their ministry. Question Three – allows the interviewee to give their opinion on spiritual formation and helps to identify if there is a process in place at FBC.

Question Four – the interviewee will be able to rate spiritual formation in their perspective ministries. Question Five – will give information as to the training the leadership is receiving and if they feel prepared to move their individual ministry toward spiritual growth. Question Six – what does the leader think about spiritual formation? Question Seven – permits the leader to discuss any spiritual formation process that is currently in place.

The Leadership Interview (Part 2) consists of 5 (five) questions. The purpose of this interview was to get supporting information and/or clarity after reviewing the congregation survey responses. The same leaders interviewed in part 1 are interviewed in part 2. The questions, in part 2, are mostly questions from the Congregation Survey. The questions in part 2 were sent by e-mail to the interviewee so he/she would have time to think about the questions prior to the oral interview. They were instructed to write the answers to these questions out, send me a copy, and bring a copy to the interview. This interview will also be taped. The questions for part 2 are as follows: (1) What are some obstacles (in your opinion or experience) that hinder a person's spiritual growth that are missing from the original survey? (a list was given to them) (2) What does meditating (quiet time) with God look like to you? (3) What are some avenues that help the believer to grow spiritually? (4) What does significant growth in the area of spiritual growth look like to you as a leader? (5) How would you suggest that spiritual growth be measured or assessed?

### Quantitative - Congregation Survey

The third method of collecting data is a survey that will be sent electronically (by e-mail) to the adult population at FBC (the survey can be found in the Appendix C). This survey consists of two sections and a total of fifteen (15) questions.

The first section is entitled, “About You.” This section asks the participant personal questions such as age, education, years at FBC, gender, and leadership role, if any. The participant’s age is important because different generations think uniquely. The seventy-five years old participant and the twenty-five years old participant may have values and priorities that are different.

Higher educational levels cause one to become more analytical compared to members with limited education. The question related to the number of years the believer belonged to FBC will give the researcher some insight on the ability of the person to assess the church. For instance, if the participant has been a member for less than one year, they may not have an extensive knowledge base to determine if the church is moving toward spiritual growth.

There is a saying that “men are from Mars and women are from Venus.”<sup>220</sup> The reason is because men and women think differently and look at situations differently. This will give insight to the way both genders look at their spiritual growth and the way each answers the survey. Leaders examine situations from a leader’s prospective. The questions referring to position is part of the first section of the survey because the researcher wants to take into consideration the response of the leader to the spiritual growth section compared to the non-leader.

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<sup>220</sup> John Gray, *Men Are From Mars, Women Are From Venus* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers Inc., 1992), 1.

The second section deals with the participant's spiritual growth. The purpose of this section is to obtain information regarding spiritual disciplines practiced, attendance in activities that could enhance their spiritual growth that are available, and their opinion on what can be done differently at FBC to assist in their spiritual growth. There are fifteen (15) questions in this section.

This section of the survey begins with asking how often the participant attends two occurrences that are available to the membership on a weekly basis that could enhance their spiritual growth: Bible Study and Christian Education Hour. The options to answer these two questions range from 0-4 times monthly.

The researcher then ask the participant to rate their spiritual growth: not growing right now, some growth, or significant growth. One's perceptive of their individual growth will help them determine the need at FBC and aid in answering the next question. The next question asks if the participant is aware of spiritual growth opportunities available at FBC and what opportunities are available.

The survey moves to individual (personal) disciplines that every believer can participate on their own turf and in their own time. Two specific questions asked are regarding how often the participant studies their Bible and how often they spend quiet time (meditating) with God. Both questions provide the following six (6) options: (1) almost never, (2) once or twice a month, (3) once or twice a week, (4) 3-5 times a week, (5) almost every day, and (6) every day. These questions allow the participant to evaluate their daily discipline practices.

Many times the believer has good intentions of reading or studying their Bible as well as spending some quiet time with God, but distractions causes them to lose their

focus. The next question deals with obstacles that hinder one's spiritual growth such as: family responsibilities, job responsibilities, lack of prioritizing (time management), church structure, and a busy schedule.

The final question allows the participant to communicate what FBC can do differently to help the individual grow spiritually. The purpose of this study is to gather data that in the end will be helpful to the FBC leadership so changes can be constructed to help move this congregation toward spiritual growth.

When the participant clicks the submit button, the survey is sent directly to Survey Monkey. Survey Monkey will collect data and group data into categories. There is no way to trace the survey back to the participant. This will allow the participant to answer the questions in a confidential manner.

CHAPTER FIVE  
RESULTS AND ANALYSIS OF DATA

**Introduction**

The purpose of this chapter is to report the quantitative and qualitative findings of the data collected. A survey was electronically sent to the adult members of Friendship Baptist Church. It is through this e-mail system the church communicates with the congregation. A request was made, during service, for anyone whose e-mail address was not in the system to submit their e-mail address to the office. One hundred and sixty-one surveys were electronically sent. Eighty-six surveys were returned, resulting in a fifty-four (54%) percent return.

The pastor and three (3) key leaders were interviewed twice from a set of pre-determined questions, in order to solicit information regarding their knowledge in researching the problem statement: “Is there an effective Spiritual Formation process in place at FBC to move the members toward Christlikeness/maturity?” All interviews were recorded with permission from the interviewees.

**Spiritual Growth Survey**

The survey consists of fifteen (15) questions. It was completed anonymously. Question One on the survey requires the participant to identify his/her gender. Seventy-five percent (75%) of the participants who took the survey were female and twenty-five percent (25%) were male. The percent of female to male participants corresponds with

the percentage of female (80%) and male (20%) members of the church. Two participants skipped this question.

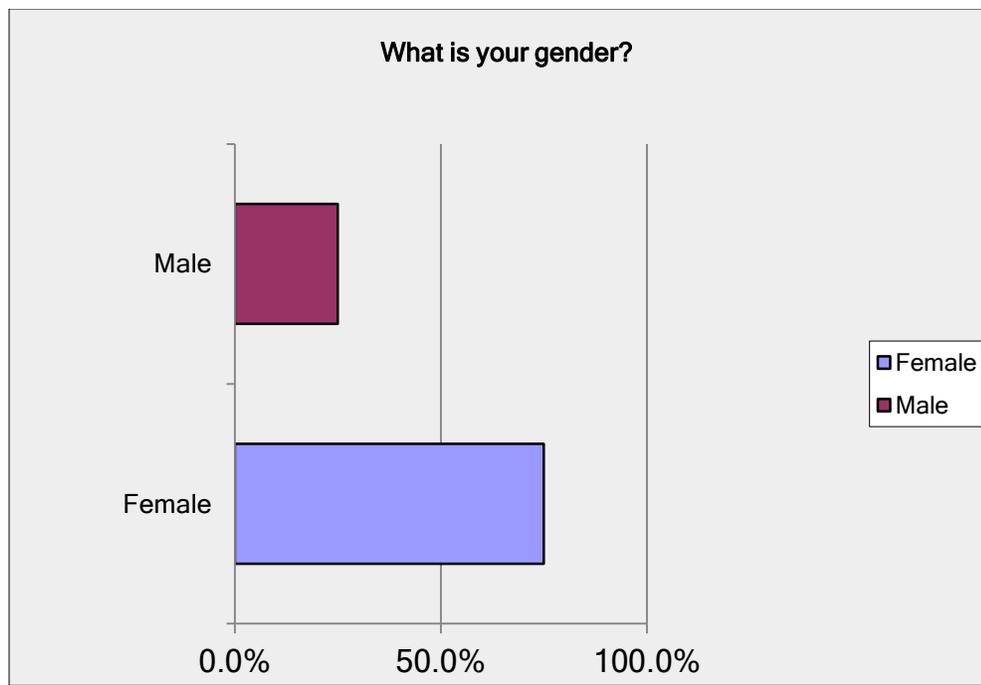


Table 5.1 –Responses to Question 1  
Source: Congregation Survey

Men are largely absent from the Christian churches of the Western world and often attend church activities because a wife, mother, or girlfriend has pressured them. “While men still run most churches, women outnumber them in the pew in Europe, in America, and in Australia.”<sup>221</sup> Not only do women join churches more often than men, they are more active and loyal. Of Americans in the mid-1990’s, George Barna writes that “Women are twice as likely to attend a church service during any given week. Women are also 50% more likely than men to say they are religious and to state they are absolutely committed to the Christian faith.”<sup>222</sup> Gallup poll confirmed the general pattern

<sup>221</sup>Leon Podles, “The Church Impotent,” *Crisis Magazine*, February, 1999.

<sup>222</sup> Barna Research Online, “Women are the Backbone of Christian Congregations in America,” <https://www.barna.org> [accessed June 1, 2014].

difference between men and women in all matters of religion. Men and women not only act differently, they feel differently when it comes to religion. Here are some facts from other surveys regarding male participation:

1. “The typical U.S. Congregation draws an adult crowd that’s 61% female and 39% male. This gender gap shows up in all age categories.”<sup>223</sup>
2. “More than 90% of American men believe in God, and five out of six called themselves Christians. Only one out of six attend church on a given Sunday. The average man accepts the reality of Jesus Christ, but fails to see any value in going to church.”<sup>224</sup>
3. “Fewer than 10% of U.S. churches are able to establish or maintain a vibrant men’s ministry, compared to the 110% of churches that offer women and children ministries.”<sup>225</sup>

Question Two deals with the age of the participants.

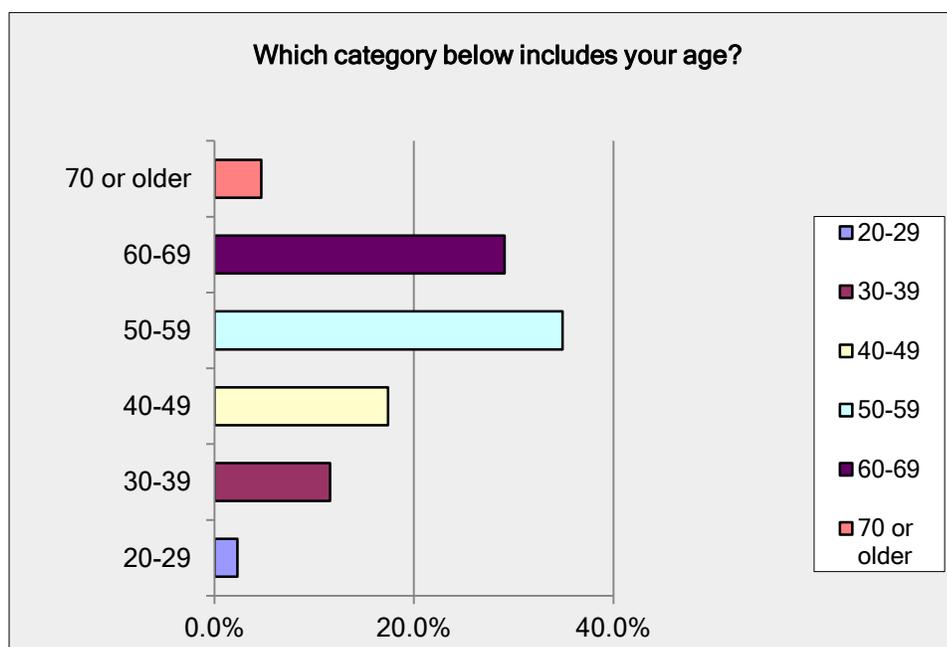


Table 5.2 –Responses to Question 2  
Source: Congregation Survey

<sup>223</sup> “U.S. Congregational Life Survey—Key Findings,” October 29, 2003, <http://www.uscongregations.org> [accessed May 31, 2014].

<sup>224</sup> Barna Research Online, <http://www.barna.org> [accessed June 1, 2014].

<sup>225</sup> Based on a show of hands at the National Coalition of Men’s Ministries meeting in 2005.

There are seven age categories on this survey: the largest percentage of participants answering the survey are in the 50-59 years old category with thirty-four (34.8%) percent. The next category with twenty-nine (29%) percent is the age group 60-69 years old. The age group of 40-49 years old had seventeen (17.4%) percent and the 30-39 age group had eleven (11.6%) percent. The lowest percentage fell in the youngest and oldest groups: 70 or older had four (4.6%) percent and 20-29 years old was the lowest with two (2.3%) percent. All of the participants answered this question.

Age is a determining factor of how important spiritual formation is to the Christian. Older adults in this culture have become more dedicated and committed to God. The oldest member of the church is 103 years old (as of 2014) and she attends Church every Sunday. She sits in the same seat every Sunday, directly behind the pastor with the Mother's Ministry. Americans age 18 to 29 are considerably less religious than older Americans. Fewer young adults belong to any particular faith than older people do today. They are less likely to be affiliated than their parents' and grandparents' generation were when they were young.

Young adulthood is a time when emerging adults question their religious beliefs and need for religious involvement. Kara Powell, executive director of Fuller Youth Institute states:

What students tend to do after they've graduated from high school is place important parts of themselves in an identity lock-box, and their faith is often part of that. The good news is that you put something in a lock-box when it's important to you. So there is some sense that students still value their faith at one level. But the problem is when your faith is in a lock-box, especially as a college student or emerging adult, you're making so many important decisions about worldview, and marriage, how you engage in risk behaviors, and vocation, and calling, and all those considerations are made while your faith is locked up in that lock-box. So there is some sort

of residual sense that students value the faith, but it's not influencing their day-to-day, or even major decisions.<sup>226</sup>

Consequently, young adults adjust their beliefs and on average become more skeptical of formal or institutional religion than older adults or adolescents. Changes in religious beliefs and participation are also influenced by young adults' self-perceptions and by how religion relates to their various life goals of success, growth, and achievement.

Students involved at Fuller Youth Institute tended to view the gospel as a list of dos and do-nots; a list of behaviors. When asked:

How would you define what it means to be a Christian? One out of three did not mention Jesus Christ in their answer. They mentioned behaviors. Young adults picked up a behaviorist view of the Gospel. That's problematic for a lot of reasons, but one of which is when students fail to live up to those behaviors, then they end up running from God and the Church when they need both the most.<sup>227</sup>

This happens when they settle down and begin to live more stable lives, such as when they get married, graduate from college, find a stable full-time job, and start having children. The following definition explains this unique generation:

Fully one-in-four members of the Millennial generation – so called because they were born after 1980 and began to come of age around the year 2000 – are unaffiliated with any particular faith. Indeed, Millennials are significantly more unaffiliated than members of Generation X were at a comparable point in their life cycle (20% in the late 1990s) and twice as unaffiliated as Baby Boomers were as young adults (13% in the late 1970's.)<sup>228</sup>

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<sup>226</sup> Kara Powell, "Why Young Adults Are Leaving The Church," *Relevant Magazine*, January 3, 2012.

<sup>227</sup> Ibid.

<sup>228</sup> Pew Research Center, "Religion in the Millennial Generation," February, 2010. <http://www.perforum.org> [accessed June 1, 2014].

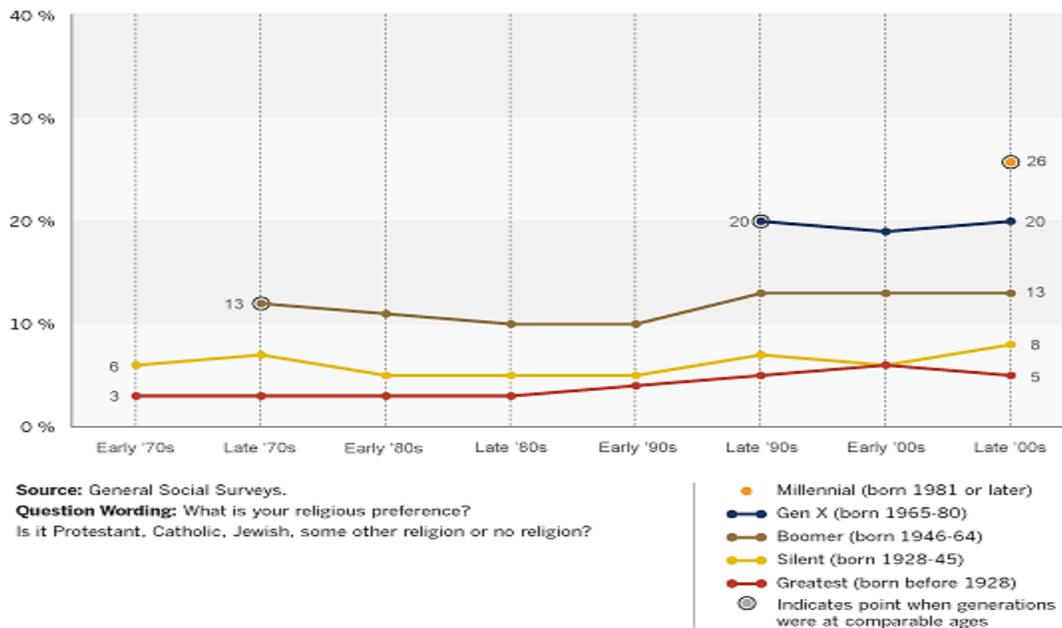
Young adults attend religious services less often than older Americans today; compared with their elders today, fewer young people say that religion is very important to them.

Yet in other ways, Millennials remain fairly traditional in their religious beliefs and practices. Pew Research Center surveys show, for instance

that young adults' beliefs about life after death and the existence of heaven, hell and miracles closely resemble the beliefs of older people today. Though young adults pray less often than their elders do today, the number of young adults who say they pray every day rivals the portion of young people who said the same in prior decades. And though belief in God is lower among young adults than among older adults, Millennials say they believe in God with absolute certainty at rates similar to those seen among Gen Xers a decade ago. This suggests that some of the religious differences between younger and older Americans today are not entirely generational but result in part from people's tendency to place greater emphasis on religion as they age.<sup>229</sup>

### Young People Less Religiously Affiliated

*Percent unaffiliated with a religion, by generation*



Pew Research Center's Forum on Religion & Public Life • Religion in the Millennial Generation, February 2010

Figure 5.3

<sup>229</sup> Pew Research Center, permission granted by Carla Ritz, November 17, 2014, <http://www.pewforum.org/2010/02/17religion-among-the-millennials/> [accessed June 1, 2014] See Appendix E.

Question Three is regarding the amount of time the participant has been a member of FBC. All participants answered this question. The longer a participant has been a member gives the researcher a clear understanding of the progress or lack of progress over the years. Many times when you are new to church everything seems fine especially if it is better than where you left.

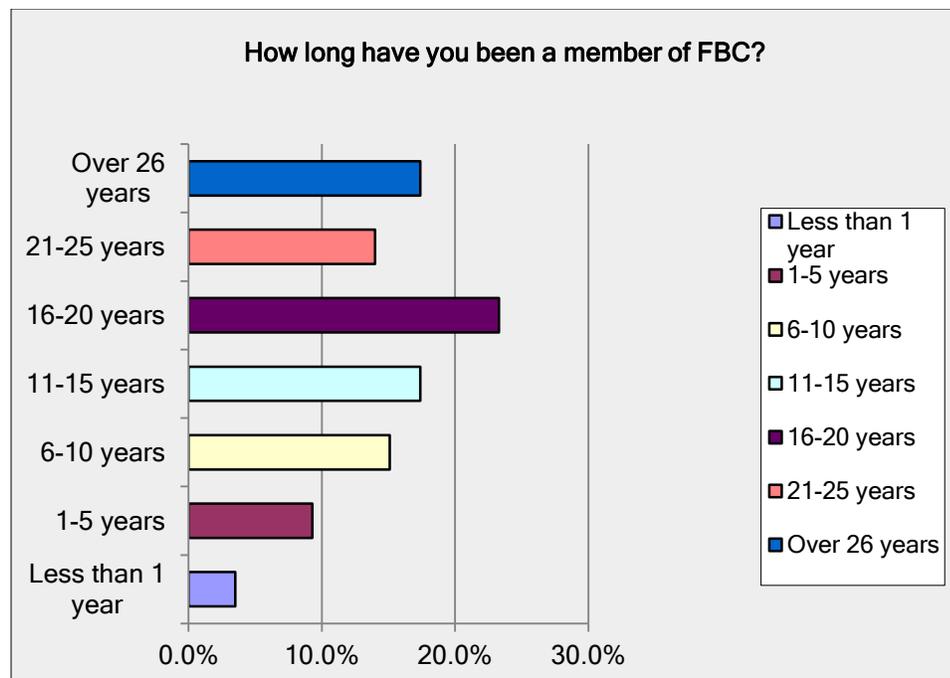


Table 5.4 – Responses to Question 3  
Source: Congregation Survey

There are seven (7) categories ranging from less than one year to over twenty-six years of membership. The category with the highest percentage of twenty-three (23.2%) percent is the sixteen-twenty years. There was a tie for the second highest percentage of seventeen (17.4%) percent: eleven-fifteen years and over twenty-six years.

The current pastor has been there twenty-nine years. The category of six-ten years has a percentage of fifteen (15.1%) percent followed by twenty-one-twenty-five years with thirteen (13.9%) percent. The two categories with the lowest percentage are the two

lowest years: less than one year with three (3.4%) percent and one-five years with nine (9.3%) percent. Most of the members have been at FBC six (6) or more years.

The majority of the membership of FBC are not newcomers; they have attended the church for eleven years or more. Fifty-four (54.6%) percent of the congregation have been members for sixteen years plus and seventy-two (72%) percent have been with this congregation for eleven (11) or more years. Only twelve (12.7%) percent of the members who answered the survey have been with this congregation for five or less years.

This congregation values education. Education is one of the areas the pastor emphasizes. The pastor has a Master's degree and two (2) Doctoral degrees. Question four inquires about the education completed by the participants.

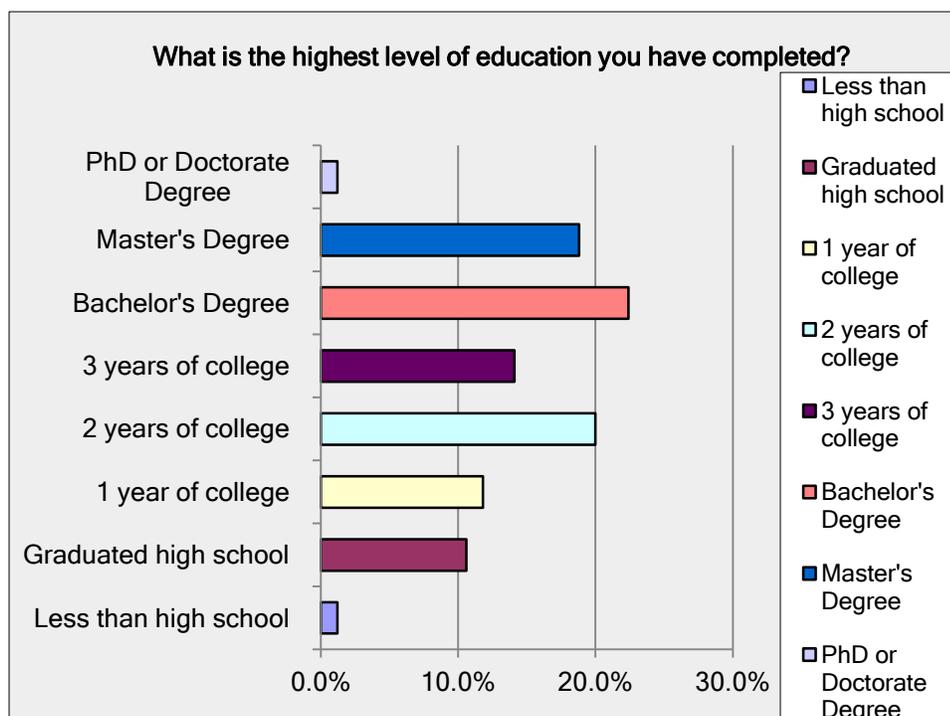


Table 5.5 – Responses to Question 4  
Source: Congregation Survey

Many of the members have earned a college degree or have attended college.

Eighteen (18.8%) percent have earned a Master's degree and twenty-two (22.3%) percent

have earned a Bachelor's degree, for a combined percentage of forty-one (41%) percent. Those completing three years of college is fourteen (14.1%) while those completing two (2) years is twenty (20%) percent. The survey shows that eleven percent (11.7%) of the participants have one (1) year of college. High School graduates without any college are ten (10.9%) percent. Only one (1.1%) of the participants has less than a high school education. One of the participants skipped this question.

Question Five pertains to leadership. How many of the participants hold leadership positions? Fifty-six (56.6%) percent of those who took the survey

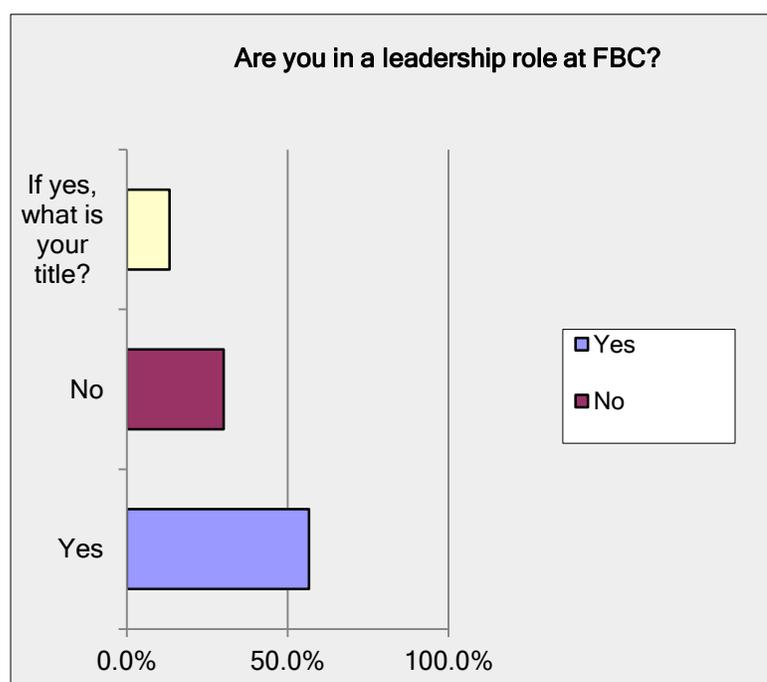


Table 5.6 – Responses to Question 5  
Source: Congregation Survey

are in a leadership position at FBC and thirty (30.1%) percent are not in a leadership role. This question allowed participants to tell what leadership position held. The positions specified are as follows: ministerial staff (overseers, elders, ministers), 1<sup>st</sup> assistants, state directors, mentees, teachers, housing specialist, pastoral clinical counselor, president of

the outreach board, protocol director, and chairman of the deacons. Thirteen (13.2%) percent of the leaders who answered yes to the question did not tell their title. Three participants skipped this question.

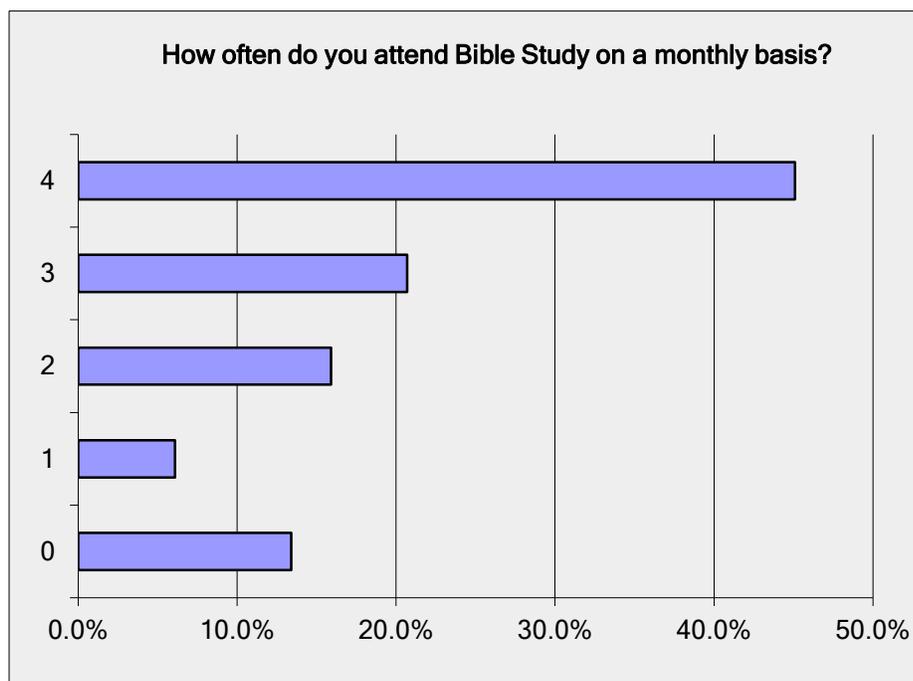


Table 5.7 – Responses to Question 6  
Source: Congregation Survey

Question Six asks, “How often do you attend Bible study on a monthly basis?”

Five categories were available ranging from 0 to 4 times monthly. Bible study is held at FBC on Wednesdays three times a day: 6:00 a.m., 12:00 p.m., and 6:00 p.m., giving the congregation three opportunities in which to participate in Bible study. The survey reveals that forty-five (45.1%) percent stated they attend Bible study every Wednesday. Twenty (20.7%) percent attend at least three times a month. Fifteen (15.8%) percent attend twice a month and six (6.1%) percent attend once a month. Thirteen (13.4%) percent do not attend Bible study. Four participants skipped this question.

Question Seven on the survey asks, “How often do you attend Christian Education Hour on a monthly basis?” Christian Education Hour is in session every Sunday morning for one hour: 8:30 a.m. to 9:30 a.m. There are three adult classes and five classes for the youth (K-High School).

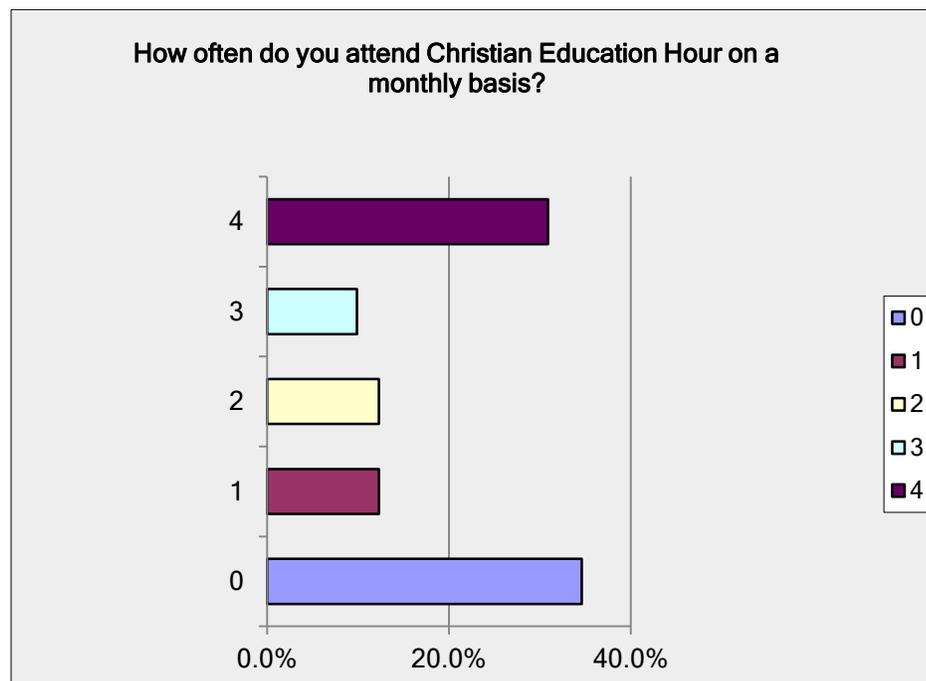


Table 5.8 –Responses to Question 7

Source: Congregation Survey

Thirty-four (34.5%) percent do not attend Christian Education Hour. Those attending Christian Education Hour once or twice a month is twelve (12.3%) percent. Thirty (30.8%) percent attend every Sunday and nine (9.8%) percent attend three times a month. When you combine the forty (40.7%) percent that attends 3 and 4 times and compare it with the forty-six (46.9%) that attend 0 or 1 times, there are as many people attending as there are not attending. The time these classes are in session, 8:30 a.m. on Sunday, is one of the factors why people do not attend, especially the young adults.

The adult class averages a total of fifty (50) people in all three adult classes. There is no young adult class. Five participants skipped this question.

In Question Eight, the researcher is looking for the different ministries that are represented by participants taking the survey. All the youth ministries have been removed from this list. However, the youth leaders did participate in the survey. On the table, the category youth pertains to leaders or adult volunteers of the youth ministry. The survey allowed the participant to select fifteen (15) different ministries. A brief description of the fifteen (15) ministries follows. Fellowship ministries contain five different ministries within it: couples ministry (this ministry is for married and engaged couples), single's ministry (included in this ministry are male and females who are single (never married), divorcee, and widows), men's ministry (men college age and older), women's ministry (women college age and older), and ideal workers (social group).

New Membership Ministry is the first point of contact for new members. This ministry teaches biblical foundation classes such as: salvation, baptism, communion, Christian growth. Christian Education (known by the name of Sunday School in many churches) is the teaching arm of the FBC (Bible study is also included in this ministry). Music Ministry includes the choir (youth, young adults, and adult choirs), praise dancers, and mime ministry. Evangelism Ministry is the discipleship ministry. This group ministers outside the walls of FBC (currently has a prison ministry also). Hope in Transition (H.I.T.) Ministry is the sick and bereavement ministry. Technology Ministry include anything that has to do with technology: power point ministry, computer classes, recording ministries, and website. Stewardship Ministry includes the trustees and financial personnel (financial committee). Deacon Ministry assists the pastor and are

appointed to that position (deacons go through the ordination process also). Ministerial Ministry consists of the overseers (elders who oversee a ministry). This ministry includes elders (ordained ministers), ministers (licensed and cannot serve communion, do weddings and funerals), and mentees (candidates preparing to become a minister). Helps Ministry includes ushers, greeters, and kitchen committee (which prepare food for funerals and special events). Spiritual Support Ministry includes intercessors and altar workers. Pastoral Support consists of the pastor's executive committee (this group consist of the senior overseer, pastor's private secretary, and administrative assistant), conference coordinator , and administrative assistant to Full Gospel Baptist Fellowship International, Inc., Mother's Ministry (members are appointed by the pastor and range from the age of 65-103 years old currently). The mother, who is one-hundred-three years old did participate in the survey with the aid of her daughter. None category means that a person is a pew member or does not participate in any of the fifteen (15) main ministries on the survey.

There is a secret inside many churches. According to researchers Scott Thumma and Warren Bird:

Most churches – mega-sized and small, black and white – are actually run by 20 percent of the congregation. The other 80 percent, tend to act like spectators: they are minimally involved and attend infrequently or not at all. Only 28 percent of pastors reported that spiritual growth was an important area of development in 2011 in the Barna poll. Spiritual engagement, however, becomes more important the longer a congregant remains in the church. Once you've been at the church for five years, 10 years, 20 years, 40 years, there's hardly any programs aimed at those groups to continually keep them engaged.<sup>230</sup>

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<sup>230</sup> Stephanie Samuel, "Churches' Dilemma: 80 Percent of Flock is Inactive," *The Church Post*, June 26, 2011.

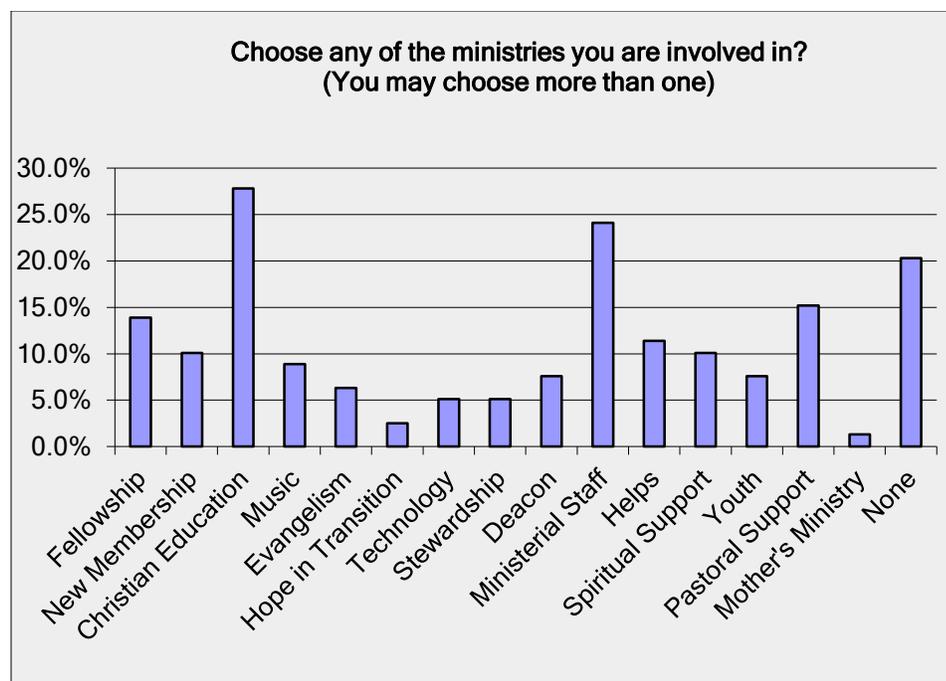


Table 5.9 –Responses to Question 8  
Source: Congregation Survey

Christian Education ministry has the largest percentage of participants with twenty-seven (27.8%) percent. A close second was the ministerial staff with twenty-four (24%) percent. Third largest percentage was the None category with twenty (20%) percent of the participants not belonging to any ministry and would be categorized as pew members. The remainder of the ministries with percentages is as follows: pastoral support (executive committee) fifteen (15.1%) percent, fellowship (men, women, singles, couples) thirteen (13.9%) percent, helps (kitchen committee, greeters, ushers) eleven (11.3%) percent, new membership ten (10.1%), spiritual support (intercessors and altar workers) ten (10.1%), music ministry eight (8.8%) percent, deacons seven (7.5%), youth leaders seven (7.5%) percent, evangelism six (6.3%), technology and stewardship five (5%) percent, hope in transition (sick and bereavement) two (2.5%)

percent, and mother's ministry one (1.2%) percent. Seven participants skipped this question.

Question Nine taps into what this research is all about: spiritual growth. The participant was given three choices to describe his/her spiritual growth: not growing now, some growth, and significant growth. If the participant chose "not growing now", it meant that the participant was satisfied where he/she is or that he/she was not using any of the disciplines to grow. It is not a priority to them at this time. If the participant chose "some growth", then he/she was progressing or making an effort. Spiritual growth has some value to him/her. If the participant chose "significant growth", he/she is moving toward maturity in Christ. It is very important to him/her and he/she values the process of growing to become more Christ-like. Spiritual growth is a journey not a destination. A journey that all Christians must travel. They travel the journey in a style that is entirely up to the individual.

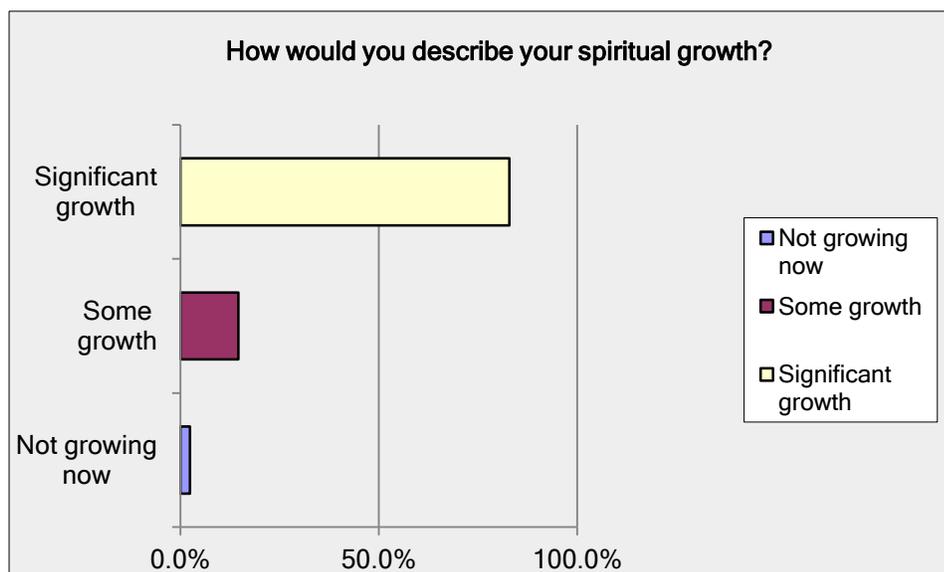


Table 5.10 – Responses to Question 9  
Source: Congregation Survey

Eighty-two (82.9%) percent of the participants described their spiritual growth as significant. Fourteen (14.6%) percent described his/her growth as ‘some’ growth and two (2.4%) percent as not growing now. Four participants skipped this question.

Question Ten asks, “In your opinion, does FBC provide opportunities for you to grow spiritually?” This question gives the respondent an opportunity to say, if in their opinion, FBC provides opportunities for spiritual growth. It also gives information as to whether what is available is being communicated to the congregation. This question also allows the researcher to know what the knowledge base is of the respondent. Does the respondent understand what avenues help a Christian grow spiritually. Spiritual growth is a topic that is not readily discussed in most Baptist churches. The opinion of the respondent is very important to the researcher because it gives the researcher guidance as to what direction to go to help this congregation.

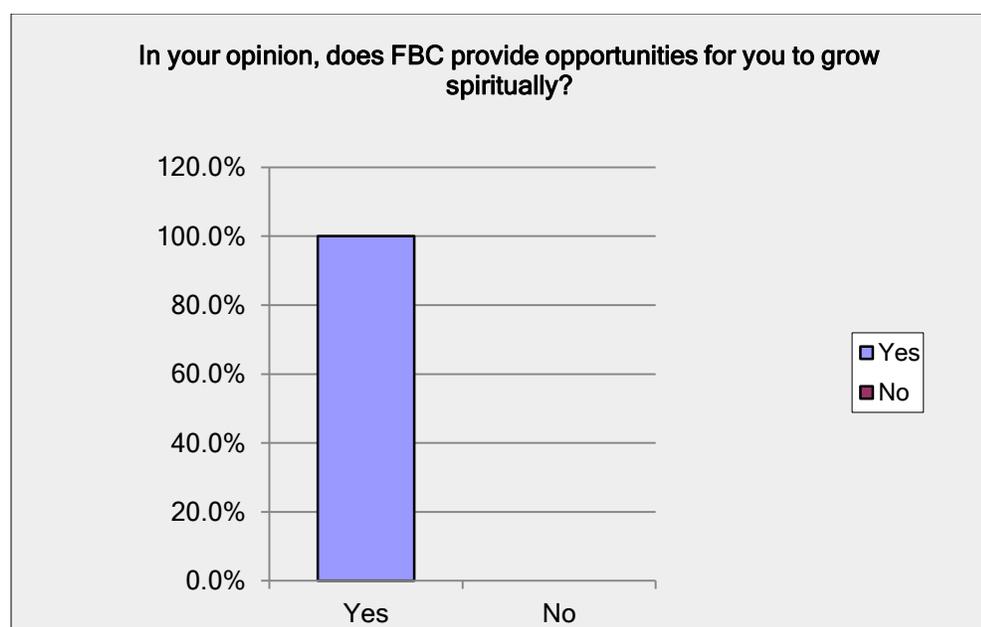


Table 5.11 – Responses to Question 10  
Source: Congregation Survey

One Hundred (100%) percent of the participants who responded to the survey answered yes that the opportunity is there. Four people skipped this question.

Question Eleven is associated with Question Ten by asking the participants to state what opportunities are available. Bible study had the largest number of responses with 28. Christian education was a close second with 26. Leadership class had 15 responses. Leadership class is new to FBC. It began in January, 2014 and has allowed the pastor to teach about leadership and spiritual formation with 100 leaders every week for twelve sessions. Every twelve weeks a new session begins. Mentee class was the fourth responses with 13. Mentee class is a class that prepares a member who has acknowledged they have been called to ministry. This class meets every Saturday from September to the end of June. They are on summer break the months of July and August. Pastor's preaching on Sunday morning received 10 responses and also 10 other responses were so vague they could not be categorized.

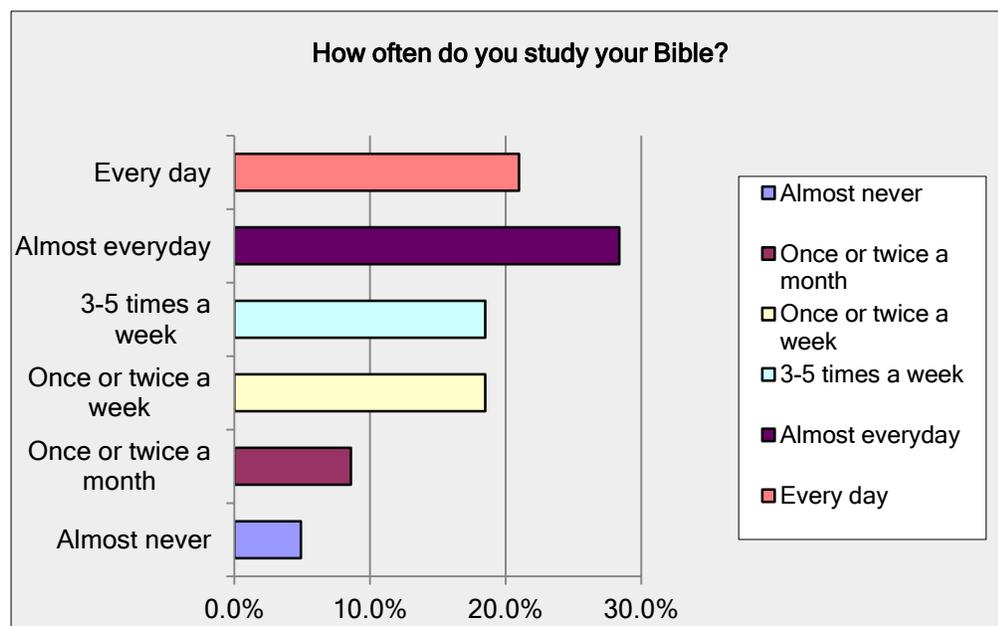


Table 5.12 – Responses to Question 12  
Source: Congregation Survey

Studying your Bible is one way to grow in Christ. Question Twelve surveyed how often each participant studied his Bible. The single responses are as follows:

Twenty-eight (28.4%) percent study their Bible almost every day. Twenty (20.9%) percent study their Bible every day. Both once or twice a week and 3-5 times a week received eighteen (18.5%) percent. Five percent (4.9%) stated that they almost never read their Bible. Five participants skipped this question.

Meditating and spending quiet time with God is one of the disciplines for growing into maturity. Question Thirteen asks, “How often do you spend time meditating (quiet time) with God? The same categories used in Question Twelve were used for this question.

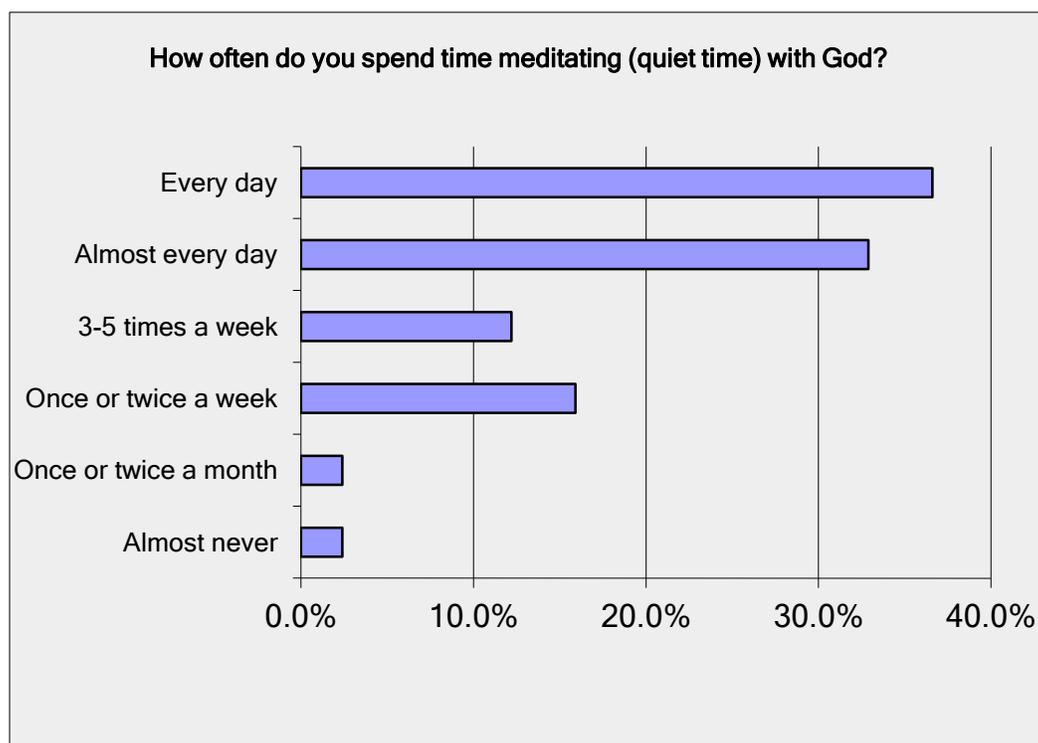


Table 5.13 – Responses to Question 13  
Source: Congregation Survey

Thirty-six (36.5%) percent responded that they meditate every day. Thirty-two (32.9%) meditate almost every day. Those who meditate once or twice a week was fifteen (15.8%) percent of the participants. The category of 3-5 times a week received a percentage of twelve (12.2%). There was a tie in percentages of two (2.4%) percent for the categories of almost never and once or twice a month. Four participants skipped this question.

What are the obstacles that are hindering the members at FBC in growing spiritually? Question Fourteen has five possible obstacles. Obstacles are those things that are keeping the member from growing spiritually.

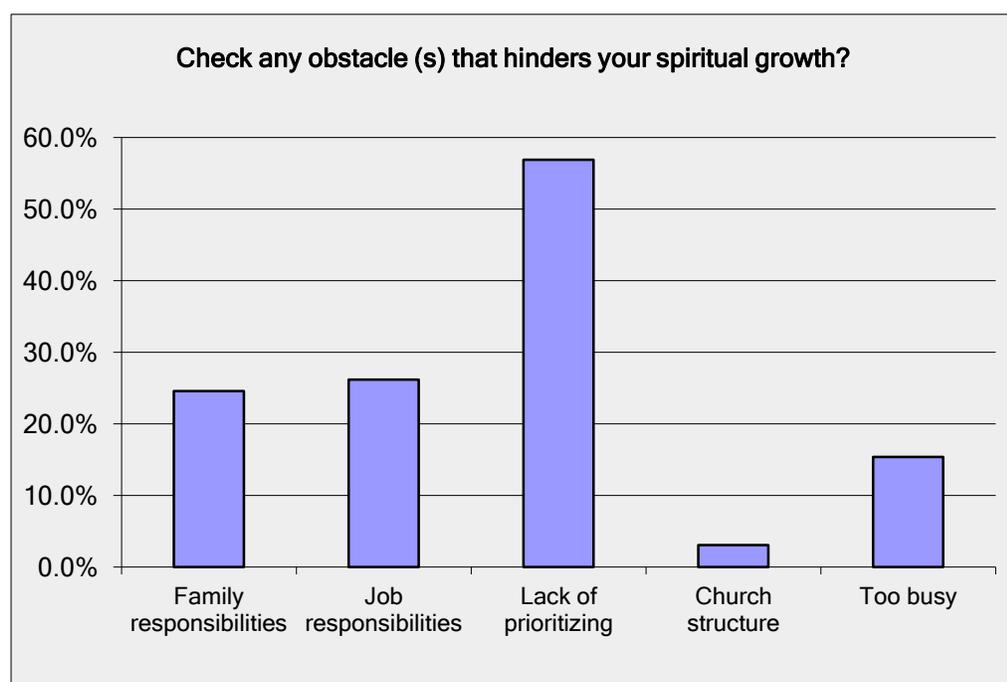


Table 5.14 – Responses to Question 14  
Source: Congregation Survey

The survey revealed that the obstacle that hinders growth the most is lack of prioritizing, fifty-six (56.9%) percent. Job responsibilities were second with twenty-six (26.1%) percent while family responsibilities was close with twenty-four (24.6%) percent. Some of the participants stated they were just too busy, fifteen (15.3%) percent.

Lastly, was church structure with three (3%) percent. Church structure means protocol, the way things are done. Surprisingly twenty-one participants skipped this question, probably because the obstacle was not listed and there was no “other” category.

Question Fifteen is an open-ended question that inquires about ways FBC could help its membership grow spiritually. Several of the answers had to do with leadership. They fall into the following categories: (1) leadership should treat others with the same dignity and respect that they would like to receive, (2) leaders should be held accountable, (3) current leadership is very territorial, and (4) stop competition in leadership. Another area of concern was teaching. These answers are as follows: (1) provide classes on spiritual growth, (2) more detailed Bible study teaching (go back to Bible instead of books), and (3) expand weekday teaching for those who work on Sundays. Seventeen (17) of the participants, who answered the survey, feel that nothing needs to change. Six (6) participants feel it is a personal choice to grow or not to grow, no matter what the church offers. Two (2) participants replied that the church needs to communicate more. Some of the single answers are: (1) get into the social media, Facebook, YouTube, and blog, (2) being on one accord with Bishop’s vision, (3) more outreach, (4) show positive concern, (5) weekly mailings and newsletters, (6) relax the protocol, (7) offer more one-on-one counseling, (8) greater corporate prayer, and (9) engage young adults more.

### **Interviews with Leadership**

Interviews were conducted in order to gather information from key leaders regarding Spiritual Formation. The researcher had six pre-determined questions to ask each person who was interviewed. The definition of Spiritual Formation was given

during these interviews as: “being conformed to Christ-like characteristics for the sake of others.”

Interview One took place on May 27, 2014. This interview was with the leader over Christian Education Hour. Interviewee One has been a member of FBC for four (4) years and has been in this position for one (1) year but was an active teacher prior to the position. Currently FBC has three adult classes: women only class, men only class, and mixed class (both men and women). The women and men classes deal with issues that are related to gender, tailored to the needs of the class, or topics that each gender would be interested in learning about. Books are selected to help them become better husbands, wives, and Christians. The third class (mixed) is biblically based and studies the books of the Bible. Some examples of the books for women’s class are: *BeAttitudes for Women*, *And I will Be Found By You*, *Thrive Don’t Simply Survive*, *Just A Sister Away*, *Give It Back*, *Battlefield of the Mind*, *Princess Within*, *Don’t Die In The Winter*, *Commanding Your Morning*, *Formed Holy In His Image*, *You Have It In You*, and *Kingdom Woman*. Some books used by the men’s class are: *No Excuses*, *Trusting God Even When It Hurts*, *Can You Stand To Be Blessed*, *Every Man’s Battle*, *Every Man’s Challenge*, *Holy Spirit*, and *Man After God’s Heart*. Books of the Bible studied by the other adult class are Genesis, John, and Romans. When asked the question, “What is your perspective (viewpoint) on spiritual formation at FBC?” the response was:

Spiritual formation helps us to learn how to identify with Christ, walk and talk like Christ, and live a Christian life. I believe that spiritual formation is happening through the teaching of the Pastor and through the teaching at Bible study. I rank spiritual formation as very important. I am being trained to move the ministry toward Christlikeness through Leadership class.<sup>231</sup>

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<sup>231</sup> Interviewee One, interviewed by researcher, Toledo, OH, May 27, 2014.

In Leadership class, Interviewee One has learned how to help others, seek Christ for yourself, and practice right principles and values. The principles and values learned in Leadership class reflected from the Pastor to leaders and leaders down to the lay person. Each leader is to have five people in their ministry that they share the information learned in Leadership class on a weekly basis. Once a month (3<sup>rd</sup> Tuesday or Thursday) everyone (leader plus their 5 people) attends Leadership class together. Question 6 is, “At any time in the ministry you oversee, is there a discussion, curriculum, or process in place to assist your members toward spiritual formation?” The curriculum used in the men’s and women’s classes have discussed and studied spiritual formation. Currently the women’s class is studying a book entitled *Being Formed into His Image*. The Men recently completed a book entitled *Holy Spirit*. The interviewee states, “currently there is no process in place to move members toward Christlikeness in the church.”<sup>232</sup> Attendance in the adult classes is low. They are averaging only fifty adults total in all three classes.

Interview Two took place on May 28, 2014. This leader has been a member of FBC for 28 years and has held the position over the New Members Ministry for three (3) years. Interviewee Two believes, “spiritual formation is extremely important and ranks it high. Interviewee Two feels, “The church is growing spiritually because the totality of the Bible is being taught so we can branch out and help others.”<sup>233</sup> The ministry (FBC) is all about people, the maturity, and growth of people. Interviewee Two states, “I am being trained to move my ministry toward Christlikeness through the Pastor’s teaching at FBC, the Holy Spirit’s teaching, and by personal disciplines and experiences. Interviewee Two states that “there is a process in place in the New Membership Ministry to help move

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<sup>232</sup> Interviewee One, interviewed by researcher, Toledo, OH, May 27, 2014.

<sup>233</sup> Interviewee Two, interviewed by researcher, Toledo, OH, May 28, 2014.

members to Christlikeness.”<sup>234</sup> The process is (1) teaching principles and foundation, (2) assisting members in discovering their gifting to operate efficiently, by taking a Spiritual Gifts Assessment, (3) guidance in what ministry to join after completing New Membership Class, and (4) receiving information on how to grow through Bible study and Christian Education Hour.

Membership Class is for five (5) Sundays and is held during Christian Education Hour. It used to be for sixteen (16) weeks but was reduced to five weeks. However, there has been a problem getting new members to attend. Due to low attendance rate, they have “microwaved” the class. You can attend class the 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday of the month, during regular service time and get all five (5) classes at one time. Each teacher teaches fifteen minutes on topic matter instead of the regular sixty minutes per topic. This class is also offered on the computer on FBC’s website. The new member can read material and answer questions then return the questionnaire for credit. One of the requirements for FBC is you cannot join a ministry or participate until you have completed membership class. Interviewee Two stated, “Although there is a process in the New Ministry Class, there is no ongoing process for the church after you leave the class. There are opportunities (teaching) available if the people choose to participate.”<sup>235</sup>

Interview Three took place on May 29, 2014. Interviewee Three is over several ministries at FBC: Men’s Ministry, Couple’s Ministry, Women’s Ministry, Single’s Ministry, and Ideal Workers. This person has been a member of FBC for twenty-two years and has held this position for thirteen years. When asked the question, “What is your perspective (viewpoint) on spiritual formation at FBC?” He broke it down into three

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<sup>234</sup> Interviewee Two, interviewed by researcher, Toledo, OH, May 28, 2014.

<sup>235</sup> Ibid.

components: “(1) emotionally-cognitively connected, (2) mind-connect to the Word of God, and (3) spiritual practices such as prayer, Bible study, outreach, and communicating where God is taking the church. Interviewee Three stated, “about 70% is not actualizing the ministry to capacity. We fall short on spiritual practices.”<sup>236</sup> Interviewee Three ranked his personal spiritual growth and the growth of the church at moderate. Interviewee Three stated, “in the area of training and preparation of leaders, it has improved since Leadership classes are now available weekly. In the past, I was not prepared or instructed. The church was conditioned to listen to senior pastor; then execute authority and agree to follow.”<sup>237</sup>

Since Interviewee Three is over more than one ministry, each ministry’s spiritual growth is discussed separately. The question was, “At any time in the ministries you oversee, is there a discussion, curriculum, or process in place to assist your members toward spiritual formation?” For the women’s ministry the answer is “yes”. This ministry has implemented a team; core group, to work on planning and allow the Holy Spirit to guide them instead of the overseer. They have regular prayer sessions with the pastor every 2<sup>nd</sup> Saturday of the month. The women’s ministry also has monthly conference calls. They strive to move women toward spiritual formation.

For the men’s ministry the answer is “no”. Interviewee Three allows leaders to formulate programs but the leadership team is not focusing and the participation from men is not there. This ministry needs to get back to men’s fellowship. Men’s fellowship was a men’s group that met on Tuesday morning at 5:30 a.m. and Saturday evenings at 5:00 p.m. The men could attend either group session. The participation of men

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<sup>236</sup> Interviewee Three, interviewed by researcher, Toledo, OH, May 29, 2014.

<sup>237</sup> Ibid.

diminished. The Christian education overseer started a Men's Class on Sunday morning, during Christian Education Hour, to bring the men back together. Once the Men's Class began (with a lot of men participating) the Men's Fellowship vanished. Essentially, there is no longer a Men's Ministry.

For the Single's Ministry, the answer is "no". They are in a building stage. Participation level has declined. Leaders of this group have been praying for three months. The team is re-focusing. The team is inviting other singles to join them. Their current book is *The Pursuit of God*, trying to get them back into the Word. The harvest is there. They need to figure out how to get other singles involved. In order for this ministry to grow physically and spiritually, they must understand bishop's vision to build a relationship with God first. They must be able to connect what is learned from the book and put it into practice.

For the Couple's Ministry the answer is "no." On an individual basis the couples have a high spirituality. As a ministry, leadership has been a problem. Leadership problems are due to (1) one couple over the ministry had to step back because of personal problems. (2) The next couple stepped aside leaving the program struggling without leaders. A new couple has been recruited to head this ministry. They were previous members and now have re-joined FBC. This couple will need to re-connect with the body. They show promise if they are able to connect cognitively and have excellent presentations. Interviewee Three is confident that this couple will move this ministry in the right direction.

The purpose of the Ideal Workers Ministry is to lend a hand to those in need. This ministry does a lot of socializing among themselves and inviting others. Ideal

workers sponsor shopping trips as a form of outreach. They exhibit a high respect for their leader and for each other. A charge from their leader is to grow and expand. They like being a small and intimate group. They are a very tight knit group. Interviewee Three “does not feel the spiritual formation is a priority in this group although they exhibit many of the characteristics of spirituality.”<sup>238</sup>

Interviewee Three stated that FBC does not have an effective spiritual growth process in place for the following reasons:

- Does not communicate effectively to the mass congregation what we (FBC) really are about
- Some information given to leaders should be transferred to Sunday sermons
- Not connecting to the cognitive
- Need to fine tune
- There are no benchmarks
- Some ministries in Toledo have very effective TV communication about their vision, others Easter egg drops, and another known for their plays. Should learn from other churches our size or larger
- FBC congregation must know goals of the church
- Used to have church picnic where congregation had opportunity to fellowship together outside the four walls. It would help build relationships
- Collaboration in church is missing
- Connection to the body is missing<sup>239</sup>

The connection to develop what is missing is lacking. FBC misses the opportunity to connect with the body and articulate to the body when it gets its biggest crowd.

A second interview with all three leaders was instrumental in answering some questions to clear up some items and get their thought pattern on some additional questions related to the congregation’s survey. These (5) five questions were sent by e-mail to the three leaders to answer prior to the face-to-face interview. Question One

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<sup>238</sup> Interviewee Three, interviewed by researcher, Toledo, OH, August 15, 2014.

<sup>239</sup> Ibid.

asked, “What are some obstacles (in your opinion or experience) that hinder a person’s spiritual growth that are missing from the original survey?” Survey choices were family responsibilities, job responsibilities, lack of prioritizing, church structure, and too busy. Question Two asks, “What does meditating (quiet time) with God look like to you?” Question Three asks, “What are some avenues that help the believer to grow spiritually?” Question Four asks, “What does significant growth in the area of spiritual growth look like to you as a leader?” Finally Question Five asks, “How would you suggest that spiritual growth be measured or assessed?”

The second interview with Interviewee One took place on Friday, August 15, 2014. The leader answered the questions in the following manner:

Question One – The obstacles that hinder grow is a lack of desire and commitment. They want to be entertained. Question Two – Meditating to me is taking a walk or driving in my car and listening to gospel music. Question Three – Some avenues that help the believer grow spiritually are attending Bible study, personal study, researching the Scriptures. Question Four – These are some ways significant growth can be seen by others: The person is maturing in their walk with God. Their lifestyle has changed. Their speech has changed. Question Five – Spiritual growth can be assessed by their works in the church. A simple survey can be given that deals with common problems and get their viewpoint on spiritual matters. Their ability to answer questions about doctrinal things such as: what is Full Gospel Fellowship, vision of the house, how do they see the Holy Spirit. This survey would identify areas where there is a need for more learning.<sup>240</sup>

The second interview with Interviewee Two took place on Wednesday, August 13, 2014. The leader answered the questions in the following manner:

Question One – The following are additional obstacles that hinder a person’s spiritual growth: “stress, substance abuse, hurt received by another member, involved in too many ministries, but no time for building a relationship with God, secular influences like friends, co-workers in the world and peer pressures, and not surrendering to God’s will for their life. Question Two – Meditating time with God is

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<sup>240</sup> Interviewee One, interviewed by researcher, Toledo, OH, August 15, 2014.

alone time with Him in your special space where there are no distractions, quieting your mind/spirit and focusing on God alone, meditating on His Word, or just being still in His presence. Question Three – Some avenues that help the believer grow are spending quality time with the Lord, consistent prayer life, studying the Scriptures, being among believers, and reading spiritual books to edify oneself. Question Four – Significant growth in spiritual formation looks like: (1) being obedient to the Word of God with little or no hesitation, (2) considering others before self, (3) loving others that may not have the capacity to love you back, (4) taking time to aid one another in need when it seems as an inconvenience to you, (5) able to forgive those who have offended you instead of harboring resentment, and (6) listening to others without judging them.<sup>241</sup>

Second Interview with Interviewee Three took place on Monday, August 11,

2014. The leader answered the five questions in this manner:

Question One – The following contribute or are obstacles to shortfalls in the believer’s spiritual growth: ego has a natural instinct for self-preservation and can lead to a mindset of putting oneself above others. Many believers struggle with this issue daily. Question Two – Meditating with God is getting up early and focusing on a passage in the Bible led by the Holy Spirit, listening to gospel music during the day while driving in my car, and once a month closing oneself up for 2 hours and talking to God for direction for the next month and writing it down. Question Three – Some avenues that help the believer to grow spiritually are a good teacher, a good mentor, a good preacher, and a good relationship with a ministry in the church. Question Four – Significant growth in spiritual growth as a leader looks like (1) better communication with one another, (2) increased participation in Bible Study and Christian Education, and (3) accepting projects and working with the team to completion. Question Five – How would you suggest that spiritual growth be measured or assessed? This is a tough one but in the Bible, in the Book of James, it says “faith without works is dead”. Therefore, our assessments are both tangible and intangible. What do we see? What did they do? Where did they go? What are their plans? Criteria must be set up by each ministry for measurement.<sup>242</sup>

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<sup>241</sup> Interviewee Two, interviewed by researcher, Toledo, OH, August 13, 2014.

<sup>242</sup> Interviewee Three, interviewed by researcher, Toledo, OH, August 11, 2014.

### **Interview with Pastor**

Interview with the pastor of FBC took place on May 31, 2014 in his office. This pastor has been preaching and teaching at FBC since 1985, which is twenty-nine (29) years. The major changes he has witnessed in the congregation besides growth in membership are loyalty to the teachings of God as opposed to consistence of church membership. “When I started Bible study there were only two or three people, since then there has been an increase in Bible study within the church. Benevolent workings are actually taking place. We now have a more expressive worship. Major change is having a God-centered thought pattern.”<sup>243</sup>

The next question asked was “What is your perspective on spiritual formation (using definition given)?” Spiritual formation is a pattern of God-Word Ministry. “What we are talking about today is a true application of a surrendering that changes my bottom line character. When I take the Word, regardless to what my old life style used to be, it measures out to be the Word of God.”<sup>244</sup> It is the application that one puts forth.

After reading the definition of spiritual formation to the pastor, he was asked to rank the church, as a whole, as to their growth in spiritual formation. At present the trueness of it is moderate (choices were not at all, small degree, moderate, high, and do not know). Now with leadership classes and literature used, there is a strong emphasis on spiritual formation. “We left Spiritual Maturity and went to Ministering to the Total Man. Now we are coming back to Perpetual Ministries which will take a spiritual formation of life, especially with the session we are teaching leaders now. It is almost equivalent to Christian discipleship.”<sup>245</sup> It is the application that one puts forth.

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<sup>243</sup> Pastor of Friendship, interviewed by researcher, Toledo, OH, May 31, 2014.

<sup>244</sup> Ibid.

In what ways has FBC grown spiritually in the past ten years? The timeframe 2000-2014 the growth has been in Outreach Ministries. The expansion in Naomi (New Attitude On My Image) House and its growth. Watching the clients perform, graduate, and get back into society. He tells this story, ‘A worker in the meat department at Walmart said to me, “I have been speaking to you every time you come in the store and you do not know or remember who I am. I went through Naomi and I would not be where I am if Naomi House had not given me the structure I needed.” When I see the changes and effect on people’s lives that Naomi House has helped, I wanted to shout right there in the store.’<sup>246</sup>

“I see changes in the New Concept-Drug Program. I see changes not in people but in staff commitment as I interact with them: a non-traditional ministry. They do not do things the way everybody else does.”<sup>247</sup> The third outreach program is Friendship New Vision. Friendship New Vision Housing Ministry takes on things that no one else in the city is willing to take on. The whole philosophy is having an attitude that no matter what, God is able. The City of Toledo says your faith is so outstanding and has ranked us a leading CDC (Community Development Corporation) provider. We do not just give them a house but we teach what it means to possess a house and walk them through the process. We have the highest sales in the city. “Those are just fruits that I see based on our outreach ministries, some real lifestyle changes.”<sup>248</sup>

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<sup>245</sup> Pastor of Friendship Baptist, interviewed by researcher, Toledo, OH, May 31, 2014.

<sup>246</sup> Pastor of Friendship Baptist, interviewed by researcher, Toledo, OH, August 25, 2014.

<sup>247</sup> Ibid.

<sup>248</sup> Ibid.

“Spiritual growth on the church side; attendance to ministry is different, more participation on the good side. Financially the tithes and offerings have been consistent. The mindset through the recession never changed their giving. In reality this shows what their relationship is with the Lord and the Word of God.”<sup>249</sup>

There is a process in place now which started January, 2014. A new leadership development started which is twelve (12) weeks straight teachings and then off four (4) weeks. These leaders are to be accountable to the ministry and five (5) other people in the congregation or in their homes. Throughout the twelve-week session there are weekly assessments: what you do, where you are, and what you are saying.

The second interview with the pastor was held on August 25, 2014. The same five (5) questions that were asked of the three (3) key leaders were asked of the pastor. Question One asked for obstacles that were missing from the congregation survey that he thought was a hindrance. His response was “lack of personal commitment to application of the Word of God to their personal life.”<sup>250</sup> Question Two is as follows: What does meditating (quiet time) look like to you? “It is a combination of (1) reading God’s Word, (2) hearing hymns and spiritual songs, (3) being still to reflect on the reading and songs to receive new revelation, and (4) praying with the revelation insight.”<sup>251</sup> Question Three What are some avenues that help the believer to grow spiritually? “One avenue is consistent study time at home and with your church family. The believer’s application of learned truths through trials and setting a time to be with God is another avenue.”<sup>252</sup>

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<sup>249</sup> Pastor of Friendship Baptist Church, interviewed by researcher, Toledo, OH, August 25, 2014.

<sup>250</sup> Ibid.

<sup>251</sup> Ibid.

<sup>252</sup> Ibid.

Question Four – What does significant growth look like to you as a leader in spiritual growth? “Significant growth in the area of spiritual growth is when the personal desire for the application of God’s Word is sought after as a life change instead of a moment of relief.”<sup>253</sup> Question Five – How would you suggest that spiritual growth be measured or assessed? “Spiritual growth can be measured or assessed by direct questions given to the believer from the Word of God in the different areas of Christian growth found in the Bible.”<sup>254</sup>

### **Summary**

The high quality of medical care we enjoyed today is built upon years of effort by physicians, PhDs, and other medical professionals investigating the causes of and potential treatments for disease. The tireless effort of countless medical professionals has made many once life-threatening diseases and conditions a faded memory. This was all done by medical research. If medical research is important, then spiritual research is just as important or more. For that reason, the researcher sent a fifteen (15) question survey to the congregation of the Friendship Baptist Church. This survey is the first step in helping heal the soul and bring this congregation toward Christlikeness. It is the first step because the pastor realizes the need for change. The church is like a hospital. People come to the church to be healed, to get better, and feel better. Church as usual will not work in this century. The survey gives pertinent information that will allow the pastor and leaders to move the church in a new direction. The information obtained from the survey will be used to make future decisions and recommendations to assist believers in their spiritual

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<sup>253</sup> Pastor of Friendship Baptist Church, interviewed by researcher, Toledo, OH, August 5, 2014.

<sup>254</sup> Ibid.

growth process. The survey participants represented all areas of ministry within this congregation. It was an accurate representation of those who attend FBC on a regular basis.

The two interviews from three (3) key or primary leaders at FBC were very informative. Their input gave the researcher the perspective from a leader's point of view. It allows the researcher to assess from a leader's perception what is going on in their individual ministries and what improvements are needed to move this congregation into a spiritual growth spurt.

The two interviews from the pastor are immeasurable. The pastor's wisdom and knowledge is an asset to this research. He has watched FBC congregation grow under his leadership and is willing to do whatever it takes to move them to the next level in Christ. Seeing a lack of growth, he started a Leadership Class this year to jump start this congregation. He believes that starting with the leadership team first will eventually filter down to the congregation and those who follow these individuals.

There is still much work to be done. Insights provided by medical research today promise to lessen the impact of today's greatest health problems, including diabetes, cancer, and heart disease. As science continues to unveil the molecular workings that underpin disease, we will see profound changes in the approach to treating disease. This is also true for the church. There is still much work to be done. Insights provided by spiritual research today will affect the total church: spirit, soul and body. "Spiritual formation is a day-by-day continuous experience that is an intentional and continual commitment toward wholeness."<sup>255</sup>

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<sup>255</sup> Gwen Ebner, *Formed Holy in His Image: Spirit, Soul, & Body* (2011), location 358 Kindle.

CHAPTER SIX  
SUMMARY, FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

**Introduction**

The purpose of Chapter Six is to summarize the project, report the findings, to state conclusions, and to convey recommendations. The summarization will emanate from the previous five chapters of the project.

Chapter One states “spiritual formation is not an option. The inescapable conclusion is that life itself is a process of spiritual development. The only choice we have is whether that growth moves us toward wholeness in Christ or toward an increasingly dehumanized and destructive mode of being.”<sup>256</sup> The responsibility of the church goes beyond making disciples. The church is also responsible for moving disciples to the next level in Christ. Spiritual formation is the “latest bandwagon that everyone is trying to jump on—and no one wants to be left behind—but what do you do if you are just not prepared?”<sup>257</sup> Here is a two-part definition of spiritual development:

First, spiritual development is spiritual formation, which is the holistic work of God in a believer’s life whereby systematic change renders the individual continually closer to the image and actions of Jesus Christ. Second, the change or transformation that occurs in a believer’s life

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<sup>256</sup>Terry Wardle, *Draw Close to the Fire* (Grand Rapids: Chosen Books, 1998), 218.

<sup>257</sup> Ruth Haley Barton, “It Begins with You! How the Spiritual Formation of the Pastor Effects the Spiritual Formation of the Congregation,” *Common Ground Journal*, no. 7 (2009): 26.

happens best in the context of authentic, Christian community and is entirely oriented as a service towards God and others.<sup>258</sup>

Spiritual growth is necessary. Jesus did not desire that one remain babes in Christ. Terry Wardle says it this way, “Nothing is more important to your life than developing intimacy with God and communing with Him. Opening yourself to the instruction of the Holy Spirit will reshape your life.”<sup>259</sup> William Chaney adapts William Mulholland’s definition of spiritual formation as “the process of being conformed to the image of Christ by the gracious working of God’s spirit, for the transformation of the world.... It is a gradual, life-long movement, not a momentous conversion. It is a process of awakening our desire for God.”<sup>260</sup>

Chapter Two states, the spiritual life that proceeds from the indwelling work of the Holy Spirit is most common in Pauline literature. The idea of the Spirit-filled life continues through the early church in the West into the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. The truth of God is the foundation of biblical spirituality. The heart of spirituality is intimacy between God the Creator and his created images. Spirituality unfolds throughout the history of revelation and is fully manifested in Jesus Christ.

This research involves whether an effective spiritual process is in place at FBC and, is just the beginning; a starting point for the Friendship Baptist Church. The researcher has attempted to analyze and report that which the data has revealed. The conclusion and recommendations are based on the research process which utilized

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<sup>258</sup> Duane C. Tisdale, classroom lecture, FBC, Toledo, OH, October 21, 2014.

<sup>259</sup> Terry Wardle, *Draw Close to the Fire* (Grand Rapids: Chosen Books, 1998), 37.

<sup>260</sup> William Chaney, *Making Disciples in an Emerging Culture*, Spiritual Formation is not Optional Blog entry posted September 17, 2007, <http://makingdisciples.wordpress.com/?s=Spiritual+formation+is+not+optional> [access March 15, 2013].

congregational survey and two interviews from the selected key leaders and the pastor. These leaders hold key positions at Friendship Baptist Church and minister or have contact with the majority of the congregation. Limitations of this research are: (1) Members who did not have access to a computer or e-mail address could not participate, (2) Not all individuals will agree to participate in the study. (3) Denominational beliefs could limit the scope of the study and (4) Full impact of this study will be unknown due to duration of time.

### **Project Summary**

The passion of the researcher is to see the people of God grow in their spirituality and move toward maturity in Christ. This passion is the reason this research project was initiated. The site of the project is the Friendship Baptist Church located in Toledo, Ohio. This congregation is predominantly African-American and has been in operation for one hundred plus years. Friendship Baptist Church has approximately 900 active members. The purpose of this study is to take a detailed look at the factors causing a lack of spiritual formation of the individual member of the Friendship Baptist Church. The study will look at the spiritual formation process that is currently available at all age levels, and the spiritual formation process that needs to be improved or implemented at FBC in order to enhance their members in the direction of maturing saints.

The culture of the American church has changed over the past centuries. There was a time when the biblical principles of religion was taught by the parents, families, schools, and the churches. Today, however, we have kids raising kids. Because of this shift in the culture, basic religious values are no longer taught at home. Cultural trends dictate moral values to society.

Tradition outweighs the Holy Spirit. Churches become so business oriented that they lose focus on what God intended for the church, that is to save souls, and form people to his image while meeting the needs of the people. It is his image that should be promoted not the church's image.

In Chapter Three it states "today the Western church has become fragmented and individualistic, which makes spiritual formation more difficult." Christian faith is often practiced in void of the community. The Christian life is best lived in community where worship, fellowship, small groups, and service are practiced. In this context, spiritual formation takes place in the community.

Many churches no longer teach moral values. They are more concerned with what the majority thinks than what the Bible says or with growing their congregations numerically. Some churches are participating in same-sex marriages even though the Bible clearly states that marriage is between a man and woman. "Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh." (Genesis 2:24) Jesus reaffirms in Matthew 19:4-5, "Haven't you read," he replied, "that at the beginning the Creator 'made them male and female,' and said, 'For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh.'"

The image of God is both male and female and is reflected in a godly union between male and female where the creative power of God, his life-giving, his self-giving and his moral nature are perfectly expressed. This is only possible in a heterosexual union. John Edminston explains it this way:

When God created a partner for Adam, He created Eve—not another Adam. This means that perfect partnership requires some level of difference as

well as a level of similarity so great that Adam could cry out loudly, *"This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh"*. (Gen. 2:23) Sexual intimacy between a man and a woman is the normal method of male/female bonding (emotionally and physically) because it corresponds to the design of our bodies and because it is the normal means by which offspring are created.<sup>261</sup>

Currently, as of October 26, 2014, thirty-two states have passed laws granting same-sex marriages in the United States.

In some of the public school systems, in the United States, hands are tied since prayer has been taken out of the schools and the students cannot repeat the Pledge of Allegiance because it says "under God." The churches (all across America) allowed one woman, Madalyn Murray O'Hair, to remove prayer and religion from our public schools. Who was Madalyn Murray O'Hair? "She was an American atheist activist and founder of the American Atheists. She went to school in Rossford, Ohio and graduated from Rossford High School in 1937. She is known for two lawsuits which prohibited prayer in school and Bible reading in American public schools: *Murray v Curlett* and *Engel v Vitale*."<sup>262</sup>

Another avenue that can be used for spiritual formation is sports. The avenue is not as important as the results. Sports can be a means to honor God. The Bible uses imagery of sports throughout the Scriptures: runners and racing. Many churches and Christian organizations have used sports as a means of recruiting new members through outreach and evangelism. Christian athletes use their faith to build relationship with their teammates, reduce pressure they feel and for moral guidance.

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<sup>261</sup> John Edmiston, "What Does the Bible Say About Same Sex Marriages?" Christiansanswers.net, [www.christiananswers.net/q-eden/edm-f018.html](http://www.christiananswers.net/q-eden/edm-f018.html) [accessed October 26, 2014].

<sup>262</sup> Beliefnet.com, "Who Was Madalyn Murray O'Hair?" <http://www.beliefnet.com/Faith/secular-Philosophies/Who-Was-Madalyn-Murray-Ohair.aspx> [accessed October 26, 2014].

Wayne Gruden gives these examples discussed in Chapter Two:

On a more everyday level, there are many activities that we carry out as human beings (in the labor force, in social organizations, in musical performances, and in athletic teams, for example) in which many distinct individuals contribute to a unity of purpose or activity, allowing us both unity and diversity. We can see a faint reflection of the glory of God in his Trinitarian existence.<sup>263</sup>

Individual and team sports can provide a context that is quite suitable for practicing the classical spiritual disciplines, such as solitude, prayer, and meditation on passages of Scripture. By practicing these disciplines as one runs, bikes, or swims, the follower of Christ can detach from one's other concerns for a time and be alone with God, attentive to him and in his presence.

Many sports demand standards of excellence in discipline, moral values, fairness, sportsmanship, and courage. The standards of excellence are not just physical standards but also include spiritual virtues. These standards can foster humility since the athlete has to submit to these standards. A Christian may become willing to risk rejection or be mocked by others for staying true to one's convictions through his words and actions if one has developed a similar sort of courage via sports. For individuals who struggle with having to be in control of how they appear to others, or who struggle with seeking to please other people, sports provide a way to practice courage that can undermine such fears and struggles.

In Philippians 3:8-10, Paul talks about his present longing and knowledge of Christ is not just something acquired at conversion. It is his present and ongoing passion to "gain Christ", "be found" in Christ, and "know" Christ. In other words, one must build

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<sup>263</sup> Wayne Gruden, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994), 257.

a relationship with Christ. A. W. Tozer laments the spiritual immaturity of believers who do not pursue God. Being born again is not an end but a beginning:

For now begins the glorious pursuit, the heart's happy exploration of the infinite riches of the Godhead. To have found God and still to pursue Him is the soul's paradox of love. Hanging everything in the Christian life on the initial act of accepting Christ and then craving no further revelation of God to our souls is based on a false logic which insist that if we have found Him we need no more to seek Him.<sup>264</sup>

A holistic approach to spiritual formation is to include the mind, body, and the soul.

There are reminders throughout the Bible to substantiate this. Mark states "Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength."<sup>265</sup> Effective spiritual formation requires the development of the total man. FBC's mission statement is "Ministering to the total man". The question is, "Are they living out their mission statement?" Ebner states it this way:

When Paul uses the word sanctify he is implying a process of growth that will lead to holiness, not an event or state of being. In his use of spirit, soul, and body, he is not referring so much to distinct parts of a person as to the effect that this wholeness will have on those parts in relationship to one's entire being. This is his way of saying that God must be involved in every aspect of our lives, not in just part of our lives.<sup>266</sup>

Spiritual growth is a long-life process of manifesting the acts of the flesh less and less and producing the fruit of the Spirit more and more. If one is becoming more loving, more joyful, more kind, more self-controlled, then one can be assured that spiritual growth is genuinely occurring in that person's life.

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<sup>264</sup> A. W. Tozer, *The Pursuit of God* (Harrisburg, PA: Christian Publication, Inc., 1948), 14-16.

<sup>265</sup> Mark 12:30 [NIV].

<sup>266</sup> Gwen Eber, *Formed Holy in His Image: Spirit, Soul, & Body* (2011), location 195 Kindle.

## Project Findings

The research findings emanate from the two techniques used to collect the data: congregational survey and interviews (quantitative and qualitative). Three times as many females took the survey as men. This ratio is common in most churches: women outnumber the men in membership and participation. This finding was found in Question One of the survey.

Question Two conveys information regarding the age of the participants. The Baby Boomers Generation had the largest percentage of returned surveys. This generation is characterized by these four characteristics:

Work-centric are extremely hardworking, motivated by position, perks, and prestige. Second characteristic is independent. They are confident, independent, and self-reliant. This generation grew up in an era of reform and believed they could change the world. They questioned established authority systems and challenged the status quo. Third characteristic is goal-oriented. With increased educational and financial opportunities than previous generations, Baby Boomers are achievement-oriented, dedicated and career-focused. They welcome exciting, challenging projects and strive to make a difference. Lastly, they are competitive. Since Baby Boomers equate work and position with self-worth, they are quite competitive. They are clever, resourceful and strive to win.<sup>267</sup>

After examining the database of membership at Friendship Baptist Church, the majority of the congregation falls within the Baby Boomer Generation as well as their leadership staff. The pastor also falls within the Baby Boomer Generation.

The longer you have been a member of an organization, the more helpful your information because you have been around to see the changes: positive or negative. The next question asked the participants is “How long have you been a member of FBC?” The findings show that the membership of Friendship Baptist Church is “stable.” Other words associated with “stable” that define this church is dependability,

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<sup>267</sup> Sally Kane, “Baby Boomers,” Aboutcareer.com, [legalcarrers.about.com/od/practice/a/Babyboomer.htm](http://legalcarrers.about.com/od/practice/a/Babyboomer.htm) [accessed November 14, 2014].

reliability, durability, and cohesion. The stability of the church seems to be connected to the focus they have on teaching and preaching the Word of God.

The pastor of FBC has two doctoral degrees. Almost half of the participants that took the survey have at least a baccalaureate degree or above from a college or university. Lianehey Membis states:

If you don't have a college degree, you're less likely to be up early on Sunday morning, singing church hymns. The study suggests that the less-educated are dropping out of the American religious sector, similarly to the way in which they have dropped out of the American labor market, said W. Bradford Wilcox, a professor of sociology at the University of Virginia.<sup>268</sup>

Churches have become more technical and intellectual to meet the needs of the educated congregant and simple enough to hold on to the uneducated congregant if possible. The findings indicate that FBC has found a system to satisfy both these groups: educated and uneducated, as far as maintaining and recruiting membership. Since this church is over one hundred years old, the demographics and its focus have changed. Although it is primarily African-American it is now drawing other races to its congregation.

Question Five deals with the position that the participant holds at FBC. Are you in a leadership role? The participants that hold a leadership position at FBC were almost twice the number of non-leaders. This shows that the leadership wants to be part of the change or the process. They want their voice and opinion heard. Positions of the participants varied and represented the majority of the ministries in FBC. This gave the researcher an overall perspective of FBC.

Question Six asks "How often do you attend Bible Study on a monthly basis?" A significant percentage of participants attend Bible Study every Wednesday, over forty

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<sup>268</sup> Liane Membis, "Less-educated Americans are Losing Religion," CNN, August 24, 2011, <http://www.religion.cnn.com> [accessed November 14, 2014].

percent. Half as many participants attend Bible Study three out of four Wednesdays a month. This shows that participants have the initiative to be in a position/place to be taught the Word of God. It does not indicate that one actually studies the Bible at home or during his personal time. Attendance at Bible Study does show that the majority of participants have a will to learn and have a teachable spirit.

Tony Morgan discusses Bible teaching and Bible engagement. He says, “Many churches focus more on Bible teaching than Bible engagement. He learned that the most effective strategy for moving people forward in their journey of faith is biblical engagement. Not just getting people into the Bible when they’re in church—which we do quite well—but helping them engage the Bible on their own outside of church.”<sup>269</sup> Only thirteen percent of the participants do not participate in Bible study.

Another avenue that FBC uses to teach its members is Christian Education Hour (Sunday School). This is the small group concept. Question Seven deals with the attendance on a monthly basis to Christian Education Hour. The largest percent of participants do not attend Christian Education. The Bible says in Hebrews 10:25, "Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another. . . ." <sup>270</sup> Rick Warren states “You need to spend time with other believers. I hope you have a church family. Be a part of whatever mechanism they have to connect you within a small group - whether that's a Sunday School or off-campus small groups.

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<sup>269</sup> Tony Morgan, “12 Reasons Why Your Church Does Not Produce Spiritual Growth,” [tonymorganlive.com](http://www.tonymorganmlive.com/2012/06/20-reasons-why-your-church-doesn't-produce-spiritual-growth/), June 20, 2012, <http://www.tonymorganmlive.com/2012/06/20-reasons-why-your-church-doesn't-produce-spiritual-growth/> [accessed November 19, 2014].

<sup>270</sup> Hebrews 10:25 [NIV].

You need the prayer support and encouragement of other believers. A Christian without a small group is an orphan.”<sup>271</sup>

There is a big difference in the findings from Bible study and Christian Education Hour. This difference is caused by the availability of each learning sessions. Bible Study has three options every Wednesday and three different times of the day (6:00 a.m., noon, and 6:00 p.m.). Christian Education Hour has one option. Christian Education Hour is held early on Sunday morning (8:30 a.m.). The participants that do attend Christian Education Hour are consistent in attending.

There are many ministries at Friendship Baptist Church. The majority ministries of FBC were listed in Question Eight. Eighty percent of the participants belong to one or more of the ministries listed on the survey. This finding shows that the major of the participants are involved in some way with the church. It shows that their commitment goes beyond just attending the church. They want to be ministered to or minister to someone. They are not pew members. Pew members are members who attend church regularly but are not involved in a ministry. Only twenty percent of the participants fall into this category.

The ministries listed on the survey are fellowship, new membership, Christian education, music, evangelism, hope in transition, technology, stewardship, deacon, ministerial staff, helps, spiritual support, youth, pastoral support, mother’s ministry, and none. These ministries cover the totality of the church. The ministries were established to meet the needs of the people and to help the church run decently and in order.

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<sup>271</sup> Rick Warren, “Three Habits to Help You Grow Spiritually,” *Daily Hope with Rick Warren*, May 21, 2014, [rickwarren.org/three-habits-to-help-you-grow-spiritually](http://rickwarren.org/three-habits-to-help-you-grow-spiritually) [accessed November 22, 2014].

The purpose of this research is to determine if there is an effective process in place at FBC to move the members toward Christ-like maturity/spiritual maturity. Question Nine of the survey asks for the individual participant to rate his personal spiritual growth. A very small percentage rated their growth as “not growing now”. This group of people are not motivated to grow in Christ. It is not a priority at this time in their life. They are satisfied where they are. The next group (approximately twelve of the eighty-two participants) are experiencing spiritual growth. This finding indicates a diminutive amount of effort on their part. Some growth is better than no growth. The last group rated their growth as significant, which is the largest group of the three. This group has a desire to grow and probably takes advantage of the teaching provided at FBC. Whether the growth is personally motivated or church directed is not known?

Question Ten asked for the opinion of the participants to state if FBC provides opportunities for an individual to grow spiritually. Surprisingly, everyone who participated in the survey responded yes, one hundred percent. According to this finding, FBC does provide opportunities for the members to grow spiritually. Opportunity does not mean there is an effective process in place. If opportunity is there then why are the congregants not growing? The researcher’s conclusion is the opportunity might be there but the congregants do not take advantage of what is currently being offered at FBC.

Question Eleven is directly connected to Question Ten. In Question Eleven, the participant had the opportunity to respond to what kind opportunities are available at FBC and how the individual grows spiritually. In the following chart you will find the themes to the responses to this question. The actual responses can be found in Appendix D. Sixty-nine of the eighty-two participants responded to this question. Thirteen of the

respondents agreed that the opportunity is there but did not respond to Question Eleven as to what opportunities are available. Many of the leaders who answered this question responded that the new Leadership Class has been an asset in informing them about spiritual maturity. This class was started January, 2014 for leaders only and is taught by the pastor. This class convenes weekly for a twelve-week session. A new twelve-week session begins every twelve weeks. One Hundred (100) leaders participate in this weekly leadership class.

Theme	Key Words and Phrases
Teaching	Bible Study Christian Education Leadership Classes Education Biblical Preaching Deeper Understanding
Relationship	Women's Prayer Conversations Spiritual Mentor Fellowshipping with other ministries Relationship with other ministries Collaboration Learning from one another Improving relationship with God
Ministry	Ministry Outreach Networking Opportunities to use gifts and talents Worship Getting Involved Participating

Table 6.1 – Question 11 Themes  
Source: Congregation Survey

Some of the responses to Question Eleven do not answer the question, “What opportunities are available at FBC?” The chart shows answers such as: many, endless opportunities (but do not name opportunities), too many, whatever area you desire to participate. These answers are vague. There are other answers that were specific and showed that there are some opportunities available at FBC.

Studying the Bible is one of the disciplines that help Christians grow spiritually. Question Twelve deals with this discipline. Almost half of the participants read their Bibles every day or almost every day. John MacArthur makes the following statement: “While we understand that sanctification is the work of the Holy Spirit in the lives of God’s people through His Word, it’s not an entirely passive process for believers. Spiritual maturity doesn’t come through osmosis—it takes careful discipline and hard work, even in the basics like how we study Scripture.”<sup>272</sup> Five percent of the participants almost never study the Bible. This is a small percentage. Almost all of the participants study the Bible at least once a month. This is a starting point. Learning how to grow spiritually is a life-long journey which occurs as you read and apply God's Word to your life. The apostle Paul teaches, "All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work."<sup>273</sup> In order for spiritual growth to occur, one must be taught, rebuked, corrected, and trained in God's Word. Then that person will be thoroughly equipped for every good work. This is the essence of spiritual growth.

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<sup>272</sup> John MacArthur, “The Importance of Careful Bible Study,” *Grace To You*, September 14, 2012.

<sup>273</sup> 2 Timothy 3:16-17 [NIV].

Question Thirteen “How often do you spend time meditating (quiet time) with God?” answers were very comparable to the answers in Question Twelve about studying the Bible. It appears that the same participants who are studying the Bible are also spending time in meditation with God. This is true in all categories except: almost never and once or twice a month. In the two categories, studying the Bible and meditating, percentages were lower, which is expected since participants have not truly made a commitment to grow spiritually, which is shown by their responses.

There are many obstacles that prevent one from growing spiritually. Five of the obstacles were listed in Question Fourteen: family responsibility, job responsibility, lack of prioritizing, church structure, and too busy. The largest percentage was lack of prioritizing which means there is a need for help in the area of time management. One must learn how to balance home, job, and ministry in order to grow spiritually. Doug Patch states: “Tension, confusion, frustration, and even spiritual defeat often confront the Christian who tries to balance church ministry and home ministry.”<sup>274</sup>

Twenty-one participants did not answer this question. The researcher should have had an “other” category for these participants because it is apparent that the five obstacles listed did not apply to them. Another option was to have space for the participants, whose obstacle was not listed, to be able to write the obstacle down.

The final question in the survey asks for the opinion of the participant. It grants the participant the opportunity to state what Friendship Baptist Church can do differently to help its congregants to grow spiritually. The responses range from areas in leadership to teaching young adults. The individual responses are located in Appendix E. Located

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<sup>274</sup> Doug Patch, “Balancing Home and Church Ministry,” xenos.org, <http://www.xenos.org/essays/balancing-home-church-ministry> [accessed November 1, 2014].

below are the common areas of change. There are four common areas of change as follows: no change (participants stated everything should remain the same), self-change (the individual needs to make some personal changes within themselves like motivation to grow), leadership changes (leaders need to be held accountable and leaders need to be more aware of what they say, do, and treat others), and teaching changes (more theological teaching and expand classes and days taught).

Theme	Key Words and Phrases
No Changes	Doing well in that area Not at this time Just continue to be open and real Continue to provide growth opportunities Just keep up the good work The church is wonderful FBC offers plenty of opportunities Nothing at this time Vehicle is in place Nothing (four times)
Self- Changes	My growth has to come from me I have to make time and stop being lazy Changes are needed within my self FBC cannot make people grow, they have to want growth I have to be willing to ask for help It is a personal choice to grow It is up to me now (2 times) Responsibility on me to take a proactive role in my growth My lack is coming from my own struggles
Leadership Changes	Leadership should treat others with dignity and respect Start holding leadership accountable for action (3 times)

	Hold people in leadership roles more accountable Stop competition in leadership and be accessible Leadership is very territorial Stuck up attitudes
Teaching Changes	Provide classes that target spiritual growth specifically Teach life-church balance More direct Bible teaching More teaching and preaching Teach more detail meaning of scripture and word origin Expand week day teaching to accommodate those who work Sundays and Wednesdays

Table 6.2 – Question 15 Themes  
 Source: Congregation Survey

In the first interview, the researcher had six pre-determined questions to ask each person who was interviewed. The definition of Spiritual Formation was given during these interviews as: “being conformed to Christ-like characteristics for the sake of others.” The interviews were conducted May and August, 2014. The three (3) key leaders have been members of FBC between four (4) years and twenty-two (22) years. The interviewees ranked spiritual formation as very important to the ministry. They agreed that FBC does not have a process in place to move the church toward spiritual growth. These leaders stated they are not prepared or have not been trained to move the ministry toward spiritual growth but the new Leadership Classes are helping in this area. Leadership class began January, 2014. Interviewee Three stated, “about 70% is not capitalizing on the ministries opportunities to capacity. We fall short on spiritual practices.”<sup>275</sup>

A second interview with all three leaders was instrumental in answering some questions to clear up some items and get their thought pattern on some additional

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<sup>275</sup> Interviewee Three, interviewed by researcher, Toledo, OH, May 29, 2014.

questions related to the congregation's survey. These (5) five questions were sent by e-mail to the three leaders to answer prior to the face-to-face interview.

Question One asked, "What are some obstacles (in your opinion or experience) that hinder a person's spiritual growth that are missing from the original survey?" Some of the responses are: (1) desire and commitment missing, (2) hurt received by church members, (3) substance abuse, (4) involved in too many ministries, and (5) ego.

Question Two asks, "What does meditating (quiet time) with God look like to you?" Answers from interviewees are: (1) walking or driving, listening to gospel music, (2) alone time with God, (3) quieting your mind, (4) meditating on God's Word early in the morning, (5) still in His presence, and (6) closing oneself up for 2 hours and seeking direction from God and journalizing it.

Question Three asks, "What are some avenues that help the believer to grow spiritually?" Interviewees said: (1) Bible study, (2) personal study, (3) researching the Scriptures, (4) consistent prayer life, (5) being among other believers, (6) reading spiritual literature, and (7) good, teacher, good mentor, good preacher, good relationship with ministry.

Question Four asks, "What does significant growth in the area of spiritual growth look like to you as a leader?" Responses are: (1) maturing in their walk in Christ, (2) lifestyle changes, (3) speech changes, (4) consider others before yourself, (5) better communication, and (6) loving others that may not be capable of loving you back.

Question Five asks, "How would you suggest that spiritual growth be measured or assessed?" One of the interviewee had no idea how to measure spiritual growth. The other interviewees suggested: (1) a survey which would identify areas of help needed,

and (2) both tangible and intangible aspects such as (what do we see, what did they do, what are their plans) and set up criteria by ministry for measuring.

The interview with the pastor of FBC took place on May 31, 2014 in his office. This pastor has been preaching and teaching at FBC since 1985, which is twenty-nine (29) years. The major changes he has witnessed in the congregation besides growth in membership are loyalty to the teachings of God as opposed to consistence of church membership. The pastor's perspective on spiritual growth is that it is very important and ranks the church as a whole as moderate in spiritual growth. That is the reason he started leadership classes this year, to start training leaders in spiritual formation and how to be an effective leader. The largest growth over the last ten years (excluding membership growth) has been in the outreach ministries (New Concept Drug Program and Naomi House for women). The pastor feels there is a process in place now which started January, 2014. A new leadership development started, which is twelve (12) weeks of straight teachings and then off for four (4) weeks.

The second interview with the pastor was held on August 25, 2014. The same five (5) questions that were asked of the three (3) key leaders were asked of the pastor. In Question One dealing with obstacles, the pastor's response was lack of personal commitment to application of the Word of God to their personal life. In Question Two he describes meditation as: (1) reading God's Word, (2) hearing hymns and spiritual songs and reflecting on them to receive new revelation, and (3) praying with revelation insight. In Question Three ask for avenues of growth. The pastor stated consistent study time at home and with church family and believer's application of learned truths through trials. Question Four inquires about what significant growth looks like. The pastor stated,

“Significant growth in the area of spiritual growth is when the personal desire for the application of God’s Word is sought after as a life change instead of a moment of relief.”<sup>276</sup> Question Five solicited information on how to assess spiritual growth. He replied, “Spiritual growth can be measured or assessed by direct questions given to the believer from the Word of God in the different areas of Christian growth found in the Bible.”<sup>277</sup>

### **Conclusion**

The Statement of the Problem for this research project involves the question, “Does Friendship Baptist Church have an effective spiritual formation process in place?” The researcher has come to the conclusion that the answer is “no” based on the data collected. The key words in this statement are “effective” and “process”. There have been some changes at FBC since the start of this project which is moving the church in the path of spiritual formation, however, there is not a process in place. Spiritual formation is the process used to grow disciples into Christlikeness.

What does it take to grow up and become spiritually mature? Why do some Christians not grow as they should? Growth is a sign of health; lack of growth is a signal that something is wrong. People understand the concept of growth in the physical development of humans and why it is important. Babies are immature physically and mentally, but everyone expects them to develop. If babies do not grow, there is a problem.

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<sup>276</sup> Pastor of Friendship Baptist Church, interviewed by researcher, Toledo, OH, August 25, 2014.

<sup>277</sup> Ibid.

Spiritual growth is a similar concept but far more important. Growth is development or improvement toward a goal called maturity (or in the Bible, “perfection”). When one is “born again” as a child of God, he is spiritually immature. As time passes, one should develop qualities or abilities which the Bible says characterize the mature. A congregation matures as individual members mature.

In Richard Foster’s book, *Streams of Living Water*, he discusses the “contemplative stream, holiness stream, charismatic stream, and the evangelical stream.”<sup>278</sup> The Contemplative Stream is the prayer-filled life. Nothing is more striking in Jesus’ life than his intimacy with the Father. “Like a recurring pattern in a quilt, so prayer threads its way through Jesus’ life.”<sup>279</sup> The Holiness Stream is the virtuous life. “Jesus points to an inner life with God that transforms the heart and builds deeply ingrained habits of virtue.”<sup>280</sup> The Charismatic Stream is the Spirit-empowered life. Nothing is more satisfying to observe than how Jesus lived and moved in the power of the Spirit. The Evangelical Stream is the Word-centered life. “In Jesus the doors were thrown wide open. The Kingdom of God’s love has been made available to all. Whenever, wherever, whoever, in Jesus name.”<sup>281</sup> All one has to do is tap into it.

Many Scriptures describe the need to grow and mature spiritually. The following Scriptures are paraphrased:

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<sup>278</sup> Richard J. Foster, *Streams of Living Water* (San Francisco: HarperCollins Publishers, 1989), 4.

<sup>279</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.

<sup>280</sup> *Ibid.*, 8.

<sup>281</sup> *Ibid.*, 15.

- Ephesians 4:14-15 – Be no longer children, but grow up in Christ.<sup>282</sup>
- 2 Peter 3:18 – Grow in the areas of grace and knowledge.<sup>283</sup>
- 2 Thessalonians 1:3 – The Thessalonians grew exceedingly in faith.<sup>284</sup>
- Philippians 1:9 – Paul prayed for their love to abound more and more.<sup>285</sup>

In order to grow, the individual must have a desire to grow spiritually. In the physical realm, children want to grow. A child makes a statement like “I want to grow up to be just like mommy or daddy.” Parents become excited when kids learn something new like the first step, the first word, or draw a picture. Everyone wants children to develop new abilities. In spiritual matters, Christians must want to grow. 1 Peter 2:2 states, “Like newborn babies, crave pure spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow up in your salvation.”

Some Christians like being spiritual babies. Some do not want to grow. It is easy to be a baby—no responsibility. Others feed you, clothe you, and change your diaper. In the church, you do not have to teach, rebuke sin, or do work. It is a free ride! Ruth Haley Barton states in her book, *Sacred Rhythms*, “Desire is the beginning of the spiritual journey. When we pay attention to our longing and allow questions about our longing to strip away the outer layers of self-definition, we are tapping into the deepest dynamic of the spiritual life. The stirring of spiritual desire indicates that God’s Spirit is already at work within us.”<sup>286</sup>

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<sup>282</sup> Ephesians 4:14-15 [NIV].

<sup>283</sup> 2 Peter 3:18 [NIV].

<sup>284</sup> 2 Thessalonians 1:3 [NIV].

<sup>285</sup> Philippians 1:9 [NIV].

Some members who once wanted to grow, may lose that desire. Members may start off on fire for the Lord, but lose their zeal. Individuals develop a spirit of indifference or negligence. Others develop a level of maturity and stagnate. They are satisfied, thinking no more growth is needed. Scriptures teach that growth is always needed (Scriptures paraphrased):

- Philippians 3:12-14 – Paul, as mature as he was, did not consider himself to have achieved perfection (maturity) such that he could cease striving to improve. He forgot past achievements (and failures) and pressed on to greater accomplishments.<sup>287</sup>
- Matthew 26:31-35 – Peter thought he had reached a level where he would never deny Jesus. But that very night he denied him three times.<sup>288</sup>
- 1 Corinthians 10:12 – Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall. Christians never reach the point we are so mature that we cannot fall.<sup>289</sup>

One of the main reasons “Christians do not grow is that they do not see the need for growing. They have no desire to work and serve to the full extent of their ability. When people develop a burning hunger and thirst to work for the Lord, then they will develop the other steps they need to grow.”<sup>290</sup>

In order to grow, relationships must be characterized by persistence and self-sacrifice. Christians can never do that on their own. The kind of love one longs to show others is only found in a growing relationship with God. Without God's power in one's life, the love will run out. One does not build that kind of relationship with God - one that

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<sup>286</sup> Ruth Haley Barton, *Sacred Rhythms* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2006), 25.

<sup>287</sup> Philippians 3:12-14 [NIV].

<sup>288</sup> Matthew 26: 31-35 [NIV].

<sup>289</sup> 1 Corinthians 10:12 [NIV].

<sup>290</sup> Duane C. Tisdale, Leadership Class Lecture, FBC, Toledo, OH, October 21, 2014.

will help Christian love others when one wants to give up - by accident. One does it through habits. Rick Warren suggests these simple three habits that will help people grow in relationship with God:

1. A quiet time – Let God talk to you through the Bible and through prayer. Nothing will help your life more. The Bible says in 2 Corinthians 4:16, “This is the reason we never lose heart. Our body does suffer wear and tear but every day the inward man receives fresh strength.” (Phillips) Outwardly our body suffers wear and tear. But spiritually we can be renewed every day by spending time alone with God. It's not hard. Read through a chapter of the Bible, mediate on it, and talk with God about what's going on in your life.
2. Small group – The Bible says in Hebrews 10:25. “Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another....” (NIV) You need to spend time with other believers. I hope you have a church family. Be a part of whatever mechanism they have to connect you within a small group - whether that's a Sunday school or off-campus small groups. You need the prayer support and encouragement of other believers. A Christian without a small group is an orphan.
3. Worship through song – Psalms 59:16 says, “I will sing about your strength, my God, and I will celebrate because of your love.” (NLT) Singing builds you up. The singing time at your church isn't just the warm-up act. It's just as important as the message. Don't miss it this weekend. <sup>291</sup>

### **Recommendations**

In order for FBC to be the church “that makes a difference” and to fulfill the instructions of Jesus Christ, it is time to start putting in place a way to grow its congregants spiritually. It is true that the pastor has started by growing its leadership team (which consists of approximately one-hundred leaders) by having weekly leadership classes. This is good but the other 800 congregants are left behind.

The researcher's first recommendation is to educate the church in the spiritual disciplines. In Terry Wardle's book, *Draw close to the Fire*, he states: “Spiritual

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<sup>291</sup> Rick Warren, “Three Habits to Help You Grow Spiritually,” *Daily Hope with Rick Warren*, May 21, 2014, [rickwarren.org/three-habits-to-help-you-grow-spiritually](http://rickwarren.org/three-habits-to-help-you-grow-spiritually) [accessed November 22, 2014].

disciplines are activities we embrace that give room for God to work in our lives. They are effective channels of grace because they complement the principles of the Kingdom.”<sup>292</sup> Wardle breaks the disciplines into two major areas: disciplines of abstinence and disciplines of engagement.

Abstinence means to abstain or give up something. The following disciplines and brief description fall into this category:

*Solitude*: choosing to come apart from our daily activities in order to be alone with God.

*Silence*: choosing against the noise of the world and self in order to listen to the whispers of God.

*Fasting*: abstaining from food for a specific period of time in order to lessen the grip our flesh has on our lives and to open the way to experience God’s strength in weakness.

*Frugality*: choosing, in a world of material excess, to say no to luxuries and wants, focusing on God as our satisfaction in life.

*Chastity*: choosing to set aside, for a season, the sexual aspect of the marriage relationship in order to concentrate on spiritual union. Abstinence in marriage requires mutual consent.

*Secrecy*: choosing to follow the admonition of Jesus to do our deeds of service and giving in private.

*Sacrifice*: giving beyond our ability in response to God’s self-giving and as a means to enhance trust in our lives.<sup>293</sup>

The researcher is aware that the person must have a desire to grow first or the teaching will not be of benefit to that person. How are Christians motivated or increase the desire to grow spiritually? According to the data collected, it must be self-motivation. It is necessary for the leaders of the church to model it for others in the church. Discipleship

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<sup>292</sup> Terry Wardle, *Draw Close to the Fire* (Grand Rapids: Chosen Books, 1998), 223-224.

<sup>293</sup> *Ibid.*, 226.

relationships, spiritual growth testimonies, the pastor speaking about spiritual disciplines from the pulpit, and prayers being raised to God to touch and work in the hearts of the individuals of the church are just a few examples for helping others grow.

In order for the congregation to grow spiritually, the leaders must grow spiritually. Enlist the services of an outsider (someone outside of the congregation and expert in this area) to facilitate a spiritual formation seminar with leaders (preferably a week-end session off-campus). This would enable leaders to work on their spiritual formation and transfer what has been learned to the ministries in which they participate.

The second major area of spiritual discipline is engagement. Engagement opens the way for Christians to receive instead of give up. Wardle gives this explanation between the two categories to “out breathing and in breathing.” The disciplines that fall in this category are:

*Study:* choosing to spend time meditating on God’s Word. The goal of this discipline is not acquiring information but allowing God to form our lives spiritually.

*Worship:* declaring the wonder and supreme worth of God and engaging our hearts, minds, souls, and bodies in an ongoing offering of adoration.

*Celebration:* choosing to find and experience joy in the life God gives us; celebrating the goodness of the created order in all its beauty and greatness.

*Service:* engaging our lives, resources, talents, and spiritual gifts in ministry to others. We accept Jesus’ example of servanthood through the towel and basin.

*Prayer:* communing with God through prayer and through the power of the Holy Spirit, as well as affecting the world around us and the spiritual realm through our requests and petitions.

*Fellowship:* choosing to be integrated into the healthy spiritual community as a place of united strength, increased faith, and demonstrated love.

*Confession:* letting Jesus work through our weakness and bring us wholeness

as we bring all things into the light. This discipline involves opening our broken hearts before one another for mutual strength and support.

*Submission:* choosing to come under the authority and directions of those in anointed spiritual leadership. This discipline also involves seeking out spiritual directors who will help guide us toward Christlikeness.<sup>294</sup>

The second recommendation is that learning the spiritual disciplines are not enough, one must exercise them, practice them, apply them, and have patience to work them. Exercise and practice are essential to physical development, therefore, exercise and practice are essential to spiritual growth. The following two Scriptures reinforce spiritual exercise: the author of Hebrew states, “But solid food is for the mature, who by constant use have trained themselves to distinguish good from evil.”<sup>295</sup> The apostle Paul says, “Exercise daily in God—no spiritual flabbiness, please! Workouts in the gymnasium are useful, but a disciplined life in God is far more so, making you fit both today and forever.”<sup>296</sup> In other words, to understand the Bible, study it again and again, talk to others, drill yourself, memorize. It is easy to say study the Bible but it is necessary to teach Christians how to study the Bible. For instance studying the Bible can be by book or topic. To learn to pray, do it over and over and over. Once again example is worth a thousand words. If the church is going to go on a fast, it is important to discuss the different kinds of fasts and why you are fasting.

By definition, growth requires time. It is progress and development as time passes. There are two points each Christian needs to remember: (1) do not expect to reach the goal overnight and (2) do not become discouraged by mistakes and rebukes. James

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<sup>294</sup> Terry Wardle, *Draw Close to the Fire* (Grand Rapids: Chosen Books, 1998), 227.

<sup>295</sup> Hebrew 5:14 [NIV].

<sup>296</sup> 1 Timothy 4:7 [The Message].

1:4 says, “But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete.”<sup>297</sup> One must have patience. Do not become discouraged by mistakes and rebukes. If one is going to become mature, the Christian has to keep going in spite of the mistake or rebuke. Some of the greatest Bible characters committed terrible errors and had to be rebuked:

- Moses made excuses when God called him to lead Israel out of bondage.
- David committed adultery with Bathsheba and was rebuked by Nathan.
- Peter denied Jesus three times.
- Paul (Saul) executed Christians before his conversion.
- Thomas doubted Jesus’ resurrection.
- All the apostles forsook Jesus when He was arrested and crucified.<sup>298</sup>

The third recommendation is to develop a spiritual formation curriculum which will help move the congregants of FBC to Christ-like everyday living. This curriculum would consist of dealing with the body, soul, and spirit. Gwen Ebner makes this statement in her book, “The Spirit is the vital principle—the inner, effective, energizing and divine principle of life. It represents the part of us created in the image of God so that we can know God and enjoy His fellowship.”<sup>299</sup> The curriculum will consist of the spiritual disciplines, life application, and spiritual formation exercises to enhance intimate relationship with God, hands-on activities, and why spiritual formation is not an option but necessary. This could include opportunities for church members to experience spiritual disciplines as individual or in group such as spiritual retreats where they experience them and share together what they have experienced.

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<sup>297</sup> James 1:4 [NKJV].

<sup>298</sup> Duane C. Tisdale, Leadership Class lecture, FBC, Toledo OH, September 16, 2014.

<sup>299</sup> Gwen Ebner, *Formed Holy in His Image: Spirit, Soul, & Body* (2011), location 774 Kindle.

The fourth recommendation is to reinstate the mentorship program, with modifications for new members with a training program for mentors. Mentor training will include step by step instructions, assignment responsibilities, and documentation of activities. The Overseer of New Members will be responsible for assigning a mentor to the new members.

A further research study is needed to determine how to assess the process of spiritual formation including assessment tools for Friendship Baptist Church.

APPENDIX A  
FULL GOSPEL DISTINCTIVES

## APPENDIX A

**FULL GOSPEL DISTINCTIVES**

**I. We believe** in the perpetual and continuing ecclesiastical value of all spiritual gifts for the edification of the body of Christ until the end of this Church Age, which will be consummated by the return of our Lord Jesus Christ ( Ephesians 4:11-13 , 1 Corinthians 12-14 ; Romans 12 ).

**II. We believe** in the Divine personhood of the Holy Spirit and His present-day ministry to Believers, including the sovereign distribution of spiritual gifts, which empowers Believers for service in the Contemporary Church ( 1 Corinthians 12:7-11).

**III. We believe** in Jesus Christ as the Sovereign Giver of spiritual gifts to the church. We further believe spiritual gifts are given for the perfecting of the Saints, for work of the ministry, and for the edifying of the Body of Christ and are given without regard to ethnicity, social class, or gender (Ephesians 4:7-12; Galatians 3:26-28).

**IV. We believe** in the full autonomy of the local church as an independent entity under the Lordship of Christ, through pastoral authority, with regards to: A) government, polity, and operations (Titus 1:5; Acts 15:1 – 35), B) discipline (1 Corinthians 5:5; Matthew 18:15-17; 2 Thessalonians 3:6, 14-15) and C) with the added value of the Episcopacy as a covering (Titus 1: 5; Acts 15:1-35).

**V. We believe** in the value of biblical terminology for leadership in the contemporary church: Bishop, Overseer, Pastor, Minister, Elder, and Deacon. We believe all of these are designations for servant-leaders (Jeremiah 3:15; Acts 20:28; 2 Corinthians 6:4; 1 Timothy 3:1-7 ).

**VI. We believe** in the formal and intentional praise and worship of Almighty God as a proper, spirit-led, corporate acknowledgement and response to His person and work (Psalm 46-50; John 4:23, 24).

**VII. We believe** in Jesus Christ as the Baptizer with the Holy Spirit, who brings men and women at salvation into relationship with Himself and His Body, the Church. We further believe that it is the baptism of the Holy Ghost that places one into the Body of Christ. All Believers have been baptized by Christ with the Holy Ghost (Matthew 3:11; John 1:33; 1 Corinthians 12:13).

**VIII. We believe** in the indwelling of the Holy Ghost for all Believers and that the Holy Ghost verifies and validates the Believer as part of the Body of Christ (Romans 8:9).

**IX. We believe** in the spirit-filled life as desirable, valuable, and an issue of obedience for all Believers who are commanded to be filled with the Holy Ghost. We acknowledge that within the Body of Christ, the term, “filled with the Holy Ghost” is often used

interchangeably with the term, “baptism of the Holy Ghost.” When referring to the controlling presence and power of the Holy Ghost, as a result of the submissive will and desire of the Believer, we allow such alternation of terms. We believe it is the will and command of God that every Believer be “filled,” “walk in,” be “led by,” and “live in” the power of the Holy Ghost (Ephesians 5:18; Galatians 5:16, 18, 25).

**X. We believe** that it is God’s desire that all Believers live under the “Divine Direction” of the Holy Ghost. We believe that the filling of the Holy Ghost is an ongoing ministry of the Spirit in the life of the Believer, that enables the Believer to live a life of power, victory, and glory to God (Acts 1:8, 2:4, 4:8, 4:31).

**XI. We believe** the Holy Ghost fills or empowers Believers for service in the Kingdom of God. Being filled with the Holy Ghost is the result of continuing submission to Divine power and control (Acts 1:8; Ephesians 5:18).

**XII. We believe** all Believers are baptized with the Holy Ghost and all Believers should be filled with the Holy Ghost (1 Corinthians 12:13; Ephesians 5:18).<sup>300</sup>

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<sup>300</sup> Bishop Paul S. Morton Sr., “Full Gospel Baptist Church Fellowship Manual,” (Revised 2005), 13 [accessed May 17, 2012].

APPENDIX B  
BAPTIST DOCTRINES

## APPENDIX B

**BAPTIST DOCTRINES**

- a.) We believe in the Triune God – the Eternally Self-Existent, “*I AM*”, the Creator of heaven and earth and Redeemer of mankind manifested in three persons; Almighty Father, Divine Son and Holy Ghost. (**Genesis 1:1, John 5:7, John 1:1, 4:24, Matthew 10:20, II Corinthians 3:17-18**).
- b.) We believe in the Bible as the inspired, infallible Word of God, inerrant in the original autographs and the only rule of faith, guide for practice and indisputable and ultimate authority of the Revelation of God, His Will and His Way. (**II Timothy 3:16-17, Psalms 19:7-11, 2 Peter 1:16-21**).
- c.) We believe in the deity of Jesus Christ, the incarnation of the father, born of a virgin, Very God of every God for, and by whom all things were created (**I John 1:1-10**).
- d.) We believe in the substitutionary atonement of the Lord Jesus Christ, that He, by the grace of God tasted death for every man and that all must be born again through faith in Him or are forever lost. Redemption is accomplished by the cross and blood of our Lord. Jesus Christ, by grace through faith, believing in the heart that God raised Him from the dead. Salvation is by Jesus Christ and none other for God has highly exalted Him and given a name, which is above every name, that at the Name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, earth and those under the earth. We further believe that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the Glory of God the Father. (**Hebrews 2:9, John 3:1-18, John 6:44-49, Ephesians 2:8, Romans 10:9, Philippians 2:9-11**).
- e.) We believe in the physical resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ and that He ascended bodily into the heaven and is now at the right hand of the Father as our Mediator, High Priest and Advocate. (**Acts 3:12-26, John 20, Hebrews 9:24, I Corinthians 15:12-28**).
- f.) We believe in water baptism and Holy Communion – The Lord’s Supper as the ordinances of the church to be observed as public declaration of salvation through Jesus Christ and the commemoration of His death, burial and resurrection in victory over Satan, death, hell and the grave. (**Matthew 3:11,14, 26:26-29, Luke 22:17-23**).
- g.) We believe in the personal, visible, imminent return of Jesus Christ both for His Saints and with His Saints in reign to victory. (**I Thessalonians 4:13-18, Corinthians 15:50-55, Revelation 19:19-20, 20:1-6**).
- h.) We believe in the authority of the believer over the enemy satan and the victory to be gained by the exercise of that authority in the areas of deliverance, healing and holiness. (**Ephesians 1:20-23, 6:10-7**).

i.) We believe in the personality and reality of satan as the enemy of the Kingdom of God, Saints of God and of the Lord; and in his ultimate defeat by the Lord Jesus Christ and potential defeat in the lives of spirit filled believers clothed in the Armor of God. **(Revelation 12:9-10, Matthew 4:2-11, Isaiah 14:12-17, John 8).**

j.) We believe in the autonomy of the local church as an independent entity with regard to matters of government, polity operation and discipline. **(I Corinthians 5:5, II Thessalonians 3:6, 14-15, Acts 11:22, Titus 1:5).**<sup>301</sup>

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<sup>301</sup> Bishop Paul S. Morton Sr., "Full Gospel Baptist Church Fellowship Manual," (Revised 2005), 12 [accessed May 17, 2012].

APPENDIX C  
SPIRITUAL GROWTH SURVEY

## APPENDIX C

**SPIRITUAL GROWTH SURVEY****About You**

Check one answer to the following questions:

1. Gender  
 Male  
 Female
  
2. What is your age category?  
 20-30  
 31-40  
 41-50  
 51-60  
 61-70  
 71 or older
  
3. How long have you been a member of FBC?  
 Less than 1 year  
 1-5 year(s)  
 6-10 years  
 11-15 years  
 16-20 years  
 21-25 years  
 Over 26 years
  
4. My highest education completed is  
 Less than high school  
 High school  
 Bachelor's Degree  
 Master's Degree  
 PhD or Doctorate Degree
  
5. Are you in a Leadership role at FBC?  
 Yes  
 No  
If yes, what is your title? \_\_\_\_\_

## Spiritual Growth Questions

6. How often do you attend Bible Study on a monthly basis?
- 0  
 1  
 2  
 3  
 4
7. How often do you attend Christian Education Hour on a monthly basis?
- 0  
 1  
 2  
 3  
 4
8. Check any of the ministries you are involved in? You may check more than one.
- Fellowship  
 New Membership  
 Christian Education  
 Music  
 Evangelism  
 Hope in Transition  
 Technology  
 Stewardship  
 Deacon  
 Ministerial  
 Helps  
 Spiritual Support  
 Youth  
 Pastoral Support  
 Mothers Ministry  
 None
9. How would you describe your spiritual growth?
- Not growing right now  
 Some growth  
 Significant growth
10. In your opinion, does FBC provide opportunities for you to growth spiritually?
- Yes  
 No
11. If you answered yes to #10, what opportunities are available? \_\_\_\_\_

12. How often do you study your Bible?
- Almost never
  - Once or twice a month
  - Once or twice a week
  - 3-5 times a week
  - Almost every day
  - Every day
13. How often do you spend time meditating (quiet time) with God?
- Almost never
  - Once or twice a month
  - Once or twice a week
  - 3-5 times a week
  - Almost every day
  - Every day
14. Check any obstacle that hinders your spiritual growth?
- Family responsibilities
  - Job responsibilities
  - Lack of prioritizing
  - Church structure
  - Too busy
15. What can FBC do differently to help you grow spiritual?

APPENDIX D  
INFORMED CONSENT LETTER

## APPENDIX D

**INFORMED CONSENT LETTER**

Patricia A. Snelling  
Winebrenner Theological Seminary  
950 North Main Street  
Findlay, OH 45840  
snellingp@findlay.edu

The purpose of this research study is to determine if the Friendship Baptist Church has an effective spiritual formation process in place to move their congregants to Christlikeness. The participant will take part in a 2-part oral interview which consists of pre-determined questions. This research will help the leaders of the Friendship Baptist Church assess their current spiritual formation process and make any changes necessary. The participant's name will not be mentioned in the research. The participant has the right to refuse to answer any questions and can terminate the interview at any time.

I voluntarily participant in this research study; and I consent to allow portions of the interview to be quoted and utilized in this research study that will be published for public review.

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Name

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Date

APPENDIX E  
PERMISSION LETTER PEW RESEARCH

## APPENDIX E

**PERMISSION LETTER PEW RESEARCH CENTER**

Nov 17 2014 09:55:20

Dear Ms. Snelling,

Thank you for your interest in the work of the Pew Research Center. We are happy to grant you permission to include the "Young People Less Religiously Affiliated," chart from our Religion Among the Millennials report in your dissertation for Winebrenner Theological Seminary.

Permission is granted for one-time use only. If you would like to use the chart again, or if you would like to use other materials from the Pew Research Center, please submit those requests separately.

Please note the following requirements for using our summaries:

1. As a strictly nonpartisan, non-advocacy organization, we do not grant permission for reprints that in any way imply that Pew Research endorses a cause, candidate, issue, party, product, business or religion. (Please see our full terms & conditions at <http://www.pewresearch.org/terms-and-conditionals/>.) This permission to reprint our content requires that you not imply that Pew Research endorses your school or point of view.
2. The following copyright language, including the full URL pointing your readers to our website, must appear with the chart: Pew Research Center, "Religion Among the Millennials," 2010. <http://www.pewforum.org/2010/02/17/religion-among-the-millennials/>.
3. The chart must be reprinted in its entirety.

Feel free to contact me if you have any questions or concerns or need further clarification about the requirements for using the summaries.

Best Regards,

C~~

Carla Ritz ~  
Executive Assistant  
Religion & Public Life Project

*1615 L Street NW, Suite 700, Washington, D.C. 20036*

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