Spiritual Formation for Seminary Spiritual Leaders

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BETHEL UNIVERSITY
BETHEL SEMINARY ST. PAUL

SPIRITUAL FORMATION FOR SEMINARIAN SPIRITUAL LEADERS

A THESIS PROJECT SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT
OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DOCTOR OF MINISTRY DEGREE
IN ORGANIC LEADERSHIP

BY
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Thank you God for the lavish and extravagant love that you offer us expressed in
everything and every way. Forgive us for what we miss, and may we strive to not miss a
detail. Thank you for the call that you place on our lives, rooted in your love. Help us to
focus upon your love, and cling to your calling at all costs.

Thank you God for the precious gifts of my children. My son is your “bringer of
light,” and my daughter “shines your light.” These bright lights will never dim, for
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Thank you God for the inspirational example set by my parents of supporting
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God for the venues in which you used me such as this project. Thank you God for those
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ABSTRACT

Jesus changed the world through spiritual formation. Jesus prioritized an intentional focus upon His intimate relationship with God through which He was able to do God’s will. He separated Himself from culture and people at times to be alone with God in nature, pursuing God at the deepest level. Jesus was then able to lead like no other and to change the world for God. Jesus is the ultimate example of spiritual formation and maturity. Seminary is the training arena for spiritual leaders. Seminary spiritual formation training and guidance at the deepest level can be most beneficial to the spiritual leaders, their families, churches, ministries, communities, and the seminaries themselves.

This project addressed the lack of seminary spiritual formation of spiritual leaders. This project began with a theological and biblical review of spiritual formation of spiritual leaders with a thorough examination of scripture. Both Old and New Testament spiritual leaders were examined. The literature review of spiritual formation of spiritual leaders provided a survey of multiple authors on the subject, offering options and methods for spiritual leader growth formation. Common themes were established and incorporated into survey questions for the survey method research. The survey questioned seminary graduate participants. The results of all three areas of research were combined to encourage seminary spiritual leaders to be free through intentional and individual deep spiritual growth formation. The hope is that this research might lead to ways to better equip and empower seminarian spiritual leaders with spiritual growth formation.
DEDICATION

This project is dedicated to God who loves without limits and beyond, if we let Him. This is the God who calls the least likely beyond themselves. This project is further dedicated to my most beloved children. Let nothing and no one hold you back, or stop you from Him or His call. This project is also dedicated to God’s seminarian spiritual leaders, His Noahs, His Moseses, His Joshuas, His Davids, His Jobs, His prophets, His John the Baptists, and to His most precious son, Jesus, through whom we are called to freedom and truth. Do whatever it takes to be with Him. Let Him have you!
CHAPTER ONE: THE PROBLEM AND CONTEXT

Statement of the Problem

The problem this project addressed was the lack of spiritual formation among evangelical seminarians. In response to this problem the researcher (a) studied the Old Testament and New Testament characters for spiritual formation themes (b) reviewed current literature regarding spiritual formation, (c) conducted survey studies among recent evangelical seminary graduates, and (d) found development strategies and practices for how evangelical seminarians may further their spiritual formation. The hope is that this research might lead to ways to better equip, sustain, and empower seminarian spiritual leaders with spiritual growth formation and maturity.

Delimitations

The research targeted recent seminary graduates. The research was limited to exploring key biblical leaders in the Old and New Testaments. The research survey questions focused on training in spiritual growth formation, spiritual practices, and mentoring or spiritual direction. This project researched seminary graduate spiritual leaders and their practices or lack of practices in spiritual formation, spiritual disciplines, mentoring, and spiritual direction.

Assumptions

The first assumption was that all one does in seminary derives from the Bible in its entirety. The second assumption was that seminarian spiritual leaders read the Word and pray as biblically recommended. The third assumption was that seminarian spiritual
leaders, as biblical leaders, have or will have enormous demands and challenges that require in-depth spiritual formation. The fourth assumption was that the historical culture of churches does not cultivate the kind of intimacy with God in their spiritual leaders that in turn results in spiritual maturity. The fifth assumption was that in-depth spiritual formation at the seminary master’s degree level could be beneficial to spiritual leaders, their ministry, and their families.

Subproblems

The first subproblem was to study Old and New Testament spiritual leaders for spiritual formation themes. Spiritual formation includes the intentional formation of a person through intimate connection with the Holy Spirit to become internally and externally like Christ. The second subproblem was to review the current literature regarding spiritual formation themes. Specific themes explored included: spiritual formation growth methods, spiritual disciplines, and mentoring. The third subproblem was to develop and conduct the field research obtained through survey method research of recent evangelical seminary graduates focused upon their spiritual formation, spiritual growth methods, spiritual disciplines, and mentoring or spiritual direction. The fourth subproblem was to develop strategies and practices for how seminarian spiritual leaders may further their spiritual formation.

Setting of the Project

The setting of this project was with seminary graduates from evangelical seminaries in the United States. Some of the seminary degree programs that are currently offered at the master’s degree level include, but are not limited to, studies in divinity, theology,
counseling, and family therapy. The intended seminary graduate participants were from different programs.

Historically, seminaries offered minimal spiritual formation courses. Currently, the lack of support within the church and culture for encouragement of the seminary spiritual leaders in intentional individual spiritual formation has resulted in limited course offerings in some seminary contexts. Inclusion of spiritual formation courses in the curriculum is a relatively new concept for seminaries and churches. Spiritual formation needs further exploration.

Seminarian spiritual leaders need in-depth spiritual training to be placed into programs and ministries for which they are called to be free to achieve God’s will. Karl Barth emphasizes that freedom for humans is possible through the Holy Spirit. Theologian Louis Berkhof listed freedom as God’s will. In addition, the in-depth spiritual formation training is essential for coping skills training. Brueggemann claimed that we are in desperate need of mature leaders and that the future culture cannot afford to be without mature leaders. Robert Clinton suggested that through biblical mentoring an exact focus upon a specific biblical path is possible and makes it easier for seminary spiritual leaders to obtain with spiritual maturity, formation, and mentoring. He

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3 Karl Barth, Karl Barth and the Making of Evangelical Theology, Eds. Clifford Anderson and Bruce McCormack (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2015), 133, 142.


encouraged leaders to focus upon the Old Testament. The lessons and training from the Old Testament leaders were invaluable for leaders today.

The leader of Biola University’s Talbot Seminary Institute for Spiritual Formation, John Coe, discusses wisdom and experience. He encourages spiritual formation and direction at the seminary level. This foresight has placed Biola University on the cutting edge of seminaries that offer both spiritual formation and spiritual direction programs to their students. This model encourages in-depth spiritual formation training of seminary spiritual leaders that is essential for ministry. Coe’s institution published the most relevant journal on spiritual formation.

Importance of the Project

Spiritual leaders face more challenges today than ever before because culture does not encourage spiritual leaders to have intimacy with God. The researcher’s grandfather and great grandfather were pastors, and her parents were the Priscilla and Aquila types, always looking out for the pastors and their families. Over a decade of the researcher’s life has been spent walking with seminary spiritual leaders in seminaries, churches, and non-profits. Many start out in seminary and ministry not knowing themselves, their spiritual gifts, their calling, strengths, brokenness, nor God. Deep spiritual growth

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through spiritual formation is the way to rise up to meet these challenges. Seminary is the place to encourage, heal, and empower spiritual leaders in the deepest and most intimate relationship of their lives, their relationship with God.

The researcher desired intimacy with God beyond seminary and church training. So she looked into the biblical and historical literature, the cultural mindset toward spiritual formation, and other training programs to find spiritual formation options. The researcher realized that a gap existed between what seminary graduates need and what they received in seminary. This creates spiritual oppression because spiritual formation training is not available at the deepest level in the seminary or in church training settings.

The spiritual oppression that comes from lack of spiritual formation is unnecessary and can be devastating. Seminary spiritual formation and mentoring or spiritual direction at the master’s degree level is a way to train spiritual leaders to understand, listen, and obey God. God calls spiritual leaders to seek Him and His truth. Spiritual formation enables His truth to be revealed for His will. Dietrich Bonhoeffer wrote that God calls people to truth.11

Thus researcher was prompted in this truth to this project for the purpose of encouraging seminary master’s degree level deep spiritual formation training. This training can provide spiritual leaders with learning strategies and practices that encourage and empower them in their spiritual maturity to succeed throughout ministry and personal challenges. In addition, spiritual maturity enables spiritual leaders to focus on their specific areas of calling and contribution, instead of on unnecessary suffering or wasting resources.

Importance of the Project to Immediate Ministry Context

Evangelical seminaries offer programs that have the potential to reach thousands of people annually. However, God is held back in these spiritual leaders by spiritual oppression because these evangelical seminaries do not offer deep spiritual formation training and mentoring or spiritual direction at the deepest level. Spiritual formation training, mentoring, and disciplines offer healing and protection so that the spiritual leaders, their families, and their ministries can withstand challenges, and help them to focus on their calling.

Surveying recent seminary graduates about their spiritual formation, spiritual disciplines, practices, and mentoring or spiritual direction helped to establish the importance and value of incorporating spiritual formation training at a deep level for spiritual maturity at the master’s degree level in seminary. Spiritual formation training was not available through seminary or the church at the deepest level when the researcher was working on a master’s degree, so she had to go outside of seminary to obtain this training, mentoring, and spiritual direction.

Importance of the Project to the Church at Large

As seen in the research that follows, churches do not offer deep-level spiritual formation training for their spiritual leaders. This enables spiritual oppression. The spiritual oppression can be eliminated when the spiritual leaders are trained in spiritual formation at the deepest level, spiritual disciplines, and maturity. Acknowledgement of this problem brings forth the solution that expands to the church at large, ultimately all areas of ministry, and eventually culture. Through the identification of seminary as the place where the spiritual leaders are trained and from there sent out to the church at large
reflects great importance and potential for spiritual maturity training in spiritual leaders at the seminary level.

The lack of spiritual formation in spiritual leaders contributes to the lack of spiritual maturity, which holds back the Holy Spirit and intimacy with God not only individually but also collectively, in the church at large. The fruit of spiritual formation includes healing and all God has planned for his people. Most importantly it includes His will. The lack of spiritual formation at the seminary level results in oppression of spiritual leaders, seminaries, churches, and ministries. The ministry field is then saturated with instability. This causes organizational budget cuts and other problems, including downsizing and high turnover rates in ministry, which in turn unnecessarily impacts spiritual leaders. The impact upon spiritual leaders and their families can be devastating which impacts on the church at large.

Evangelical seminaries can move themselves to the forefront of the fight for mature spiritual leaders by offering deep spiritual formation and direction training at the master’s degree level. Then they will be better able to produce completely equipped, prepared, and focused spiritual leaders enabled to overcome challenges. The effects of this divine alignment can be further reaching than is fathomable. The effects surpass what is humanly measurable, because this spreads like wildfire when God and obedience becomes the core of these seminaries. The church at large would be the greatest beneficiary.12

CHAPTER TWO: BIBLICAL AND THEOLOGICAL BASIS

Old and New Testaments

The researcher explored the Old and New Testaments for spiritual formation themes of spiritual leaders. As a result, this chapter included a discussion of the following: spiritual formation, spiritual growth methods, and spiritual mentoring or spiritual direction of spiritual leaders. The Bible from beginning to end contains multiple examples of spiritual formation by spiritual leaders and ways to draw near to God to minimize spiritual oppression. From Adam in Genesis, through the seven letters to the seven churches in the book of Revelation, the Bible lays out example after example of how close God wants His spiritual leaders to walk with Him. Spiritual formation and the maturity of spiritual leaders require the intentional steps outlined in these examples. God wants His children, especially His spiritual leaders, to draw near to Him.

Throughout the Bible, God explains specific steps of how He wants to be loved. This was described by the most important commandment (Deut. 6:5). God asks spiritual leaders to love Him with every ounce of their being. The first three of the Ten Commandments (Exod. 20:2-7) explain more in-depth how to obey the most important commandment. They all describe prioritizing God over everything else. The New Testament added to this command. It said that from this love for Him other people are to be loved. Complete obedience to this commandment of loving Him with all one’s being results in spiritual formation and maturity.
Jesus was the most effective example of obedience and surrender to God through His spiritual maturity and formation practices. His spiritual practices, disciplines, and rhythms resulted in changing the world forever. Churches and seminaries teach individuals to be like Jesus with the Bible as the guide to this truth yet that is not happening at the deepest level of seeking and surrender. The gospels discuss that during the last three years of his ministry, Jesus spent intentional time alone with God. He left culture for solitary places in nature to pray and listen to God. His ministry was spiritual formation and maturity. He changed the world forever with spiritual formation and maturity, not by people-pleasing. This was the biblical and theological basis for the importance of spiritual formation and maturity in spiritual leaders.

Genesis One explained how God with His Holy Spirit created all aspects of nature and then Adam. God created humanity to be in perfect harmony with Him and allowed nature to be a place to connect with Him. Jesus knew this, and during His short ministry He intentionally spent time alone in nature listening to God, praying to God, and being with God. Through spiritual formation and maturity Jesus was able to conquer all distractions, evil and temptations, and then focus wholly upon God. Jesus was enabled through these spiritual practices, disciplines, and rhythms to minister, heal, teach, and preach where and when God wanted Him to do so.

*Old Testament Spiritual Formation of Spiritual Leaders*

Nature is a setting for spiritual formation throughout the Old Testament. Adam spent time alone with God in nature and experienced perfect harmony with God.¹ During the flood God used nature with Noah and his family to separate them. God sent Noah and his family out in the ark to separate and cleanse them from wickedness. God used the

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wilderness in nature to separate Moses and Joshua, and to instruct and renew them. God used nature to separate the Old Testament prophets for instruction and other purposes. God used the setting of nature for spiritual formation and maturity of those spiritual leaders.

From these examples these spiritual leaders become the spiritual mentors and spiritual directors example as a method of spiritual growth formation. Robert Clinton wrote many books analyzing biblical leaders and their characteristics. In analyzing some of the Old Testament leaders from a spiritual formation and spiritual maturity perspective, each one spent time alone with God in nature, praying, and listening. After doing so they were able to focus upon God and His will. This included Adam. Like Jesus, there was no sin when Adam spent all of his time alone with God.

Noah’s entire calling was in nature. His obedience to God’s instructions in faithfulness also placed him in the New Testament. God appeared with angels to Abraham when he was alone near trees. Joseph spent most of the first part of his life tending to sheep when he had his vision of all people bowing down to him. God called Moses and Joshua alone on the mountain to instruct, empower, and impart His Spirit upon them so that they could focus upon Him and His will. Samuel, pursuant to God’s instruction anointed Saul, outside, in nature. David spent most of his young years outside drawing near to God’s heart. He was then able to conquer Goliath as his first large victory for God.

Solomon was described as extremely wise, specifically with knowledge of all aspects of nature. Ezra brought great change when he prostrated himself to pray and confess outside, before the Lord. Nehemiah’s rebuilding of the church brought much
favor from God, seen outside through every prayerful step. Nehemiah, out of obedience to God, purified the priests outside. Elijah and Elisha remained outside and frequently were alone in nature to hear God.

Coe suggested people ought to focus on God and the wisdom of the Psalms for spiritual growth theology.² David Howard further suggested that the Psalms have “life-giving power.”³ Longman claimed that the Psalms are an inspiration for prayers.⁴ Wisdom books, such as the Psalms and Proverbs, constantly refer to aspects of nature. Isaiah continually refers to aspects of nature metaphorically. Most of the Old Testament prophets included references to nature, or were confined to nature alone with God.

Nature was God’s gift to mankind and a place to seek Him. He was the creator of nature, and can be found in nature. He waits in nature, as He did for Jesus, and for His other leaders throughout time. Wayne Grudem suggested that one important aspect of nature was based upon Isaiah 43:7, for which His basis was glory.⁵

The Old Testament laid the groundwork for all aspects of spiritual formation, spiritual disciplines, and direction of spiritual leaders. God placed many examples of how close He wants His children to be to Him throughout the Bible. One example of this close relationship can be found with Adam in the Garden of Eden. From then on throughout the Bible God shows that He wants nothing less from His spiritual leaders. God separated His spiritual leaders for spiritual formation and disciplines to surrender to His will. When

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³ David Howard, The Psalms and Current Study: Interpreting the Psalms (Downers Grove: IVP, 2005), 40.


⁵ Wayne Grudem, Systematic Theology (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994), 271.
God had brought the spiritual leaders spiritually into maturity, they could then deny culture and anything else to do His will.

The spiritual formation process required the spiritual leaders to give God time alone, surrender all of their being, and all of their focus to carry out His will. Without spiritual formation and direction, spiritual leaders are spiritually oppressed. If spiritual leaders are not as close to God as possible to do His will they are not doing His will. They are leading through a source that is not God.

The most important commandment is first listed in Deuteronomy 6:5. It was echoed throughout the Bible as the most important commandment. With it, God explained how to love Him with all one’s being. God asks for all that is in a person to be His. He does not ask His spiritual leaders for a portion of themselves. Youngblood suggested the importance of the “Shema,” as described in Deuteronomy 6:5 using the Hebrew term, was seen in the fact that Jesus teaches on it in the New Testament. This view of God gives the key to freedom through spiritual formation and disciplines. This is the biblical core of spiritual leadership spiritual formation and spiritual disciplines. This is how Jesus changed the world.

The Old Testament prophets were also excellent examples of spiritual formation, spiritual disciplines, and maturity. They will not be the focus herein because of the fact that today’s culture is so far from God that it is difficult for one to comprehend the concept of Old Testament prophets, their level of spiritual disciplines, prophetic voices, or a prophetic office. The people that we serve can better resonate with Noah, Moses, David, and Job at some level in the Old Testament. Jesus and John the Baptist will be a

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focus for the New Testament examples of spiritual formation and maturity because Christ will return.

Longman encouraged the immature in the wisdom books because that was and is the guide for them.¹ Brueggemann emphasized the importance of the Old Testament wisdom because it is the basic theology of God. He suggested times are so difficult within the church that the things that once worked are now not working due to the fact that the Old Testament has been neglected. He cited the reason for this to be that the Old Testament contrasts with church culture.⁸

The Old Testament wisdom books of the Psalms and Proverbs explained steps and ways to draw closer to the Lord. The book of Psalms contained endless expressions of love for God including but not limited to some spiritual disciplines required for spiritual formation of spiritual leaders such as repentance, prayer, fasting, solitude, silence, crying out, surrender, sacrifice, worship, and obedience. Psalms contained multiple references to the heart and how to give it to God as He asks. The first half of Psalm 23 discussed spiritual formation as a way to prepare for what the second half of the passage describes: walking through the darkness. This type of preparation in spiritual formation enabled the spiritual leader not to fear.

The book of Proverbs expressed it differently, yet with the same the depth of devotion that the Lord requires. More specifically, it focused on fearing and obeying God. The training contained character formation with instruction. Proverbs suggested how to give God one’s whole heart as He asks in the most important commandment (in

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Deuteronomy 6:5). Throughout the book of Proverbs, the focus was upon the heart. The word heart was listed 31 times. Proverbs 2:2 instructed one to apply one’s heart to understanding. Proverbs 3:1 instructed one to keep God’s commandments in the heart. Proverbs 4:22 instructed guarding one’s heart. Proverbs chapters six and seven explained to bind and to write His commandments on the hearts. Spiritual formation wisdom included the commandments. It is not possible to obey the book of Proverbs without spiritual formation and maturity.

Bonhoeffer wrote about the importance of first seeking the Lord. Spiritual growth requires seeking the Lord. The Old Testament contains numerous scriptural references to seeking God, such as Deuteronomy 4:29; Psalms 34:10, 105:3-4, 119:2, 10; Proverbs 8:17, 11:27, 18:15, 28:5. In addition, the New Testament contains multiple scriptural references to the importance of seeking God such as Matthew 6:33; Luke 12:31; 1 Corinthians 7:27; 1 Peter 3:1. In seeking and loving God as He asks, His spiritual leaders become mature, as seen by these examples.

Genesis began with God and the Holy Spirit, and then shows God creating and connecting through nature. He set the stage for the place for humankind to connect to Him through nature where He dwells. Man is so loved by God that God brings His son to die for sins. First God created all aspects of nature and a perfect environment. God adores nature and created all aspects as a reflection of who God is. His perfect beauty, grace, harmony, and way to be close to Him is in nature. If we do not spend the time with Him alone in nature, we miss God’s characteristics. His characteristics are to be praised.10


Old Testament Examples

The focus upon spiritual leader formation and maturity examples herein began with a general survey as described previously. What follows is an expansion of this focus on a few spiritual leaders from the Old Testament, such as Noah, Moses, David, and Job. The lessons from these spiritual leaders in spiritual disciplines, spiritual formation, and spiritual maturity are far greater than what can be examined in this document.

Noah, Moses, David, and Job spent time alone in the wilderness with God. All had humanly impossible tasks and callings by God. The only way to survive and to succeed in these callings was to be as close to God as possible. The things that God asked them to do were and are unfathomable to humans and culture.

There are five common threads in the lives of these four spiritual leaders. First, they all spent time alone in the wilderness listening, discussing, praying, cleansing, and being with God. Second, their devoted obedience in their intentional intimacy with God enabled all to change their cultures then, and impact today’s culture. Third, their devoted obedience in total surrender to God through spiritual disciplines enabled them to focus upon God, His characteristics, and His call over the people no matter what. This meant that they were not people-pleasers. Fourth, their devoted obedience enabled them to be used by God to mentor and spiritually direct others both in that time in the Bible through today. Fifth and finally, their willingness to put God and who He is over everything else enabled them to be some of the most effective spiritual leaders of all time.

One other common characteristic in each of these leaders’ lives was the use by God of the number 40. Genesis 7:4 referred to the rain for 40 days in God’s explanation and instructions to Noah. Genesis 7:12 confirmed that the rain fell for 40 days. Genesis
7:17 again confirmed the rain for 40 days. In Genesis 8:6 stated that after 40 days Noah sent a bird out of the ark to find dry land.\(^{11}\)

During the exile of the Israelites in the wilderness, Exodus 16:35 explained that they ate manna for 40 years. Then God put Moses on the mountain for 40 days in Exodus 24:18. Exodus 26:19, 26:21, 36:24, and 36:36 referred to 40 silver bases. In Exodus 34:28 God again required Moses alone for 40 days in a fast. God reminded His people of the time in the desert for 40 years in Deuteronomy 8:2, 8:4, and 29:5.\(^{12}\) Moses’ time on the mountain for 40 days is remembered in Deuteronomy 9:9, 9:11, 9:18, and 9:25. In Joshua 4:13, there were 40 thousand, and in Joshua 5:6, the Israelites were reminded of the 40 years in the desert. Moses was 40 when he was called.

In 1 Samuel 17:16, Goliath the Philistine stood against the Israelites for 40 days until David stood against him. David reigned for 40 years as King, recorded in 1 Samuel 5:4 and 1 King 2:10. Solomon reigned for 40 years, noted in 1 Kings 11:42. Other Old Testament rulers ruled for 40 years. Job lived a hundred and 40 years. Numerous others referenced throughout the Bible exist regarding the number 40, such as in Job 42:16. Psalm 95:10 said God was angry for 40 years. The number 40 is significant to God in use for spiritual growth formation of the spiritual leader in all of these instances.

The culture and environment of the Old Testament times was conducive for spiritual leaders to move into spiritual formation and practice spiritual disciplines. Prayer was socially acceptable, as it is referred to numerous times throughout the Bible from Genesis forward. The cultural life style of the Old Testament easily enabled people to


find silence, solitude, mediation, and prayer time alone with God. The cultural lifestyle was mostly outside so the wilderness surrounded them and was a short walk away.

The artifacts, clothing, and symbols of that time of the Old Testament reflect that they lived very simply. The customs and rituals were very common. Fasting, sacrifice and discomfort were commonplace. The Old Testament communities practiced worship, celebration, fellowship, and service at some level. Distractions were minimal and the simplistic culture provided minimal convenience and no luxuries, compared to today's western societies. Total surrender to God and His call came to these Old Testament spiritual leaders; even though each lived in different times and places the culture was similar.

The culture today is populated with luxuries and conveniences that are completely removed from that of the Old Testament. To intentionally focus upon God and spiritual formation with spiritual disciplines, the current culture has to be denied. The wilderness, quiet, solitude, and simplicity are not found in the culture of the city. God wants the same thing of His spiritual leaders today that He did with Noah, Moses, David, and Job, regardless of the culture.

Each book of the Bible reflected characteristics of God. He starts Genesis as the creator and finishes as the redeemer. The Old Testament spiritual leaders knew to trust in Him and who He was. God explains His characteristics throughout the Bible. It shows the core of who He is and where the focus is to be for spiritual leaders. David expressed this throughout the Psalms; Job expressed this throughout his book.  

13 Gordon Fee and Douglas Stuart, How to Read the Bible for All Its Worth (Grand Rapids, Zondervan, 2003), 26-27.

14 Ronald Youngblood, How It All Began (Downers Grove: IVP, 2014), 5-6, 10.
His characteristics include holiness and purity. Purification was discussed throughout the Old and New Testament. For example, in the Old Testament Job was pure; Nehemiah purified the priests and Daniel remained pure. The Psalms and Proverbs discuss purity. God asks His spiritual leaders to become pure and holy like Him. Throughout the spiritual formation process, including repentance, a level of purification occurs, which transforms His spiritual leaders into the likeness of Christ.

God asked big things of Noah, and Noah obeyed wholeheartedly. Noah never questioned, doubted, or feared what God was asking. No matter what God asked, Noah was faithful at the expense of everything. God gave Noah specific steps all along the way. Noah walked completely with God, and God spared and used his family. Noah moved forward in the Lord against culture and sin without the things and attitudes of the world.

The specific details given by God in the building of the ark, and with the animals, are interestingly all natural. He wanted to restore that perfect environment of nature that He created in all aspects of earth long before man and sin. God loves the detailed aspects of nature proven by the fact that He sustained it throughout the cleansing of the earth through the flood.

Nothing stopped Noah from obeying God because he had done the work of spiritual formation and surrendered His all to God’s will. He had spent the time alone with God that God asked for, therefore trusted completely in God. Nothing else could prepare him for the months on the ark. God used him mightily to cleanse the world. God was so pleased with Noah that He used Noah as an Old Testament example of spiritual formation and direction.
God taught through the Moses’s writings that He hated oppression of His people, especially spiritual oppression. God called Moses through a burning bush. In that moment, God made this connection through nature a relationship sacred and intimate between Him and Moses. God pulled Moses out of everything to spend 40 days and nights on the mountain alone with God. God wanted Moses to Himself, cleansed, and undistracted from everything other than God and to do God’s will. Moses spent that time resting in the Lord, listening, and being with the Lord only to connect intimately for God’s will.

God tried numerous times and ways throughout the Bible to show how close He wants His children to Him. God tried with large groups also when He took His people, the Israelites out alone in the wilderness to remove the world. He did this as a spiritual formation tool to mature them for 40 years. It is sad that all they could do was complain instead of rest in the Lord and become as intimate as possible. This infuriated God.

As a result of Moses’ faithfulness in all that God asked him to do, he was used as one of the most powerful God-led leaders in history. Moses’s patience is to be modeled and exemplified. It was God’s patience emanating through Moses’s state of being that enabled him to stand and lead for God no matter what. No one could possibly be that patient with all of that complaining, divisiveness, and uncertainty, without closeness to God through spiritual maturity.

Moses was in right relationship with God so that God’s will and power was and is visible.\(^\text{15}\) Moses’ obedient seeking of the Lord alone is the example of spiritual formation and maturity practices. They also enabled him to be a great example of a mentor and

spiritual director for Joshua. Joshua was able to carry obedience and time with the Lord forward to the victory for God. In His commissioning, he was called to not fear and to be strong in the Lord. Joshua shows that there are no limits to God’s power when He is obeyed and when one stays close to Him. God will get attention to keep His spiritual leaders close with struggles like Joshua’s.

Moses writings in the Bible are also a result of his spiritual formation and maturity. God was able to use Moses in more ways as a result of God being with him and in him at the deepest level. Moses’ mentoring is an example of spiritual formation and maturity for spiritual leaders and seminarians no matter what battle they face. His leadership is referred to into the New Testament.

David spent years alone in the wilderness as a shepherd. God kept him as close as possible out in the fields with no humans, no obstacles, distractions, or hindrances. David could feel God and not fear the things that humans fear because of his closeness to God. David did not fear the lions and bears that other humans fear. David did not fear the Goliath that other humans fear. Without doubt created by fear,\(^\text{16}\) David wasted no time and went against Goliath knowing that he had come against God’s children. God was the victor in that battle because David had done his work in deep spiritual formation and with God in intimacy alone in the wilderness.

David was able to rely completely upon God. His self-restraint was from God, which was demonstrated when he refrained from killing Saul when he had the chance. David became a great warrior due to his spiritual disciplines and maturity. Brueggemann suggested that David’s example of maturity is one that can encourage others into

maturity. Insight and strength were given to David throughout his leadership that God gave only to His most devoted and most spiritually mature leader. God could do more in and through David because God possessed David’s whole heart and being after years in the wilderness alone with God. When God called David, he called to a heart that was devoted to God, and completely surrendered in every way.

David melted God’s heart so much that he was granted blessed favor in all ways. David’s devotion to God is seen in the Psalms. God met David in all ways throughout his life due to his closeness and intimacy with God. Even though David sinned, God did restore his favor after repentance and consequences.

David’s son Solomon was a blessed result of David’s closeness to God. Solomon was highly favored by God and obeyed Him in all ways, having been mentored and given spiritual direction from David. David then commissioned Solomon in his call to the Lord and to obedience in all God’s ways. God used Solomon in many ways. This included Solomon’s authorship of the books of Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and Song of Solomon. When Solomon stopped pursuing God in spiritual formation and direction, he turned away from God.

When David sinned, he looked to the Lord and repented, drawing nearer to God. God did not turn His back upon David. Nor did He turn His back on Solomon when he sinned. Both men’s writings are included in the books of the Bible for direction in loving the Lord, adoring the Lord, praising the Lord, pursuing the Lord, forgiveness, repentance, wisdom, and so much more. God used David and Solomon mightily then, and He uses their examples mightily now because David spent his time alone with the Lord seeking Him as He asked, with every ounce of his being.

Even though Job was seen as pure, God allowed him to suffer greatly to get time alone with Job so that He was Job’s complete focus. Job stuns readers with his devotion to God in the deepest of human suffering. God allowed Job to be tested and stripped in all areas of life so they could get as close as possible to one another. God wanted Job all to Himself periodically, like David and Moses. God removed everything from Job except periodic visits from his wife and friends.

God’s redemptive grace is Job’s focus. Instead of focusing on himself, Job focused on God and His characteristics. Job did not question God and praised God throughout even claiming Him as his redeemer! Job prayed and spoke to God constantly, and asked for forgiveness. Job did not allow emotion to override how God could be working in his suffering. Eventually God answered and forgave with huge blessings. God also allowed Job to repent for the sins committed by his friends and wife during the period of suffering.

God desires His people to focus upon Him over everything else, just as Job did. He desires His people to focus on Him no matter what. Job chose to focus upon God, praise His name, and His character during suffering. Job chose God, not humans, to deal with his suffering. He rose above his wife and his friends to commune with God during the entire process. God’s leaders today are to follow this example. Job focused on God’s names and characteristics as they are laid out in the Old Testament, and in nature.

The Old Testament examples of spiritual formation show spiritual leaders remaining in close relationship with God. This was achieved by seeking Him in

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intentional time alone with Him in nature and away from people. Prayer was the method they used, which is direct conversation with God. There was confession and repentance, and most likely fasting, sacrifice, and possibly physically submission prayer. The Old Testament prophets knew this. Noah, Moses, David, and Job exemplified this with prayer, confession, listening and being with God. They were then able to mentor and spiritually guide all to God and His will. In addition, they were an example of people fearing God, focusing upon His characteristics, and obeying Him in total surrender.

*New Testament Spiritual Leader Formation*

Jesus changed the world through surrender exemplifying spiritual formation, spiritual disciplines, and maturity. In the last book of the New Testament are the seven letters to the seven churches. This section reiterates spiritual formation, and depth with spiritual disciplines, which result in spiritual maturity. In those letters, God asks for total devotion, just as He did in the beginning of the Bible: He starts with His Holy Spirit, light, water, sky, land, plants, and animals. He characteristics were and continue to be upstanding, indisputable, and unchanging as is His love. The only way He changed is how He tries to get His leaders’ attention. His will is achieved by intentionally seeking Him at the deepest level and through spiritual formation and maturity.

As seen in the Old Testament, God connects with His spiritual leaders through nature, time alone with Him, intimacy with God, spiritual disciplines, mentoring, and other ways. With that as the foundation, and moving forward into to the New Testament on how God wants His spiritual leaders to connect with Him, the biblical principles remain the same. His characteristics remain the same. God’s leaders were outside in
nature when Jesus called them to Him. John the Baptist lived in nature. Jesus dwelled with God in nature.

The New Testament is love-focused, including many references to trees, plants, land, and animals. First Corinthian discusses wisdom and the Spirit. The depths of His love cannot be comprehended if He is not sought at the deepest level possible, doing whatever it takes to be as intimate with Him as possible. He is always calling leaders back to Him. He is always asking His spiritual leaders to look to Him, and His wisdom, and to no one else. Colossians expresses that Christians do not live like this world, but that they are to set their minds on Him, and to purify themselves. The New Testament is a reminder to pray in all things and to persevere by focusing on being blameless and righteous.

Kenneth Berding claimed Paul’s letters explain spiritual formation through a missional perspective. He focuses upon 2 Corinthians 1: 3-12 and Philippians 4:10-14. The New Testament seems to be an easier place to rest for evangelicals. Mark Strauss emphasized that the world is extremely hostile and that faithfulness is required. Faithfulness is what God calls spiritual leaders to through spiritual growth formation.

The New Testament explains how to love in many ways. All of this revolves around loving Him with every ounce of being, then loving others. It is not possible to love the Lord as He asks without intentional focus upon Him, His characteristics, and His love with spiritual disciplines, formation, and maturity. This included time alone with Him in nature.

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21 Mark Strauss, Four Portraits, One Jesus (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2007), 206, 226, 445.
Jesus changed the world through spiritual formation and disciplines. Similar spiritual formation found in the Old Testament can also be found in the New Testament. The basic methods for spiritual formation of spiritual leaders in the Old Testament as set forth above are discussed more in detail in the New Testament. Jesus’ disciplines and spiritual formation included solitude, prayer, silence, confession, meditation, fasting, service, surrender, sacrifice, worship, and obedience. He laid the groundwork for total devotion in addition to obedience in all areas as God’s spiritual leader. The New Testament examples expand upon these methods within the gospels in spiritual disciplines and direction such as worship, simplicity, purity, service, celebration, and sacrifice in needs of the flesh.

Some of the church culture today is gospel-focused. However, throughout the New Testament God’s love and who He was not limited to the gospels. The most important commandment is expanded to love Him with all and from this foundation to love others. The New Testament encouraged the need to focus upon the things of God listed in Philippians 4 and the things of the Spirit in Galatians 5.

The Old and New Testaments state not to fear numerous times. Yet fear holds back one’s spiritual formation and intimacy with God because the culture said in fear to always be with people so spiritual leaders intimacy with God is limited to community. This keeps God at a distance limiting what He wants both biblically and in all ways which is spiritual oppression. If spiritual leaders actually spend time alone with God surrendering every ounce of being as God asks they would be made fun of out of fear as were Noah, Moses, David, Job, John the Baptist, or Jesus. Fear God in disobedience is what is taught. If spiritual leaders are not seeking God as He asks, then fear creates
disobedience. If one of these biblical spiritual leaders had not obeyed God in spiritual formation their lessons standing against fear as spiritual leaders would not be available today.

The gifts of the Holy Spirit were listed in the New Testament in Romans, Corinthians, Ephesians, and Peter. The fruit of the Holy Spirit was listed in Galatians. The New Testament discusses wisdom in 1 Corinthians 2 calling one into total reliance upon God’s wisdom, and not human wisdom. Only through spiritual growth formation of spiritual disciplines can a person be spiritually mature to be discerning and to receive God’s wisdom.

The New Testament culture was similar to the Old Testament so the spiritual leaders were able to practice the spiritual disciplines easily in such a simple world. The wilderness was still close, so silence, solitude, prayer, confession, fasting, meditation, service, surrender, worship, and fellowship could easily occur and were more acceptable in that culture than today. The few buildings were still set in the wilderness. The tools, artifacts, and clothing were a bit more advanced than in the Old Testament. 22

Prayer is discussed throughout the Bible with some Old Testament examples listed above and in Nehemiah, Daniel, and the Psalms for prayers including repentance. The New Testament expands upon prayer with Jesus examples, the Lord’s Prayer, and further instruction in the letters to the churches. We are biblically instructed to pray about everything so one cannot pray enough. Silent prayer, prostate prayer, listening prayer, scriptural prayer, any prayer biblically compel us to pray throughout both Testaments.

22 Mark Strauss, Four Portraits, One Jesus (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2007), 150, 153-155.
The Bible explains about worship and how to do so. Worship is an integral part of spiritual formation. However, church culture worships an hour a week when there are 168 hours in a week to worship. Worship is important to God in all ways. One hour a week is insufficient to connect to Him and honor Him as He asks. He is to be worshiped in everything.

God gave His children Jesus, His son, to die for sins. He unlocked His heart so that people could see a glimpse of God as love. God gave His most incredible gift of self and all that He is in giving His son. How then can leaders deny Him anything, or even a part of anything? He wants His spiritual leaders as close as possible and to be totally surrendered. People cannot conceive of this if they do not give Him the time that He asks for alone, in imitation of Jesus.

The Old Testament culture and books show how to love God as He asks including but not limited to spiritual disciplines required for spiritual formation of spiritual leaders such as repentance, prayer, fasting, solitude, silence, service, surrender, sacrifice, worship, and obedience. This type of preparation in spiritual formation enables the spiritual leader not to fear. The New Testament reiterates the need for obedience to this command and all of these spiritual disciplines and formation for maturity to be close to God as possible.

The need for the purity of spiritual leaders is discussed in various books of the New Testament. Timothy and Titus contained instructions. Hebrews and James explained how to counteract sin while Peter explained about right and holy living. Revelation explains to put down sin and cleanse in repentance. John encouraged keeping His commands.
The common threads of intentional spiritual formation with God in the lives of the Old Testament spiritual leaders listed above are the same as for Jesus and John the Baptist. First, they all spent time alone in the wilderness listening, discussing, praying, and being with God. Second, they devoted themselves to obedience and to intentional intimacy with God, which in turn enabled them all to change the culture then and today. Third, their devoted obedience to God enabled them to focus upon God and His call instead of being distracted by people. Fourth, their devoted obedience enabled them to be used by God to mentor and spiritually direct others both in that time and today. Fifth, their willingness to put God over everything else enabled them to be some of the most effective spiritual leaders of all time. Jesus and John the Baptist did not rely upon themselves in any way. They completely relied upon God.

New Testament Examples

Jesus and John the Baptist are the focus for leaders of spiritual formation in the New Testament. Jesus has the largest impact as God’s son. Not much is in the Bible on Jesus’ time alone with God prior to His baptism and ministry so not much is written on this subject. However, while in ministry He was often seen leaving the people to be alone with the Lord. He removed Himself altogether to be with God and God alone in the wilderness. He was with the Father so that He could do only what God wanted and desired Jesus to do. In the 40 days of testing Jesus was able to shun evil, fuel His soul, cleanse His soul, and move forward to die for sins. God dictated Jesus’ actions during His ministry and His energy went mostly to God and a select few.

Jesus was given all gifts of the Spirit and empowered beyond human capacity. God gave the gifts for His purpose but they were evident to all whom came in contact
with Him and not hidden. The parable of the talents reminds readers not to hide spiritual gifts. If not the gifts, talents, and callings are hidden in culture. The culture minimizes and marginalizes these gifts and limits ways that God can be maximized. Spiritual leaders need to seek God and give Him as much as He asks so that nothing is wasted. Without spiritual formation of the spiritual leaders in the churches and seminaries, the gifts and the spirit will be killed. God’s work in and through them will be diminished.

Jesus through the book of Matthew prioritized seeking first the kingdom by obeying the most important commandment with the whole heart, body, mind, and soul. God does not mean that people are to give Him a small portion and the rest to cultural perspectives and worldviews. God asked for surrender in everything, as exemplified in the lives of Jesus and John the Baptist. These men gave God all that He asks by spending time alone with Him listening, praying, and then obeying.

Spiritual formation was completely natural to Jesus yet is ignored by man. The fact is that spiritual formation is how God’s son changed the world, how He freed the oppressed, and how He did God’s will. Jesus’ spiritual formation enabled Him to help guide all spiritual direction as part of the outpouring of His obedience.

However, current church culture discourages alone time. No solitude can create a sense of interdependency. Church members are divided into small groups and ministries that focus upon books that are not the Bible, and call it a Bible study. Then church members are encouraged to take on as much as possible leaving no time for God. This creates a disconnection with God, which creates fear and kills the Spirit. Theologian Karl Barth wrote of the importance of solitude as an element of character building.\(^{23}\)

John the Baptist was born into and raised in the Holy Spirit in the wilderness. He was drenched and enveloped in the Holy Spirit. He was raised in the wilderness to be as close to God and in the Holy Spirit as possible. His life was total spiritual formation in spiritual disciplines and maturity. He had nothing to do with the things of the world. All that he did when he came out of the wilderness was to prepare the way for Jesus.

John the Baptist lived, ate, breathed, and slept in the wilderness. He only ate locusts and honey. He ate no meat, wheat, processed foods, dairy products, or junk food. His every second was devoted to the Lord. His whole being was a breath of God. His birth from a pure union between His priest and his godly wife consecrated John the Baptist to the Lord.

John the Baptist’s entire existence was to bless and surrender to God and His will. John the Baptist was so pure and one with the Lord that he proclaimed repentance, the coming of the Lord, and baptized. He baptized Jesus. As soon as he did, the Holy Spirit came upon Jesus. Then God called Jesus alone in the wilderness for spiritual formation, before He put Jesus with people.

John the Baptist exemplified spiritual formation disciplines, and spiritual direction no matter what he had to do for God to the point of death. He was also a great example of stewardship doing only what he was called to do and nothing else. He as was called to God and in the Holy Spirit so he was used by God to make way for Jesus.

Strauss suggested that the laws set the high standards that reflect God’s characteristics through which transformation occurs.24 The characteristics of God combined with the things of God as listed throughout the Bible are important to God.

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24 Mark Strauss, *Four Portraits, One Jesus* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2007), 247.
They are important for spiritual formation of spiritual leaders. Wayne Grudem affirmed this by explaining that the characteristics of God are also that of His Son and His Spirit. Longman wrote that Job and other books discuss purity, blamelessness, righteousness and fear of the Lord as what God desires. Philippians 4:8-9 suggested that what we learn through Him is truth and that we are to focus upon those things. Galatians 5 listed the fruit of the spirit. Louis Berkhof discussed the attributes of God theologically. These are the things important to God that can only be achieved as spiritual leaders through spiritual formation. Jesus changed the world through spiritual formation by exemplifying the things important to and the characteristics of God.

In the letters to the seven churches in the book of Revelation Christians are asked to do nothing less than the same thing, spiritual formation with spiritual disciplines. The churches were warned to return to Him, with prayer and repentance, to put down the things of culture that cause sin, to wake up, to turn up the heat, and to eliminate evil. The instructions in every letter to every church include discernment. This cannot be attained without spiritual formation and direction. God wants His spiritual leaders to be as close to Him to have those eyes and ears that see and hear Him. Spiritual leaders who do this are following and leading as Jesus did.

The number 40 is used by God as a spiritual growth maturing tool for His spiritual leaders as suggested above. For example immediately after Jesus was baptized, God took Jesus into the wilderness for 40 days (Matt. 4:2, Mark 1:13). Numerous other references

25 Wayne Grudem, Systematic Theology (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994), 141.
27 Louis Berkhof, Systematic Theology (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1938), 65-70.
are throughout the New Testament regarding the number 40. The disciples were transformed by 40 days with Jesus.

**Summary**

Spiritual growth formation of spiritual leaders throughout the Bible included intentional individual seeking of God with spiritual disciplines. These spiritual disciplines and wisdom were consistent from Old Testament throughout the New Testament. All is rooted in love from and for God, as encouraged by the most important commandment and the commandment to seek Him first. Through this process the spiritual leaders eliminated spiritual oppression and became spiritually mature enough to enable them to obey God, His commands, and His will. This in turn enabled them to change, mentor and spiritually direct people throughout history to today.

The Old Testament wisdom books explain that spiritual formation is aimed at the transformation of His children’s hearts through being with God. The key to freedom is closeness to Him. The wisdom books emphasize the fear of God, obedience to His commands, purity, and focus upon God’s characteristics. The spiritual disciplines included but were not limited to prayer, solitude, silence, fasting, repentance, service, surrender, listening, worship, celebration, and fellowship. This is the spiritual leader’s core. Jesus changed the world through spiritual formation.

The common threads in these spiritual leaders’ lives are: first, they all spent time alone in the wilderness listening, discussing, praying, cleansing, and being with God; second, their devoted obedience in their intentional intimacy with God enabled all to change the culture then, and through today; third, their devoted obedience in total surrender to God through spiritual disciplines enabled them to focus upon God, His
characteristics, and His call over the people no matter what. This meant that they were not people pleasers; fourth, their devoted obedience enabled them to be used by God to mentor and spiritually direct others both in that time in the Bible through today; and fifth, their willingness to put God and who He is over everything else enabled them to be some of the most effective spiritual leaders of all time.

Prayer throughout the Old and New Testament included not only the way in which these spiritual leaders listened to God, but also the way they carried on discussion with God. Pleading with God, repenting to God, adoring God, praising God, and thanking God are all examples of this discussion. He receives it all. Prayer is God’s love language and the means through which we connect with Him.

This conclusion explains the biblical basis for spiritual formation of spiritual leaders with spiritual disciplines and wisdom from the Old Testament through the New Testament, and with mentoring or spiritual directing. This Old and New Testament background enables spiritual leaders to see that spiritual formation is also important in gaining wisdom as part of spiritual maturity. Wisdom opens the door to look at the New Testament in a spiritual formation, spiritual disciplines, and spiritual maturity mindset. Jesus changed the world through spiritual formation, spiritual disciplines, and spiritual maturity carried forward from the Old Testament spiritual leaders.
CHAPTER THREE: LITERATURE FOR THE PROJECT

Review of Related Literature

The literature review consisted of four areas: spiritual formation, spiritual growth methods, and spiritual mentoring or spiritual direction. Spiritual leaders are called to God’s truth through spiritual formation and spiritual maturity. The core of truth comes from God’s truth through spiritual maturation. Henri Nouwen claimed that Christian leaders are aware of the need for spiritual formation that is the search for truth in the heart, which frees the soul.¹ Today seminaries and churches put theology, ministry, and people curriculum above growing closer to God. There is so much need, and so many ways to minister that reacting to the mess is easier than stepping back and taking the time alone with God that He asks to mature.² Arnell Motz wrote that God wants total devotion in His people.³

The churches must minister with cultural standards that are based upon a legal system that has separated church and state. The basis of culture lies in that of a reasonable man, not God’s truth. The truth is that culture is void of truth, and God’s truth altogether. Spiritual leaders must step back from culture and practice spiritual formation and maturity for the truth, like Jesus did. The seminaries must offer as much spiritual

formation for spiritual maturity as possible so that seminarians are in God’s truth, and do not deny God. Culture stands in the way.⁴ Robert Mulholland claimed that the spiritual formation process actually goes against culture.⁵

**Spiritual Leader Formation Themes**

The standard requirement for spiritual formation in seminary is a couple of classes and a retreat, even though the mission and vision statements of some evangelical seminaries include some level of spiritual formation intent language component. Ruth Haley Barton suggested that the churches are completely reliant upon the spiritual formation and maturity of the pastor, and that God’s truth lies in solitude and silence.⁶ Biola University Talbot Seminary foresaw the need for circulation of information at the seminary level on spiritual formation. They created a peer *Journal for Spiritual Formation and Soul Care* in 2008. Recent journal articles in the *Journal for Spiritual Formation and Soul Care* are opening hearts and minds to new hope and options in spiritual formation based upon historical theology⁷ for the future and philosophically.⁸

Richard Foster wrote about the spiritual disciplines rooted from spiritual bankruptcy where he found himself as a spiritual leader after seminary. His journey then included spiritual direction, confession, and spiritual disciplines, which set him free. He

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⁴ Rick Langer, “Points of Unease with the Spiritual Formation Movement,” *Journal for Spiritual Formation and Soul Care* 5, no. 2 (Fall 2012): 182-206.


wrote on the following disciplines: meditation, prayer, fasting, study, simplicity, solitude, submission, service, confession, worship, guidance, and celebration.9

Eugene Peterson wrote about the importance for pastors and spiritual leaders to focus upon their calling of prayer, the Word, and spiritual direction. He discussed the immense pressure upon pastors and spiritual leaders and that they are forced out of the shepherd role and into the customer service role by the culture and lack of spiritual formation. He believed that pastors are not doing spiritual formation and direction because it is too difficult. Pastors and spiritual leaders were told what to do but not taught how spiritually with spiritual formation. He believed that without prayer, the Word, and spiritual direction that spiritual formation of the spiritual leader is not taking place so asleep with the people that they are leading.10

Dallas Willard wrote that we do not have the training programs and curriculum focused upon spiritual formation.11 He suggested the disconnect stems from the Christian culture. It has numerous programs all based upon behavioral changes and not internal transformation, and certainly not spiritual formation. He wrote that people do not understand the benefits of spiritual disciplines so they do not use them and that they believe that seeking is not necessary.12 He claimed that the keys are seeking the Kingdom first based upon the Matthew scriptures. He claimed that the problem is in those whom are not seeking with spiritual formation or only through the spiritual disciplines.13

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For example, spiritual formation and maturity includes healing and affects all areas of life. God asks His spiritual leaders to love Him with all that one’s soul, which is refined through spiritual formation. The effects include but are not limited to the soul, the heart, the mind, and the body. That is because spiritual formation is in obedience to the most important commandment that includes loving God deeply with all areas. Culture and spiritual leaders miss important truths when they do not train seminary spiritual leaders to seek God at the deepest level possible. God’s truth, through spiritual formation, brings about maturity.

Larry Warner wrote of walking with Jesus as close as possible. His ministry enables the being to be defined differently in the developing into becoming. He offers spiritual formation retreats and spiritual direction. He has worked at many seminaries and Christian schools towards this end. In order for His spiritual leaders to rest in this place, each has a lot of work to do with the Lord in prayer. This work opens minds and hearts to what God is doing and wanting His spiritual leaders to do. It is a lengthy process. However, it frees a soul to be what God designed.14

Robert Clinton wrote that people cannot find the truth unless they seek the Lord deeply, and become spiritually mature.15 Sadly, in his years of research he has found that many spiritual leaders do not “finish well.”16 The only way to “finish well” is through biblical spiritual growth formation.17 As a result of his teaching, one of his mentees,


Terry Walling, spent years designing programs to enable spiritual leaders to finish well.\textsuperscript{18} His Leader Breakthru has helped many to clarify what happens throughout the life of spiritual leaders and enables them to have more of a chance of finishing well through biblical leadership and spiritual formation training.\textsuperscript{19}

Charlie Sattgast emphasized the “doing and being” paradox of aspects of spiritual formation. He studied ministry transitions of the lives of spiritual leaders. He found that later stages of spiritual growth and maturity bring spiritual authority from God, which leaders need to succeed for God. The phases of spiritual maturity are laid out with clarity from the beginning of Christ’s foundation through maturity, the “doing to being.” Sattgast’s concluded that those who exhibit closer relationships with Jesus have an easier time in transitions.\textsuperscript{20}

Scott Rideout of Converge Worldwide explained the importance of accountability of spiritual leaders purifying their inner core in all aspects of their lives.\textsuperscript{21} The vitality of all that they do emanates most effectively from a pure and integrity-filled heart for the Lord. He encouraged spiritual leaders to use caution regarding the people with whom they spend time. He based this message upon the frequency in Scripture of the word “blameless.” Spiritual formation and maturity are the only way to achieve this type of purity. He included the fact that this is the only way to true wisdom. He also included the importance of mentors in this process.

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\textsuperscript{18} Terry Walling, \textit{TRAC Coaching} (Chico, CA: Leader Breakthru, 2015), 3-7.


\textsuperscript{21} Bethel Seminary San Diego Commencement May 30, 2015.
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Dietrich Bonhoeffer warned long ago that people need to be spiritually mature to know the truth.\(^{22}\) He warned his readers to stay focused upon God through the disciplines in the Word, prayer, worship, and communion both in community and in solitude. He wrote suggesting that Christians are called to be spiritual and not human in searching for the truth because human love disregards God’s truth. God’s love provides freedom. Like Jesus, Bonhoeffer stayed focused upon the spiritual disciplines until he came upon spiritual maturity in the truth.

Erwin McManus of the Mosaic faith community in Los Angeles writes and teaches that Christians need to create and find the beauty to which God calls each person individually. This beauty is discovered through a spiritual process that requires time and effort. He claimed that only through this process can people find the truth. He suggested that only when people let God master their lives could they become beautiful works of art in His truth.\(^ {23}\) He explained that he had been through such difficult times that the only thing he had to cling was God, and from this clinging, he was transformed. This spiritual growth formation process brought Erwin to a place of having eyes to see what others do not.\(^ {24}\)

The wisdom books of the Bible discuss purity and obedience to God’s laws. Spiritual maturity demands purification and discipline in all areas of life. As Jesus, all areas of His life were purified, disciplined and focused. Richard Foster discusses the idea


of purity and obedience. He uses the Book of James and other New Testament books to enforce this concept. Foster, along with other contemporary writers such as Dallas Willard and David Benner, are listed on many bibliographies on spiritual formation. Each has its own focus. Interestingly, for the most part, their degree areas are not spiritual formation. Most of these authors focus upon the New Testament.

The Essenes and the desert forefathers isolated themselves from culture to cleanse and to hear from God. They were then able to grasp the depth of spiritual maturity. John Calvin desired purity to find the truth, which can be done through spiritual formation and disciplines. Nouwen and McManus agree. While McManus is easier for people to relate to, both suggest going deep, not look to people, and look to God. Brother Lawrence lived it. Saint Augustine focused upon love-based spiritual formation. Philosopher Michael Foucault said that religion and culture is all wrong, and not truth at all. This is due to a lack of spiritual formation of our spiritual leaders.

The gifts of the Spirit manifest themselves in different ways according to the person and where he or she is in his or her relationship with God in maturity. They are in tune to the Holy Spirit and know who they are called to be and what they are called to do. In perfect harmony with the will of God is a difficult concept for human capacity.

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30 Joyce Schuld, *Foucault and Augustine* (Notre Dame: UND Press, 2003), 207-211.
Daniel Wolpert discusses the importance of silence and prayer for spiritual leaders in his writings. Sadly, in discussing these practices with hundreds of spiritual leaders, only a small percent admitted that they take time for silence and prayer.31 Slowing down to listen and hear God is difficult for spiritual leaders.32

Books and journal articles on spiritual direction help to clarify and connect with God at a deeper level than other options. Spiritual direction is an option for spiritual leaders. This is the process where the focus is upon listening for and to God and what He is doing, and on what wants His spiritual leaders to do. The art of spiritual direction is contemplative and Holy Spirit led.

Some of the current literature on spiritual formation includes peer review journals articles and books to help clarify the situation on the lack of spiritual formation. The spiritual maturity of spiritual leaders with biblical spiritual disciplines is the common method of spiritual formation. Some suggest spiritual direction and mentoring alongside with the maturing process helps the spiritual leader see. The heart searching for truth through God is the core with life realignment with Christ and His truth.

The New Testament gospel love centric focus blinds spiritual leaders to the essential need and methods for spiritual formation of spiritual leaders. God gave His children Jesus, His one and only son to die for sins. His love is shown partially through Jesus complete surrender. God wants love but that is not enough. He wants total intentional pursuit of Him with entire heart and being. Robert Mulholland wrote that the biblical spiritual formation process enables channeling that love to union with Christ in


all areas of life.\textsuperscript{33} He also wrote that the results include transformational healing into wholeness with Christ.\textsuperscript{34}

Coe wrote that the Old Testament wisdom is an important aspect of spiritual formation along with love and obedience that creates godliness. He suggested that spiritual leaders adopt a rigorous spiritual formation program for purification to transform into the image of Christ. He goes further in claiming that is the responsibility of the spiritual leader to move the Kingdom forward.\textsuperscript{35}

The subject of spiritual formation has been undefined or placed on the back burner for so long that the seminaries and churches assume that it is taken care of by the individual spiritual leaders. Spiritual formation of spiritual leaders takes intentional time and energy from the seminary spiritual leader. The demands of ministry upon spiritual leaders are immense which keep them busy with leading and ministering. The demands of the church are not supportive of formation time because of the economic impact that it doesn’t happen. Therefore, if spiritual leaders are trained in seminary how to become and remain spiritually mature then it flows into church priorities.

Current writings on seeking and researching spiritual maturity are somewhat lacking. The writings from the desert fathers, saints, and martyrs grasp something deeper. The current literature is somewhat skewed due to the biblical imbalance that comes from the spiritual oppression today as a result of a lack of spiritual formation of spiritual


\textsuperscript{34} Robert Mulholland, \textit{Invitation to a Journey} (Downer’s Grove: IVP. 1993), 34.

leaders. However, in piecing together current literature with the biblical study above on spiritual formation, spiritual disciplines, and maturity no one author lists them all.

The effects of this spiritual imbalance and actually reaches farther than previously realized creating blindness from spiritual oppression by quashing the Holy Spirit and limiting God in this culture because spiritual leaders are not spiritually mature. The Holy Spirit is essential to spiritual leaders. James Wilhoit claimed that spiritual formation is empowered by the Holy Spirit through prayer and meditation. The false teaching results when lack of the Holy Spirit in spiritual leadership sets a tone of denying God and allowing culture to lead and define God’s children both individually and collectively.36

When spiritual leaders do the work of spiritual formation through spiritual disciplines, focus upon God’s characteristics, fear of God, obey God’s commandments as He asks, then leaders can bring about the changes that need to bring the church back to God. Training spiritual leaders in spiritual formation at the seminary level would prevent limiting God. Robert Logan and Tara Miller wrote about conforming people into leaders. They found that people have to go outside of the church to be developed in spiritual formation. They found that leadership failure derives from the being of the leader and his or her lack of spiritual formation.37

Henri Nouwen claimed that the need for spiritual formation of spiritual leaders is increasing.38 He claimed that spiritual formation takes place within the heart and cites John 8:32 as freedom being with God as the reason and purpose. He claimed that prayer


38 Henri Nouwen, Spiritual Formation, xv-xxx.
in silence, solitude, and journaling are the basic methods. He claimed spiritual leaders suffer deeply from the loneliness of the calling and low self-esteem and feel marginalized because the church environment is so critical. Furthermore, Nouwen claimed that spiritual leaders cannot rely upon theology anymore. Instead they must be deeply intimate with Jesus.\footnote{Henri Nouwen, \textit{The Wounded Healer} (New York: Doubleday 1979), 42-43.}

Purification and sanctification require spiritual formation and maturity. Charles Spurgeon wrote that the most important aspect of ministering is the heart aligned in purity with Jesus.\footnote{Charles Spurgeon, \textit{Lectures to My Students} (Grand Rapids: Zondervan 1954), 8, 13, 17, 18.} The character needs to be the most upright in all aspects of life. Joseph McGarry wrote about Bonhoeffer’s attempt to balance the disciplines with the focus and core around Jesus.\footnote{Joseph McGarry, “Con-formed to Christ: Dietrich Bonhoeffer and Christian Formation,” 226-242.} Sanctification, purification and holiness are discussed throughout the Bible. John Calvin confirmed this in his writings.\footnote{John Calvin, \textit{Instructions in Christianity}, 210.} Steve Porter wrote that Paul’s spiritual formation is sanctification.\footnote{Steve Porter, “Sanctification in a New Key: Relieving Evangelical Anxieties over Spiritual Formation,” \textit{Journal for Spiritual Formation and Soul Care} 1, no. 2 (Fall 2008): 129-148.}

David Benner and Gary Moon wrote about the care of souls with the goal of transformation through spiritual formation including spiritual direction.\footnote{David Benner, \textit{Spiritual Direction and Soul Care} (Downers Grove: IVP, 2004), 7-9, 20.} The steps require purification through spiritual disciplines and constant intentional daily effort from leaders. Romans 12:1-2 and Corinthians 3:18 are scriptural focus for this process. They claim that spiritual maturity is liken to Ephesians 4:13, and from this comes His truth and
wisdom. Courage in suffering, highest virtues, and a level of detachment yet peace and love are also part of the spiritual maturity process. Benner argues that truth lies in identity only found in deep intimate relationship with God. Benner wrote about the importance of spiritual direction and guidance in the spiritual maturing process.

Robert Clinton encouraged spiritual leaders to follow the Old Testament leadership principles or they will not be focused leaders. He has researched numerous spiritual leaders and conducted research to help them achieve their callings. He has written many books on Bible study for spiritual leaders. Bible leadership produces moral character, which creates credibility essential to God’s spiritual leader. He suggested that without deep biblical spiritual formation the spiritual leaders are on the path of destruction.

    Philosopher Michael Foucault claimed that the most crucial research is contrary to the masses, and that the masses oppress. He believed that all systems are skewed and not based upon truth but false beliefs of the masses. He suggested that people question everything because true justice would cause a revolution.\textsuperscript{45} Spiritual maturity enables leaders to step back and question the spiritual oppression.

    A great example of a current spiritual leader who questioned culture is David Walden. God grabbed him out of culture and helped him become spiritually mature with spiritual formation, disciplines, and mentoring. Then God helped him to question protocol. This questioning led Walden to minister outside of the church walls. He did the seeking with God through spiritual formation and disciplines, fearing God, obeying His

\textsuperscript{45} Joyce Schuld, \textit{Foucault and Augustine}, 207-210, 215.
commandments. Now God uses Walden in multiple countries all over the world changing numerous aspects of cultures bringing them to God.46

Journaling in the Old Testament was mostly left to the scribes. However, Moses did bring the Ten Commandments imprinted on stone to the people. That perhaps is the journaling of that era. Many current writers and spiritual directors encourage journaling to the list of spiritual disciplines.47 The Ten Commandments have been used in spiritual formation because they include spiritual freedom in aligning behavior and attitude with God and His will. The Ten Commandments areas are often prayerfully walked through for spiritual growth formation exercises in an attempt to acknowledge sin, repent of it, and to change and heal.

Biblically and some current writers encourage sabbath rest in the Lord as a method of spiritual growth formation and discipline. Jesus rested in the Lord, and rest was so important to God that He made it a commandment because rest in Him can be nurturing beyond and healing to say the least. It helps with slowing down and processing of the soul to grow in deeper connection with God and through God. Slowing down is also considered a spiritual discipline through sabbath rest. Eugene Peterson wrote that sabbath rest is crucial for the pastors and spiritual leaders. Resting in the Lord allows Him to heal, restore, and to lead again. Sabbath rest is part of a spiritually disciplined life. He bases this on Exodus 20:3-11 in that the Lord rested.48

48 Eugene Peterson, Working the Angles (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987), 67, 69, 72, 78, 80.
Edgar Schein wrote about culture and explains that either the culture leads or the leaders lead. He explains that leaders have to be change agents in order to lead the cultural dynamics. The process requires helping the people of the culture to change their perceptions relationally so that they feel the change. He suggested that the change agent establish a concise vision.

Everett Rogers wrote on mass cultural change and strategies to induce it. He explains that innovative change agent communication and perceptions is key. He suggested that the change agents establish an open information exchange for communication flow to allow mass cultural change to occur. In the cycles of change with most people are slow to change so this concept could take a longtime for seminaries and churches to consider re ordering their core because people have always done things the comfortable and safe cultural way in seminary and church and everything is fine. Slow adapters think that the churches and seminaries are training people to lead like Jesus so why change.

James Smith wrote and teaches about spiritual and church history. He wrote that for renewal people must reform their image of God based upon Genesis 1:26-27. Then he referred to the Revelation 2:4-7 for how to do this. Obedience and repentance is the beginning. Only then can people align their characters with God’s.

Without spiritual formation training no one can lead like Jesus. McManus wrote that the worst kind of oppression is spiritual. He suggested that it is time for a revolt


where the Holy Spirit leads.\textsuperscript{52} He claimed that removing fear and doubt is the key. He claimed that knowing Christ and being free in Him makes it impossible to remain cultural. Seeking God with everything, surrender, intimacy with God, and stepping out in faith for Him is the means.\textsuperscript{53} People fear this. He wrote that God’s will has nothing to do with comfort. He wrote that seeking God’s presence and wisdom is what matters. He affirmed that listening and obeying God is all that matters in intimacy with Him.\textsuperscript{54} He suggested creativity to conquer the fear and whatever holds back from this mandate. However one cannot create if we are not free of culture. He claimed also that the commandments provide freedom. He suggested becoming divergent and stop conforming.\textsuperscript{55}

John Ortberg wrote about walking close to God.\textsuperscript{56} This requires risk with no fear and all faith. He wrote that a deeper walk with God is the only way to grow and to find God’s call. He wrote about spiritual disciplines and about listening through the pain. He reminded that God really wants to be the leader.

Bruce Humphrey explained in his books to put all control in the Holy Spirit for change both individually and collectively.\textsuperscript{57} In years of pastoring he found that the church that does this moves forward. The church that does not move forward with God dies.

\textsuperscript{52} McManus, \textit{Barbarian Way}, 4, 7, 13.
\textsuperscript{53} McManus, \textit{Barbarian Way}, 15-17, 47.
\textsuperscript{54} McManus, \textit{Barbarian Way}, 53, 78-79, 94.
\textsuperscript{55} McManus, \textit{Artisan Soul}, 156-160.
\textsuperscript{56} John Ortberg, \textit{If You Want to Walk on Water You Have to Get Out of the Boat} (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2001), 61, 81, 84, 164.
\textsuperscript{57} Bruce Humphrey, \textit{Ministry on Fire} (Danvers: NavPress, 2005), 143-147.
church that kills the Holy Spirit dies. The fire of the Holy Spirit creates a powerful energy for change, and can actually encourage it.\textsuperscript{58}

Ken Blanchard and Phil Hodges wrote about leading like Jesus.\textsuperscript{59} The core scripture they use is the most important commandment. The spiritual disciplines listed include prayer, the scripture, solitude, receiving God’s love, and fellowship. They addressed issues that hinder use in these practices such as fear. They encouraged leaders to encourage other leaders in these methods of formation values.\textsuperscript{60}

Gary Thomas discussed nine pathways to achieving spiritual formation for that most important commandment.\textsuperscript{61} He wants to encourage God’s love. He explains that calling is more Holiness than anything else.\textsuperscript{62}

Jerry Sittser claimed that Christians chose not to dive deeply into the spiritual disciplines and relationship with the Lord because they do not want to live like that.\textsuperscript{63} This limits God. It is easier to be a marginalized humans limiting God than to retreat into nature or to spend time alone with Him.\textsuperscript{64}

Gordon Smith and Simon Chan argue for the need for the priority of intentional spiritual disciplines including solitude, prayer, the Word and fasting. Simon Chan also believes that if people obey with spiritual formation and seeking that they can please

\begin{footnotes}
\item[58] Humphrey, I’m In <3 (San Diego: BFG Publishing, 2013), 150-154.
\item[59] Ken Blanchard and Phil Hodges, Lead Like Jesus (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2005), 49-52, 55.
\item[61] Gary Thomas, Sacred Pathways (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010), 13-15.
\item[62] Gary Thomas, Sacred Pathways, 30-31, 39.
\item[64] Jerry Sittser, Discovering God’s Will, 15, 18, 20, 29.
\end{footnotes}
God. Chan’s discussion overlaying spiritual theology and systematic theology ties the concepts together making the focus upon formation.

God wants the whole heart, aims at the heart through His love, and transforms through hearts by connection with His. Theologian Karl Barth discussed that the effectiveness of a theologian derives from his heart. In discussing evangelical theology he places the importance of the heart being sanctified through the theologian’s covenant with God.⁶⁵ John Calvin’s wrote on the same.

Neil Cole explained that leaders have no authority if it is not spiritual authority through spiritual formation and listening to the Holy Spirit. If they are not doing this they will fail as spiritual leaders. Timothy Keller believes that leaders cannot minster without God, and that this culture denies His authority because His authority is not based upon ego. Without spiritual growth formation and maturity in that time listening to God, and then obeying God spiritual leaders are not able to reshape culture.

Eugene Peterson suggested that cultivating the fear of the Lord in the spiritual disciplines is the way of spiritual formation.⁶⁶ Brennan Manning suggested that people have the choice to pursue being in Christ or not. Robert Mulholland explained that through Luke 9:23-24 people must die to self in being.⁶⁷ Dallas Willard agrees and further suggested empowerment in all relationship with the Lord.⁶⁸ James Houston suggested to go after the Holy Spirit and to master the scripture after Augustine who

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based everything on love. Since the authors have not fully exegetically gone through the entire Bible on the subject, none of the current works cover all aspects of spiritual formation, spiritual disciplines, and spiritual maturity.

Historically seminaries did not offer or emphasize spiritual formation. David Clark Vice President and Dean of Bethel Seminary explains that knowledge in theology is not sufficient training. Thus, Bethel Seminary is working on integrating spiritual formation into their program. Today the evangelical seminaries that offer any training in spiritual formation are aiming at spiritual character development through their programs. The current spiritual formation curriculum in seminaries and the current literature on spiritual formation are consistent in that they include spiritual disciplines at some level and some spiritual directors. However, the current literature on spiritual formation is the somewhat confusing and conflicting in the area definitions of spiritual formation.

Biola’s Talbot Seminary has put together a master’s degree program focused upon spiritual formation and spiritual direction. Both require the students to have spiritual direction as part of the program. They have published the *Journal for Spiritual Formation and Soul Care* since 2008. The articles are helping to bridge the gap with clarification and guidance towards the importance of spiritual formation and spiritual direction. Some of the articles are referred to herein. Their incredibly gifted board of editorial consultants includes Ruth Haley Barton, Simon Chan, Larry Crab, James Houston, Robert

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70 James Houston, “Seeking Historical Perspectives for Spiritual Direction and Soul Care Today,” 88-91, 105.

Mulholland, Gerry Sittser, Jim Wilhoit, John Coe, Steve Porter, and Kyle Strobel.\textsuperscript{72}

Rick Warren used the theme of the 40 days in his writings. He encouraged people to love God more than anything else. He wants people to come to the fullness of Christ and claimed that the greatest sin is not to do this. He writes to love God, trust, and worship God in everything. Warren explained that the most important relationship in life is that with God and to love Him wholeheartedly by obeying His Ten Commandments, seeking Him in prayer and in the Word. He encouraged solitude, journaling, and meditation with focus upon God’s characteristics. He wants people to seek God’s truth and to fully surrender to become mature in Him and for Him. Rick Warren explained that this comes from the heart and that we were made to be God pleasers delighting in Him. Rick Warren explained that fear, guilt, anger, and misunderstanding hold Him back. In becoming Christ-like, we need to leave that behind.\textsuperscript{73} He explains that we need to daily and constantly have conversations with God thanking Him and praising Him. Warren encouraged people to seek God and trust in God for the gifts of the spirit and how He wants to use them. This empowers God’s purpose that is God’s will. He suggested that God’s purpose is the only calling and involves biblically all areas life including family, education, vocation, ministry, and painful testing. In this process spiritual gifts come out in community.\textsuperscript{74} Then the focus must be faithful stewards of the identity in Christ based upon the most important commandment. He helps people put together their identity in

\textsuperscript{72} Journal for Spiritual Formation and Soul Care 8, no. 1 (Spring 2015), 0.

\textsuperscript{73} Rick Warren, The Purpose Driven Life (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2002), 9-12, 17-18.

\textsuperscript{74} Rick Warren, The Purpose Driven Life, 18, 20-21, 65.
Christ so that all priorities are for Christ, the responsibility is to Christ, and then all can persevere in Christ. As a result, Rick Warren leads one of the largest churches today.75

_Spiritual Mentoring and Spiritual Direction_

Mentoring and spiritual direction is effective in spiritual formation.76 Evangelical seminaries encourage mentoring and spiritual direction at some level. However the importance may not be emphasized and studied enough.77 Mentoring has existed throughout time and discussed biblically above. Success of some biblical characters depended not only upon spiritual formation but also upon mentoring. Richard Jones did a study at UCLA on the importance of encouragement for higher education student success through mentoring by faculty, counselors, and others in authoritative roles. He found that students that were poured into by a mentor had a higher success rate.78 For spiritual formation to succeed mentoring79 and spiritual direction are vital to that success.80

Mentors and spiritual directors can empower and encourage spiritual leaders in their spiritual formation and education in many ways. The Bible suggested that we seek wisdom from others. Biblical mentors are an important option especially in seminary.81

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75 Rick Warren, _The Purpose Driven Life_ (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2002), 87-88, 91, 111.


81 Jacob Dunlow, “The Relationship Between Mentoring and Spiritual Formation Among Nontraditional Theological Seminary Students.” 12.
Robert Clinton and Terry Walling wrote about biblical leadership and the importance of biblical mentors. They have designed curriculum for spiritual leaders to walk through the Bible identifying spiritual mentors and how to glean from them. In addition they wrote about the importance of spiritual leaders in being mentored and mentoring others. Mentoring touches more on the practical aspects of formation in goal setting and the steps.

Robert Clinton and Terry Walling have found that all spiritual leaders go through extremely difficult times. When the core of the spiritual leader is biblically based and their values are biblical that spiritual formation and spiritual maturity can occur. They suggest that when spiritual leaders experience the deep pain through these difficult times they focus upon God and biblical mandates formation results in spiritual maturity. Their research reflects that a mentor during these difficult times is crucial to using the situation for spiritual maturity.82

They have developed curriculum to help spiritual leaders focus upon their calling by God and do it well. The biblical wisdom, spiritual formation, spiritual disciplines, and focus are part of that process. They suggest that the use of a biblical mentor, human mentor, or spiritual director as key in the painful difficult times of spiritual leader. As a result of years of studying and working with spiritual leaders they have written numerous books and created curriculum to keep spiritual leaders on their path to their calling and empowering coaching and mentoring for this purpose.

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82 Terry Walling, *Stuck* (St. Charles: Church Smart, 2008) 30.
William Barry wrote a book on spiritual direction that claimed spiritual directors helped directees focus upon God. Spiritual direction, however, is completely biblically focused upon God, with the Holy Spirit in helping spiritual leaders in healing, guiding, freeing, listening, and understanding what He is doing. In addition, spiritual direction can help through difficult times when spirituality is lacking. Spiritual direction has existed since the first century, but there has been a renewed interest with the evangelical world over the past 25 years. The peer review journal by Spiritual Directors International has over 6,000 members has fascinating articles and information on the subject of spiritual direction. Listening for God through the Holy Spirit led biblical wisdom and discernment is the focus. Fuller Seminary recently added a Doctor of Ministry in Spiritual Direction degree and it is the only one in the country.

Evangelical spiritual directors recommend Gordon T. Smith’s book on spiritual direction to clarify and explain spiritual direction. He helped to communicate the spiritual growth aspect in spiritual direction. Smith’s book expressed theologically that the long existence of spiritual direction meets this specific ministry niche in all that it offers.


84 James Houston, “Seeking Historical Perspectives for Spiritual Direction and Soul Care Today,” 88-105.


Simon Chan wrote about the need for spiritual directors for Holy Spirit-led biblical wisdom years ago. He helped to clarify their role. Chan differentiated between spiritual directors and pastors. Pastors present the theology through teaching and spiritual directors help to integrate spiritual formation deeply into character for the purpose of spiritual maturity. He separated the mentor from both roles as one with less authority. He also separated spiritual direction from counseling in that counseling sometimes separates from Christianity for diagnosis. Spiritual direction focuses upon God for the purpose of spiritual maturity. Some of the most spiritually mature are not seen by counselors as completely healthy because the Holy Spirit is at the core. Thus in complete union with God derives the encouragement for spiritual maturity, not human.\(^\text{89}\)

Chan claimed that healing through spiritual direction occurs in the deep discernment for those directed in who they are in Christ and in the body of Christ. The spiritual disciplines are incorporated as part of the process for healing, guidance, and moving forward in what God wants. Sanctification and cleansing is an aspect if this process.\(^\text{90}\) Chan claimed for the spiritual direction to come to the fullness the church has to rethink their priorities and send their leaders to spiritual directors. Then we are sure that the church is led by spiritually mature in discerning God’s will. He explains that the training for a spiritual director is the deepest walk with God. Discernment is part of that process and is discussed throughout the book of Proverbs. Wisdom becomes an integral part of spiritual maturity, as does sanctification as discussed throughout the Bible.\(^\text{91}\)

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\(^{91}\) Simon Chan, *Spiritual Theology* (Downers Grove: IVP, 1998), 239, 249.
Spiritual direction is often used with the increasingly popular Saint Ignatius exercises. Larry Warner wrote about these exercises. His book through the exercises of Saint Ignatius includes spiritual formation through disciplines in a closer more aligned walk with Jesus. Jesus’ depth of spiritual maturity helps to encourage spiritual leaders at any place in life.92

Spiritual direction relies heavily upon prayer. Wayne Grudem wrote on systematic theology emphasizing the importance of prayer, the Word, and the characteristics of God. It is as if this is a form of worship for him as he emphasizes the importance of worship.93 He suggested that moral character is important to comprehend scripture. He claimed that to achieve this prayer, confession, fasting, alone in solitude, and obedience, most of the spiritual disciplines must occur!! That in scripture we can find God’s will through prayer, moral character, and focusing upon the characteristics of God. He discussed purification through the Holy Spirit. He saw beauty and joy in sanctification.94

**Summary**

Throughout the literature research of the spiritual formation of spiritual leader’s common themes for spiritual leader growth formation and methods from the Old Testament and New Testament were also found including the use of mentors and spiritual direction. Multiple authors reviewed during this process affirmed these themes. Seminary

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spiritual leader spiritual formation requires the individual biblical intentional focus upon
God to become Christ-like in a process that requires surrender for maturity.

Throughout the Old and New Testament the common threads in these spiritual
leaders lives researched were: first, they all spent time alone in the wilderness listening,
discussing, praying, cleansing, and being with God; second, their devoted obedience in
their intentional intimacy with God enabled all to change the culture then, and through
today; third, their devoted obedience in total surrender to God through spiritual
disciplines enabled them to focus upon God, His characteristics, and His call over the
people no matter what. This meant that they were not people pleasers; fourth, their
devoted obedience enabled them to be used by God to mentor and spiritually direct others
both in that time in the Bible through today; and fifth, their willingness to put God and
who He is over everything else enabled them to be some of the most effective spiritual
leaders of all time.

These common themes for spiritual growth formation of spiritual leaders from the
Old Testament and New Testament were also found among current writings on spiritual
formation for the most part. The process required biblical focus with the Holy Spirit in
prayer, intentional seeking of the Lord with biblical wisdom, focus upon His
characteristics, and spiritual disciplines such as: confession, solitude, silence, listening,
simplicity, fasting, sacrifice, meditation, service, worship, celebration, fellowship, rest,
and complete surrender. All of this frees the spiritual leader to step back from culture to
be and do what God wants. Jesus did this and changed the world through spiritual
formation. The literature research results enables spiritual leaders do the work of spiritual
formation through spiritual disciplines, focus upon God’s characteristics, fear of God, obey God’s commandments as He asks.

The spiritual growth themes section included an intentional intimate relationship with God with the spiritual leader pursuing God individually. This required spiritual leaders to spend time alone with God listening to Him and going to Him to restore. The depth and level to which they were intimate with God was based upon their intentional pursuit of Him in these areas. The growth themes included spiritual disciplines, which included all or some spiritual disciplines, prayer, time in the Word, and journaling by the participants as intentional methods of intimacy with God. This enabled spiritual leaders to know and understand their spiritual gifts and calling for God. This also enabled them to move towards these with vision. The importance of mentoring and spiritual direction for seminary spiritual leaders encouraged and supported them throughout the process.

The process commonly required individual and biblical focus with the Holy Spirit in prayer, intentional seeking of the Lord with biblical wisdom, focus upon His characteristics, and spiritual disciplines such as: confession, solitude, silence, listening, simplicity, fasting, sacrifice, meditation, service, worship, celebration, fellowship, rest, and complete surrender. All of this frees the spiritual leader to step back from culture to be and do what God wants. Jesus did this and changed the world through spiritual formation.
CHAPTER FOUR: METHODOLOGY

Data and Methodology

This project used a survey method research to address the problem of the lack of spiritual formation among evangelical seminarians. This survey method research was quantitative in nature. Paul Leedy suggested that survey research is quantitative for the purpose of acquiring information.\(^1\) Nancy Vyhmeister also suggested that the survey method is quantitative. She suggested that the survey method is used for the purpose of obtaining information and describing reality.\(^2\) Alain Pinsonneault and Ken Kraemer have defined a survey as a venue for collecting information about the attributes and habits of a group of people.\(^3\) Based upon the problem statement, the researcher obtained information about the spiritual formation experience of seminary graduates in order to encourage the future spiritual formation of seminary spiritual leaders. This project specifically asked the question, “How can the spiritual growth formation of evangelical seminarian spiritual leaders be encouraged?”

Survey Research Design

The survey method research design for this project was created and based upon the subproblems. A strength in utilizing the survey method can be found in the questions

\(^1\) Paul Leedy and Jeanne Ormrod, *Practical Design* 9\(^{th}\) (Saddle River: Pearson, 2010), 187.


used. Specific questions enable the participants to provide answers that describe a personal experience. Another strength of the survey method is the ability to incorporate both closed-ended questions and open-ended questions. Closed-ended questions allow an individual to choose from a given set of responses, such as a Likert scale. Open-ended questions allow an individual to answer a question in his/her own words. By including both types of questions within a survey the participants were able to be more authentic and detailed in their answers. A third strength in utilizing the survey method is that the participant could do the survey whenever they had time, take their time, and take the survey wherever they wanted. A fourth strength of survey method research is that it enables the collection of information and demographic information from groups of people. However, surveys are somewhat limited in that they provide estimates of the population surveyed.

The biblical and literature research results laid the groundwork of themes for the survey method questions that express the importance of spiritual growth formation for the spiritual leader. The biblical sources combined with the current literature on spiritual maturity, formation, and mentoring or spiritual direction. This resulted in a description of common practices, strategies, and methods.

The first subproblem was to study Old and New Testament spiritual leaders for spiritual formation themes. Spiritual formation includes the intentional formation of a person through intimate connection with the Holy Spirit to become internally and

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externally like Christ. The second subproblem was to review the current literature regarding spiritual formation themes. Specific themes explored included: spiritual formation growth methods, spiritual disciplines, and mentoring. The third subproblem was to develop and conduct the field research obtained through survey method research of recent evangelical seminary graduates focused upon their spiritual formation, spiritual maturity, spiritual disciplines, and mentoring or spiritual direction methods. The fourth subproblem was to develop strategies and practices for how seminarian spiritual leaders may further their spiritual formation.

*Survey Design*

An online survey was created in an attempt to answer the question “how can the spiritual growth formation of evangelical seminarian spiritual leaders be encouraged?” The online survey was used over mail or interview because the surveys were sent out to seminary spiritual leader graduates located all over the world. Some did not have access to mail, and some were not able to skype. The biblical and literature themes resulted in spiritual growth, spiritual disciplines, spiritual gifts and calling, mentoring and spiritual direction, spiritual formation training, and demographics. Five questions were open-ended and 15 were Likert questions, for a total of 20 questions. (Appendix A) The Likert questions collected information about the participants’ engagement in spiritual formation. The open-ended questions allowed individuals to share additional thoughts on spiritual formation. The design of the survey research method contained specific spiritual growth formation questions. Data was collected through Bethel’s Qualtrics program, which allowed for confidentiality. To address concerns of confidentiality and consent, an
Informed Consent form was included in the online survey. Participation in this research was voluntary.

Research Participants

The research included only recent seminary graduates because they had completed their master’s program. Since they had graduated from seminary and were in ministries they had the experience to assess their spiritual formation experience and identify the needs and methods as compared to current seminary students. Researcher sent out numerous surveys over the estimated amount allotting for those who do not answer surveys. A list of 40 spiritual leader seminary graduates was compiled from random seminary email lists in the researcher’s possession. The seminary graduates were located all over the world but had graduated from evangelical seminaries in the United States. Of the 40 surveys emailed, three emails were not deliverable and one opted out. Twenty-eight surveys were opened but not started, and eight were completed. A couple opened the survey and started but did not complete it. This could be due to multiple factors such as lack of time. In addition, two surveys were sent out and completed for the purpose of editing and proofreading but not counted in the results.

Appendix B reflects that all eight participants graduated with a M.Div. between 1991-2012. Five of the participants were currently working on a D.Min. The participant’s ages ranged from 35-64. Four participants were over 50 and four were under 50. Five of the participants were male, while three of the participants were female. The longest time that it took a participant to complete the survey was 1 hour 7 minutes and the shortest amount of time was 3 minutes 27 seconds. Six surveys took 6 minutes or less to complete while two took 45 minutes to complete. All participants attended an evangelical seminary.
either in the Midwest or West. Four had received their master’s degree from other seminaries. Four had received their master’s degree from Bethel.

Data Collection

The survey was sent out via email through the Bethel Qualtrics system. Use of Qualtrics allowed for a secure and confidential way to collect data. The survey was sent out asking for a two week completion time. Two reminders were sent out after the initial mailing. Each participant opened and completed their surveys on their own time frame and their choice of location.

Data Analysis

Margaret LeCompte suggested that the analysis of quantitative data includes looking for frequency in the data.\(^7\) For this study, the research primarily first focused upon the frequency of responses for the close-ended questions. The Likert scale was chosen because it was concise and simple. The survey questioned the participant’s frequency of spiritual formation activities, spiritual growth, spiritual disciplines, spiritual gifts and calling, mentor and spiritual director usage, and spiritual formation training.

The first section of the survey contained questions using the following Likert scale: never = 1, sometimes = 2, often = 3, and all of the time = 4. The researcher reviewed the survey answers to this section and summarized the data descriptively for each question. The answers were totaled and placed on a chart. The data was reported based upon the number of research participants that self-reported a greater involvement versus lesser involvement. More specifically reporting the range from never to all of the time with regards to their spiritual growth methods, spiritual disciplines, spiritual gifts

and calling, and mentoring and spiritual direction.

The second section of the survey contained open-ended questions. The researcher reviewed the data and broke it down into subthemes for each question. Then the subthemes were summarized into larger themes. The responses were coded into themes. First the responses were lined up side by side and recorded specifics looking for repetition. From this the sub-themes were developed. From this the similarities were categorized into border themes. The final section of the survey contained the demographic questions. The researcher reviewed the data. This data was then listed in table descriptively. (Appendix B)

Summary

This chapter discussed the nature of the research on spiritual formation of seminary spiritual leaders as set out by the problem statement and the subproblems. The survey method research was best utilized for the purpose of obtaining the specific information established throughout the biblical and literature research. The results of which were combined to compile the survey method research list of questions. This type of research enabled the survey to contain both closed-ended questions and open-ended questions which enable variety for clarity in the results of the research. The survey method research also enabled the participants to take the survey in their own time, at their own pace, and their choice of location. The research participants were seminary graduate spiritual leaders. The data collection and analysis process broke the answers down into sections. The results were discussed in detail and placed on charts and tables in the following chapter. Generalizations were not possible with this size study.
CHAPTER FIVE: ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

Spiritual Growth Formation Seminarian Spiritual Leaders

The purpose of this research was to address the lack of spiritual formation among evangelical seminarians. The biblical and literature research based upon this stated problem established common threads through which a survey was created. Data was collected through the use of this survey. The survey (Appendix A) contained twenty questions divided into the following five categories: spiritual growth, spiritual disciplines, spiritual gifts and calling, mentoring and spiritual director, spiritual formation training, and demographics.

*Spiritual Growth*

The questions related to spiritual growth asked the participants about their relationship with God. The questions explored the degree to which participants felt they were spiritually growing as characterized by an intimate relationship and time alone with God, and being able to go to God for restoration. (Figure 5.1) This figure and the following figures in this chapter reflect the participant’s answers to the questions for each section. Overall, the data revealed that the majority of participants felt as though their relationship with God was growing.
The participants were asked if they were growing spiritually. All participants reported that they were growing spiritually. In regards to how often their spiritual growth took place, five participants indicated that it took place “all of the time,” while the remaining three participants reported their spiritual growth took place “often.” The participants were asked if they had an intimate relationship with God. All participants reported having an intimate relationship with God. In regards to the frequency of their intimate relationship with God five participants indicated that their relationship was intimate with God “all of the time,” while the remaining three participants reported their relationship with God was intimate “often.”

The participants were asked if they got time alone with God to listen to Him. All participants reported that they got time alone with God to listen to Him. In regards to how often they got time alone with God, three reported that they got time alone “all of the time,” while five reported getting time alone “often.” The participants were asked if they go to God to restore. The data for this question was slightly less on the Likert scale. Four of the participants reported that they go to God to restore “all of the time,” two go “often” to God to restore; while the remaining two participants reported that they “sometimes” go to God to restore.
All participants were attempting spiritual growth formation at some level utilizing and practicing spiritual disciplines. The researcher noted that while a variety of spiritual disciplines were noted, there were some spiritual disciplines not mentioned. A few of the spiritual disciplines not mentioned included: service, fellowship, worship, and celebration.

Spiritual growth assessment is difficult due to the subjective nature. From the biblical and literature research, the researcher found that spiritual growth could be assessed through an intimate relationship with God in the spiritual leader. Time alone with God, and seeking God were ways to develop intimacy with God. In reviewing the data, all participants reported a level of intimacy with God. The responses to the questions of spending time alone with God differed from the responses to other questions in that the majority responded “sometimes” having time alone with God. The researcher was encouraged that the respondents wanted more time alone with God, but wondered why they answered that way.

_Spiritual Disciplines_

Closed-Ended Questions

This section of the survey focused on the participant’s use of spiritual disciplines. All participants reported utilizing spiritual disciplines at some level. Figure 5.2 summarizes how the participants answered the questions. The first question was a general question about the practice of spiritual disciplines. This was followed by more specific questions such as, if the participants felt that they got enough time to pray; enough time in the Word; and if the participants journaled. All participants reported that they used spiritual disciplines. Data revealed that spiritual disciplines were used to varying degrees.
Two participants reported using spiritual disciplines all “of the time,” four participants reported using spiritual disciplines “often,” and two participants reported using spiritual disciplines “sometimes.”

Figure 5.2. Data on participants’ responses to spiritual disciplines questions (n=8)

The participants were asked if they got enough time to pray. When it came to having enough time to pray, participants reported a range of responses. Only one participant reported getting enough time to pray “all of the time.” The majority of participants reported having enough time to pray “often,” while two participants reported that they “sometimes” get enough time to pray. The participants were asked if they got enough time in the Word. When it came to having enough time in God’s Word, participants reported a range of responses. Only one participant reported getting enough time in the Word “all of the time.” The majority of participants reported getting enough time in the Word “often,” while one participant reported that they “sometimes” get enough time in the Word.

The participants were asked if they journaled. When it came to the spiritual discipline of journaling, participants reported a lesser frequency of using this spiritual discipline. The majority of participants reported that they “sometimes” journal, two reported that they journal “often,” while one participant reported that they “never”
journal. This is not a surprise as each spiritual leader has a unique way that God compels them towards Him. The researcher found this section encouraging in that all participants reported some use of spiritual disciplines. All reported time in the Word and in prayer, yet not enough time. Not having enough time, could be an indication that participants desired more time with God in prayer and His word.

**Open-Ended Questions**

Open-ended questions were added regarding spiritual disciplines to gain a deeper understanding of participants’ engagement in them. Participants were asked an open-ended question asking them about their specific spiritual disciplines they used. Participants reported using a variety of spiritual disciplines. Table 5.1 reflects the participant answers. This table divided the spiritual disciplines into categories based upon the outline of Richard Foster’s Celebration of Discipline.8

In the most important commandment God asks us to love the Lord with our all. He asks for all of our heart somewhat like the inward spiritual disciplines, which could be described as those of the inner heart. Foster identifies some of the inward disciplines as meditation, prayer, fasting, and study. He lists some of the outward disciplines as simplicity, solitude, submission, and service.9 From the outflow of our heart we are to love our neighbors as the second half of that commandment set for in the New Testament. This is somewhat similar to the outward disciplines and part of the outflow from the inner work of the heart. These practices are more observable by others. The corporate disciplines are an outflow that includes others. Foster lists some of the corporate disciplines are an outflow that includes others. Foster lists some of the corporate disciplines are an outflow that includes others. Foster lists some of the corporate disciplines are an outflow that includes others. Foster lists some of the corporate disciplines are an outflow that includes others. Foster lists some of the corporate disciplines are an outflow that includes others. Foster lists some of the corporate disciplines are an outflow that includes others. Foster lists some of the corporate disciplines are an outflow that includes others. Foster lists some of the corporate disciplines are an outflow that includes others. Foster lists some of the corporate disciplines are an outflow that includes others. Foster lists some of the corporate disciplines are an outflow that includes others. Foster lists some of the corporate disciplines are an outflow that includes others. Foster lists some of the corporate disciplines are an outflow that includes others. Foster lists some of the corporate disciplines are an outflow that includes others. Foster lists some of the corporate disciplines are an outflow that includes others. 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Foster lists some of the corporate disciplines are an outflow that includes others. Foster lists some of the corporate disciplines are an outflow that includes others. Foster lists some of the corporate disciplines are an outflow that includes others. Foster lists some of the corporate disciplines are an outflow that includes others. Foster lists some of the corporate disciplines are an outflow that includes others. Foster lists some of the corporate disciplines are an outflow that includes others. Foster lists some of the corporate disciplines are an outflow that includes others. Foster lists some of the corporate disciplines are an outflow that includes others. Foster lists some of the corporate disciplines are an outflow that includes others. Foster lists some of the corporate disciplines are an outflow that includes others. Foster lists some of the corporate disciplines are an outflow that includes others. Foster lists some of the corporate disciplines are an outflow that includes others. Foster lists some of the corporate disciplines are an outflow that includes others. Foster lists some of the corporate disciplines are an outflow that includes others. Foster lists some of the corporate disciplines are an outflow that includes others. Foster lists some of the corporate

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9 Richard Foster, *Celebration of Discipline*, v.
disciplines as confession, worship, guidance, and celebration.\textsuperscript{10} Most of the participants reported that they spent time in prayer and meditation. The participants all reported studying and reading the Bible. Half of the participants reported using solitude and silence. The other categories reflected that these participants are intentionally attempting spiritual growth through spiritual disciplines both inward and outwardly. Richard Foster identifies outward disciplines to include submission, simplicity, and service.\textsuperscript{11} The researcher noted that the participants did not include these as spiritual disciplines that they used. That raised the question of if submission, simplicity, and service are not seen as spiritual disciplines or if participants do not participate in them.

Corporate spiritual disciplines described above as part of the outflow of the inner disciplines of the heart. The inward disciplines are intentional and individual practices for the purpose of deep intimacy with God. Half of the participants reported spiritual guidance through a mentor or accountability as a spiritual discipline they used. The researcher acknowledges that the closed-ended questions did not include all spiritual disciplines. A benefit of this open-ended question allowed participants to identify spiritual guidance as a spiritual discipline. Richard Foster identifies corporate disciplines to include confession, celebration, and worship.\textsuperscript{12} The researcher noted that the participants did not include these as spiritual disciplines that they used. That raised the question of if confession, celebration, and worship are not seen as spiritual disciplines or if participants do not participate in them.

\textsuperscript{10} Richard Foster, \textit{Celebration of Discipline}, v.

\textsuperscript{11} Richard Foster, \textit{Celebration of Discipline}, v.

\textsuperscript{12} Richard Foster, \textit{Celebration of Discipline}, v.
Participants were asked to describe what they did for spiritual growth formation or renewal and to include the spiritual disciplines that they practiced. (Table 5.1) The list included: spiritual and professional accountability, fasting, prayer, reading the word, silence, solitude, meditation, rest, time with family, time outside, quiet time, fellowship, journaling, retreats, spiritual mentors, and Clinton’s biblically centered leader as follows:

Table 5.1. Data on participants’ responses to spiritual disciplines questions (n=8)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Inward Spiritual Disciplines</th>
<th>Outward Spiritual Disciplines</th>
<th>Corporate Spiritual Disciplines</th>
<th>Other</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Study/Reading 7</td>
<td>Silence 5</td>
<td>Guidance:</td>
<td>Rest 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Word 7</td>
<td>Solitude 3</td>
<td>Mentor 2</td>
<td>Journal 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prayer 6</td>
<td></td>
<td>Accountability 2</td>
<td>Outside Time 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quiet Time 3</td>
<td></td>
<td>Fellowship 1</td>
<td>Family Time 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meditation 2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Retreats 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fasting 2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Clinton’s biblically centered leader 1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The researcher was encouraged to see a variety of spiritual disciplines used as a way to grow closer to God. The data emphasizes the use of inward disciplines over outward of corporate disciplines. There are a couple of reasons why the inward spiritual disciplines might be practiced among more of the participants. One reason is that they are seen as disciplines both biblically and culturally. Another reason could be that they are individual and intentional. The data also suggested that there was less engagement with outward and corporate disciplines. There may be a couple of reasons for this. Researcher believes that is because most people do not identify with these as spiritual disciplines.

*Spiritual Gifts and Calling*

The section on spiritual gifts and calling was placed into the survey to help assess the spiritual growth formation of the above in the lives of the seminary spiritual leaders. Spiritual growth enables the spiritual leader to focus upon their spiritual gifts and calling.
Knowledge of the seminary spiritual leader’s gifts and how to use them is vital in spiritual growth formation and calling of the spiritual leader. Figure 5.3 summarizes the results of these questions.

Figure 5.3. Data on participants’ responses to spiritual gifts and calling questions (n=8)

The participants were asked if they knew their spiritual and natural gifts. In regards to the degree to which the survey participants knew their gifts, five of the participants reported having knowledge of those gifts “all of the time,” while the other three reported “often” having knowledge of their gifts. The participants were asked if they knew how to effectively use their gifts. Four of the participants reported that they knew how to effectively use their spiritual and natural gifts “all of the time.” Three participants reported knowing how to use them “often,” and one reported “sometimes” knowing how to use their gifts.

The participants were asked if they had a calling and a vision. All participants reported having a calling and vision. In regards to the degree to which participants knew their calling and vision, the majority of the participants reported knowing their calling “all of the time,” while one participant reported “sometimes” knowing their calling. The participants were asked if they were moving towards that calling and vision. All participants reported moving towards their calling and vision. In regards to the degree to
how often participants were moving toward their calling and vision, the majority of the participants reported “all of the time,” while one reported “often,” and one participant reported “sometimes.”

This section is compelling in that spiritual gifts and calling are easy to assess and affirm in community. However vision requires more in depth spiritual growth formation on the individual part of the spiritual leader. All participants recorded knowing their spiritual gifts, calling, and vision at some level. In addition all participants recorded moving towards that at some level. The more intimate a spiritual leader is with God through intentional spiritual formation, the clearer their vision, their giftedness, and their calling becomes. Like Jesus, He was completely intimate with God so knew His calling where every ounce of energy and resource were intentionally distributed for God’s will.

*Mentor/Spiritual Director/Support*

Questions were placed into the survey to examine the use of mentors and spiritual directors in providing support for seminary spiritual leaders. The research reflected both biblically and in the literature that mentors and spiritual direction provides support to spiritual leaders. The data indicated that seminary spiritual leaders did use mentors and spiritual direction to aid in their spiritual formation. (Figure 5.4)

Figure 5.4. Data on participants’ responses to mentor/spiritual direction/support questions (n=8)
The participants were asked if they had a mentor, biblical mentor, or spiritual director. All participants reported having a mentor, biblical mentor, or spiritual director. In regards to the frequency, half of the participants reported having a mentor/spiritual director “all of the time,” while the other half reported “often,” and one reported “sometimes.” The participants were asked if they had the support they need during struggles. All participants reporting having the support they needed during struggles, however the degree to how often they had this support varied. Three reported having support “all of the time,” while four reported having support “sometimes,” and one reported having support “often.” Even though all participants recorded have either a mentor or spiritual director support, half recorded that they “sometimes” have the support that they need during struggles.

Mentoring and spiritual direction is effective in spiritual formation.13 Having a spiritual mentor or spiritual director has to the potential to help a spiritual leader in all areas such as clarity, healing, encouraging, and focusing. The researcher was encouraged to see that all participants reported having a spiritual mentor/director to some degree. The concern could be identified in the fact that half of the participants reported sometimes having support during times of struggle. The struggles of spiritual leaders can be unbearable especially without enough or the right kind of support. However each spiritual leader may require different types of support during different types of struggles. All spiritual leaders not only need spiritual support, but emotional, physical, and social support.

Spiritual Formation Training

This section focused upon the spiritual growth formation training that the seminary spiritual leader had received. Questions included two areas: where they received spiritual formation training, and what spiritual formation training they needed in seminary. All participants utilize spiritual formation practices as a result of informal or educational training at some level. All had required training beyond the seminary master’s degree level program. The chart lists the seminary spiritual leader spiritual formation training needed at the seminary master’s degree level.

Where Spiritual Formation Training Was Received

Table 5.2 provides the participant’s answers in describing where they learned about spiritual formation, spiritual discipline practices, mentoring, spiritual direction, and renewal. Research participants reported that they received spiritual formation from both informal and educational sources. Informal sources included such things as books and fellow pastors. Educational sources included such things as seminary and professors.

What Type of Spiritual Formation Was Received

The participants also described what kind of spiritual formation training they received in seminary while working on their master’s degree. It should be noted that three participants reported that they did not receive any spiritual formation training in seminary. The remaining five participants reported that they had received spiritual formation training in a seminary class, from a professor, or through a small group.

The participants also described what spiritual formation classes of training beyond seminary they have taken. All but one of the participants indicated that they have participated in either informal or educational spiritual formation training sources beyond
Informal sources included spiritual direction, books, and small group.

Educational sources included a conference/seminar, retreats, and denominational courses.

Table 5.2. Data on participants’ responses to spiritual formation training questions (n=8)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Where you learned about spiritual formation.</th>
<th>Themes</th>
<th>Sub-Themes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Informal sources</td>
<td>Alone time with God (1)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Fellow pastors (2)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Books (2)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Professional (1)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educational sources</td>
<td>University as undergraduate (1)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Seminary (1)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Clinical Pastoral education (1)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Professors (2)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Academia (1)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>D Min program (1)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What kind of spiritual training did you receive in seminary*</th>
<th>Informal source</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Informal sources</td>
<td>I semester course (2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educational sources</td>
<td>Professors (1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Small group in seminary (1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>D.Min. Program Dr. Clinton’s “Having a Ministry that Lasts.” (1)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What type of spiritual formation training in seminary would have encouraged your intimacy with God benefiting your relationship with Jesus, your ministry, your family, healing, and maturity, mentoring, or personal struggles?</th>
<th>Informal Sources</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Informal Sources</td>
<td>Spiritual direction (2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mentor (3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Small group (1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Training in spiritual disciplines (1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educational Sources</td>
<td>Class small groups (2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Course on specific topics (1)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What spiritual formation classes or training beyond the seminary master’s degree program have you taken???</th>
<th>Informal Sources</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Informal Sources</td>
<td>Spiritual Direction (1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Books (1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Group (1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educational Sources</td>
<td>D Min courses (5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Spiritual Formation Conferences, Retreats, and Seminars (3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Denominational (1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Clinical Pastoral (1)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Three participants reported that they received no spiritual formation training while in seminary.

**One participant reported that no spiritual formation training was needed beyond seminary.

In breaking down the answers on where the spiritual leader participants learned about spiritual formation practices they answered in a range of informal and formal sources. Some participants recorded not having received spiritual formation training during seminary and one reported that he/she did not need it beyond seminary. However,
all are practicing some information source because they are all practicing spiritual growth methods at some level.

**What Spiritual Formation Training Was Needed**

The participants reported what type of spiritual formation training would have been helpful in seminary. All of the participants agreed that informal and educational sources would have been helpful in seminary. Informal sources of spiritual formation training included spiritual direction, mentoring, small groups, and training on spiritual disciplines. One participant said, "I would have loved a safe place to discuss my problems and receive direction." Another participant said, "I would have liked to have had a mentor, small group and training in the diverse spiritual disciplines." Educational sources of spiritual formation training included small groups in classes and course on specific topics.

Regarding spiritual formation training, participants reported that they received both informal and educational training in seminary. In addition, participants reported what type of spiritual formation training would have been helpful in seminary. Participants reported that a mentor, spiritual director, and/or small groups would have encouraged spiritual formation. Other suggestions included: spiritual growth formation and discipline courses, retreats and conferences, books, small groups, mentors, and spiritual directors.

**Summary**

The focus of this chapter was to discuss and analyze the data. The survey data supported that the participants were growing spiritually using spiritual disciplines. The participants knew their spiritual gifts, calling, how to go after them, and how to use them.
The inward spiritual disciplines were favored over the outward and corporate disciplines according to Foster’s categories and listed in Figure 5.1. The data reported a possible area of needing support during struggles perhaps through a mentor or spiritual director or spiritual maturity. Data reported that some participants received spiritual formation during seminary and some did not. Participants provided suggestions on the types of spiritual formation training would have been helpful in seminary including educational sources on spiritual growth formation training, and informal sources such as mentor, spiritual direction, and small group options.
CHAPTER SIX: EVALUATION AND DISCUSSION

Through this project the researcher examined development strategies and practices for how evangelical seminarian spiritual leaders may further their spiritual growth formation. The hope was that this research might lead to ways to better equip, sustain, and empower seminarian spiritual leaders with spiritual growth formation and maturity. Spiritual formation and maturity requires intentional and individual seeking on the part of the spiritual leader like Jesus.

In surrendered obedience to God’s will Jesus was able to change the world through spiritual formation and maturity. He was able to conquer all distractions, evil and temptations, and then focus wholly upon God. Jesus was enabled through these spiritual practices, disciplines, and rhythms to minister, heal, teach, and preach where and when God wanted Him to do so.

From the research found within the Old and New Testaments, there were five common threads identified. First, spiritual leaders spent time alone in the wilderness listening, discussing, praying, cleansing, and being with God. Second, spiritual leaders devoted obedience in their intentional intimacy with God enabled all to change the culture. Third, spiritual leaders devoted obedience in total surrender to God through spiritual disciplines enabled them to focus upon God, His characteristics, and His call over the people no matter what. Fourth, spiritual leaders devoted obedience enabled them to be used by God to mentor and spiritually direct others both in that time in the Bible
through today. Fifth, spiritual leaders were willing to put God over everything else enabled them to be some of the most effective spiritual leaders of all time.

The common themes for spiritual growth formation of spiritual leaders from the Old Testament and New Testament were also found among current writings on spiritual formation. The process required biblical focus with the Holy Spirit in prayer, intentional seeking of the Lord with biblical wisdom, focus upon His characteristics, and spiritual disciplines such as: confession, solitude, silence, listening, simplicity, fasting, sacrifice, meditation, service, worship, celebration, fellowship, rest, and complete surrender. In addition all of the research included the importance of mentoring and spiritual direction in the spiritual growth formation process for seminary spiritual leaders. All of this frees the spiritual leader to step back from culture to be and do what God wants. Jesus did this and changed the world through spiritual formation.

The research results aligned with the biblical and literature conclusions. The spiritual growth section included intentional intimate relationship with God in time alone to listen to Him and going to Him to restore as methods for the participants. The level to which they were intimate with God was based upon their intentional pursuit of Him in these areas. The spiritual disciplines section included practices like prayer, time in the Word, and journaling by the participants as intentional methods of intimacy with God. The spiritual gifts and calling section included knowledge of the participants spiritual gifts, how to use them, and movement towards those of the participants in their intimate relationship with God. The mentoring and spiritual direction section indicated that the participants utilized either or both in their spiritual growth formation.
In the survey method research section on spiritual formation training the participants indicated that they learned about spiritual formation through informal and educational resources. Participants indicated that they would have been encouraged through the offerings of mentors, spiritual direction, small groups, and spiritual formation courses at the master’s degree level in seminary. Therefore seminaries could make this a requirement that each seminary spiritual leader be assigned a mentor and a spiritual director throughout the program. In addition, seminaries could reorganize the core curriculum requirements to include in depth spiritual formation and discipline training, small groups, and outdoor spiritual formation retreats.

Recommendations

The exciting aspect of this project was that the biblical and literature research combined with the survey research method aligned with what the seminary spiritual leaders needed. The seminary spiritual leaders wanted to grow spiritually closer to God and in maturity. They made suggestions for curriculum and relationships that would encourage spiritual growth in seminary spiritual leaders.

Curriculum

The researcher encourages seminaries to evaluate curriculum so that it includes intentional opportunities for spiritual leaders to grow closer in their relationship with God. Based upon the data, the researcher recommends that seminaries incorporate into their curriculum the following: courses in intentional spiritual growth formation, spiritual disciplines, and outdoor retreats for their students to encounter God in nature. In addition, the researcher recommends that seminaries research spiritual formation for their students and other ways to support them in their spiritual growth formation. Researcher
recommends that courses offered by seminaries where spiritual growth formation of
spiritual leaders as listed throughout the Bible including intentional individual seeking of
God with spiritual disciplines, wisdom, and mentoring or spiritual directing enables the
spiritual leaders to see that spiritual formation is also important in gaining wisdom which
is part of spiritual maturity.

Courses offered by seminaries in seeking God and fearing God as the way to
wisdom opens the door for spiritual formation, spiritual disciplines, and spiritual maturity
mindset for seminary spiritual leaders. Researcher encourages seminaries to consider
enabling seminary spiritual leaders to process spiritual growth formation with the biblical
focus on the Holy Spirit in prayer, intentional seeking of the Lord with biblical wisdom,
focus upon His characteristics, and spiritual disciplines such as: confession, solitude,
silence, listening, simplicity, fasting, sacrifice, meditation, service, worship, celebration,
fellowship, rest, and complete surrender. All of this frees the spiritual leader to step back
from culture to be and do what God wants. Jesus did this and changed the world through
spiritual formation. Researcher also encourages seminaries to review the literature
research results which enables spiritual leaders do the work of spiritual formation through
spiritual disciplines, focus upon God’s characteristics, fear of God, and obey God’s
commandments as He asks. Researcher encourages seminaries to encourage churches to
support their spiritual leaders in all of these ways.

Relationships

The researcher encourages seminaries to evaluate curriculum so that it includes
intentional opportunities for spiritual leaders to develop relationships that encourage
intentional spiritual growth formation. One recommendation is that seminaries assign
mentors or spiritual directors as part of the curriculum as a result of the biblical and literature research. A second recommendation is that seminaries consider where small groups could be incorporated in this effort because they are an effective mechanism for connection and support for spiritual leaders. A third recommendation is that seminaries encourage further research of spiritual formation for their seminary spiritual leaders relationally and any other options that encourage their seminary spiritual leaders. A fourth recommendation is that seminaries offer programs for community church spiritual leaders for the same purpose.

The researcher recommends that seminary alumni associations offer programs and spiritual direction for their alums. Furthermore, the researcher recommends that individual seminary graduates develop an intentional plan for their own individual spiritual formation process. This plan could include a variety of the ideas found in previous chapters. The process required biblical focus with the Holy Spirit in prayer, intentional seeking of the Lord with biblical wisdom, focus upon His characteristics, and spiritual disciplines such as: confession, solitude, silence, listening, simplicity, fasting, sacrifice, meditation, service, worship, celebration, fellowship, rest, and complete surrender. The literature research results enables spiritual leaders do the work of spiritual formation through spiritual disciplines, focus upon God’s characteristics, fear of God, obey God’s commandments as He asks.

**Evaluation**

*Strengths*

One strength of this project was the theological research. The Old and New Testaments documents examples of how the spiritual formation of spiritual leaders
eliminated spiritual oppression and enabled them to obey God, His commands, and His will. This in turn allowed them to mentor and spiritually direct people throughout history. The Old Testament wisdom books explained that spiritual formation is aimed at the transformation of people’s hearts through being with God; the key to freedom is closeness to God.

A second strength of this project was the literature research. The authors affirmed and defined spiritual formation as an intentional process that focused on becoming more like Christ. The process required focus with the Holy Spirit in prayer, intentional seeking of the Lord with biblical wisdom, focus upon His characteristics, and spiritual disciplines. In addition, multiple authors affirmed the value of mentors and spiritual directors.

A third strength was the target audience. Targeting participants who were seminary graduates rather than current seminary students was strength. The perspective of someone who had graduated from seminary provided insight into how spiritual formation during seminary could have better prepared him or her. Whereas current seminary students may have lacked the educational and ministry experience to fully answer the questions. Furthermore, some of the participants graduated from different seminaries. This enabled a level of diversity in the answers given by the participants to avoid one sided opinions was a strength.

A fourth strength was the type of questions asked on the survey. The survey method allowed and included both Likert scale questions and open-ended questions. Having both types of questions encouraged an objective and subjective depth to the answers. The Likert scale offered a full range of answers regarding frequency from never to all of the time. Sometimes and often were mid-range answers. The open-ended
questions provide freedom for participants to use their own voice in the response. In addition the design of the questions in the survey were based upon the biblical and literature research. Strength also came from the results of this research, which created a clear line of questioning for the participants.

*Weaknesses*

The collection of data through an online survey was convenient for both the participants and the researcher. One weakness of this research is that it did not include interviews. The benefit of an interview could include the personal aspect of the researcher being able to see facial expressions, body language, and tones. In addition in an interview the researcher can probe further if the participant is willing. The difficulty of the interview was in the complexity of analyzing and comparing the answers of the individual participants and the time involved. The use of a survey could be a helpful tool in research because it eliminates these variables. The researcher chose an online survey research method seeing this method as strength for two reasons. First, Researcher was hoping to get answers from participants both within civilization and without civilization ministries. Second, researcher wanted to encourage participants to answer the survey in their own setting and their own time. Also researcher was hoping to obtain answers from those seminary spiritual leaders not in ministry.

Some participants that were emailed the survey did not have access to Skype or mail. Therefore, email surveys that the participant could open and answer when they had internet access was the only option. In addition, the questions were deeply personal in nature. Interviewees sometimes were impacted by the presence of the interviewer in their answers during an interview regarding deep personal questions. Researcher thought that
the answers would be more authentic if the spiritual leaders could remain anonymous. In addition, the answers would be more authentic if the spiritual leaders did the survey in their own space and time. Though some might see this as a weakness the use of an interview could have yielded additional data, or not.

A second weakness of this project was the small sample size. The survey was sent out to 40 individuals with only eight surveys completed. A sample larger could provide more options in assessing the needs for spiritual growth formation both at the individual and collective levels. It should be noted that a larger sample size could lead to generalizations from the data. Generalizations from this data cannot be drawn. With the small sample size of this research, the data provided a summary of the experience of those eight participants.

A third weakness of this project was the fact that all participants were currently involved in ministry. Having answers from individuals not currently serving in a ministry setting would have been interesting. Answers from those who have either left ministry, were destroyed by ministry, or are distraught would have given different insight. Perhaps then some of the answers would have been never.

Summary

The purpose of this chapter was to provide recommendation and an evaluation of the research. Recommendations fell under the themes of curriculum and relationships based upon the research. Spiritual formation and maturity requires intentional and individual seeking on the part of the spiritual leader like Jesus. In surrendered obedience to God’s will Jesus was able to change the world through spiritual formation and maturity as a spiritual leader He was able to conquer all distractions, evil and temptations, and
then focus wholly upon God. Spiritual leaders through these same spiritual practices, disciplines, and rhythms to will enable them to minister, heal, teach, and preach where and when God wanted Him to do so like Jesus.

The researcher identified four strengths of this research project. They include the biblical and literature research, the target audience, and the types of questions. The researcher also identified three weaknesses. The weaknesses included possibly lacking an interview, the small sample size, and the limited sample to those still in ministry as opposed to those who have left ministry.
CHAPTER SEVEN: REFLECTION

Spiritual Formation

Spiritual formation as a topic is perplexing especially with regard to seminary spiritual leaders. The reasons that seem to hold spiritual formation back in seminary spiritual leaders is the lack of acceptance of the process, a lack of understanding the importance and definitions, the fact that it requires intentional and individual effort for a unique purpose, and the culture. For example, spiritual disciplines can often be confused with spiritual formation. Spiritual formation and spiritual disciplines are not interchangeable. Spiritual disciplines are practices that one engages in a way to be spiritually formed.

Spiritual formation is difficult to define. There are many terms used for reference in spiritual formation, spiritual maturity, spiritual direction, and spiritual oppression throughout the literature. The researcher found through years of ministry and research that perceptions of these terms by the spiritual leaders could be limited so the researcher did not want to limit these terms in any way. Instead the researcher brings forth pondering of the below for seminary spiritual leaders spiritual growth formation both individually and collectively.

Identification and clarification of the need for seminary spiritual leaders to pursue spiritual growth formation through the biblical research, the literature research, and the survey method research was discussed throughout this project. In ministry and through
research, as part of the ongoing process of individual spiritual leader spiritual formation defining these terms was found to be an important aspect of spiritual growth formation of seminary spiritual leaders. When spiritual leaders come up with non-self-limiting terms for spiritual growth formation by establishing their own process and practices they are able to engage in and wrap around their own maturity. The lack of knowledge by trying to fit into limited definitions of these terms in itself holds back the process or causes more frustration than necessary for the spiritual growth formation process. Therefore, part of individual intentional spiritual growth formation of the seminary spiritual leader includes seeking deeply with ultimately establishing definitions of terms that open the individual spiritual leader’s hearts, minds, and souls to God and what brings them closer to God.

Researching the common threads of spiritual leader spiritual growth methods throughout the Bible and the literature produced various categories for the survey questions. However, in the results of the survey not all spiritual growth methods were mentioned and this could be why. If a lack of definition of the terms, or perceived limiting terms exist within the mind of the spiritual leader, this could hold back the process. In becoming more Christ like or exhibiting God’s characteristics or His wisdom different definitions on the practices may work differently with different leaders.

Spiritual growth formation and drawing near to God is a different experience for each spiritual leader. This is due to many factors some of which include the following: how they receive love, gifting; experiences; calling; wounding; surrendering; and level of intimacy with God. What brings one closer to God is different for another. Some do not journal for example, and some journal every single day.
In working with and observing the spiritual growth formation process many aspects of spiritual leaders’ lives are changed allowing them to draw nearer to God through the change. God’s love through the spiritual growth and spiritual maturity process sets the spiritual leader free from the spiritually oppressive areas of their lives if they allow Him. The difficulty is the human condition in allowing Him to carry them through to being free. Some spiritual leaders have little sense of the need for personal soul-care apart from community so their soul is marginalized and oppressed. Writings from John of the Cross help spiritual leaders grasp the spiritual growth process at some level of what is required which includes purification of what holds the leader back from God.\textsuperscript{14} Spiritual direction provides a safe place, which enables spiritual leaders to heal and move deeper towards spiritual maturity and away from spiritual mediocrity.\textsuperscript{15} Some suggest that the experience of spiritual direction as a spiritual leader can be like that of the movie “Mr. Holland’s Opus.” Thus freeing the directee to be exactly the instrument that God designed them to be.\textsuperscript{16}

My hope through this research is that everyone that reads it is inspired to seek Him at a deeper level and is inspired to seek Him first as He asks. God loves beyond one’s comprehension and only in seeking Him is one able to see His love. He makes it simple and leaves some method for deeper connection that works for His spiritual leaders as a lifeline. He is the bridge to one’s heart, soul, mind, and body and wants to connect as


close as possible so that one misses nothing of what He is doing, especially His spiritual
leaders.

Culture is a roadblock that has made spiritual growth formation too complex for
seminary spiritual leaders to attempt due to limited mindset and terms on the subject.
Spiritual growth formation and spiritual disciplines are not the same. Only when the
spiritual maturation process of the spiritual leader is rooted in love and all about
surrendered love instead of culturally closed-minded definitions, limits, and labels can
the Holy Spirit move. If this project is difficult to comprehend then simplify focused
upon God’s limitless and endless love. Scripture is filled with explanations of God’s love.
Pray and read those scripture inviting the Holy Spirit to guide through the scriptures on
love. Do whatever it takes to get that time alone to surround in His love. Move forward
towards Him and His love, and strive for love at all levels of surrender, not definitions.
God is love. Find a mentor or spiritual director. Try the spiritual disciplines. There is
nothing to lose by seeking Him as He asks except what isn’t His Will.

Movement towards God is easily received because He awaits every seminary
spiritual leader daily in a deeply loved place established for each one in a different way.
What that conveys and compels to each seminary spiritual leader is different but if they
are not taught to seek and find through love God is limited and cannot bring seminary
spiritual leaders to maturity. That seminary spiritual leader is then missing the entire
point of their calling without the focus on God’s love in depth formation into Christ
likeness.

This project was an effort to encourage seminary spiritual leaders towards God
regardless of the lack of definitions, cultural acceptance, and misunderstandings. This
project was an effort to open seminary spiritual leaders’ hearts, minds, and souls to spiritual growth formation and maturity. Each one has a unique path towards spiritual formation and maturity that requires intentional and individual desire and efforts.

**Future Research**

Future studies regarding spiritual leader spiritual formation could stem from any of the research results. The more information on spiritual formation that is researched the clearer it becomes and the higher the possibility that seminary spiritual leaders will engage in spiritual formation. In following the process of this project the three areas that were the focus become the hope for new studies. These three areas include biblical focus, focus upon literature, and focus upon the research.

One area of future research could take place through examining scripture for additional themes related to spiritual formation. Research on God’s love in healing and guiding spiritual leaders through spiritual maturity could be an insightful study that would enable spiritual leaders to focus more upon God’s love as the guide for spiritual formation. A study on the Old Testament prophets for spiritual growth formation practices, or on the New Testament disciples on the same would also be helpful for emphasis and clarification on what practices might lead to spiritual formation for spiritual leaders.

Future studies on Old Testament wisdom as a result of spiritual leader spiritual formation could be a beneficial study also. Spiritual leader’s spiritual growth formation through reflection of the characteristics of God could be a focus for a study. A future study on the forty-day emphasis by God for spiritual growth formation could be an interesting study. A study on spiritual leader sabbath rest could be done, as a spiritual
growth formation practice could be a beneficial study. A future study on humility from the spiritual formation of spiritual leader’s perspective would be beneficial.

Another area of future research could focus upon current literature. Focusing upon one or two authors instead of a survey of authors could also be helpful in further understanding of each author’s theories on spiritual formation of spiritual leaders. For example utilizing Richard Foster’s theory on spiritual formation through spiritual disciplines and comparing it to Dallas Willard’s would be interesting.

A final area of future research could be a qualitative research project that explores more facets of spiritual formation beyond the results of this study. A study focused upon what barriers prevent the spiritual leaders from spiritual growth formation would be helpful in unleashing those limits. The business of spiritual leaders could be a study because it prevents them from spiritual growth formation. The spiritual maturity of spiritual leader’s assessment study could be beneficial. Studies on different spiritual formation exercises and how well they work be helpful. Finally, a study done on seminaries encouraging spiritual leaders in focusing and investing more upon the spiritual growth formation of their spiritual leaders than other areas could be beneficial.

**Personal Growth**

This project encouraged my personal growth through the strengthening of my faith and affirmed the need to free spiritual leaders and encourage them. Stepping out in faith and moving forward with the project strengthened my trust in God and empowered my spiritual giftedness. I was challenged beyond what I anticipated coming into the project so my faith was tested way beyond my ability to conceive. Clinging to God in all
was the only way through so that He could use me. Relying upon myself was not an option because it is about Him and not me.

Throughout this process I found a new sense of deep gratitude towards God for all that He is, and for my children whom He has placed in my life for multiple wonderful reasons including encouragement and hope. I found a new sense of appreciation for those whom He sent to support us. In addition I am grateful for my mentors, professors, thesis reader, fellow students, and spiritual directors because they have encouraged me throughout this process in spite of its uniqueness. God gave me a diverse group of mentors and spiritual directors not unlike Paul, John the Baptist, Barnabas, Moses, Joshua, Ezra, Peter, Zechariah, Rabbis, and their wonderful wives. This calling and journey over the years was labeled by some of my mentors, fellow students, and spiritual directors as “the Beatitudes,” “in the suffering,” and as “most painful." This calling is not much different from Job’s suffering, requiring Joshua and Daniel’s obedience, and Moses strength which God provided got me through a few near death experiences, and multiple losses. God would want nothing less than blind faith and trust in Him in all ways and all areas of life. Through His faithfulness all areas of life were tested and washed throughout this process.
APPENDIX A: SURVEY
APPENDIX A: SURVEY

Please indicate the degree to which you agree with the following statements:

1 Never   2 Sometimes   3 Often   4 All of the time

1. I am growing spiritually.
2. I get time alone with God to listen to Him.
3. I get enough time in the Word.
4. I get enough time to pray.
5. I journal.
6. I have an intimate relationship with God.
7. I go to God to restore in Him.
8. I use spiritual disciplines.
9. I know my spiritual gifts combined with my natural gifts.
10. I know how to effectively use them.
11. I have a calling and vision.
12. I am moving towards that calling and vision.
13. I have a mentor, biblical mentor, or spiritual director.
14. I have the support that I need during struggles.

Please answer the following questions:

15. Describe what you do for spiritual growth formation or renewal? Include the spiritual disciplines that you practice?
16. Describe where you learned about spiritual formation, spiritual discipline practices, mentoring, spiritual direction, and renewal?

17. Describe what kind of spiritual formation training you received in seminary while working on your master’s degree.

18. What type of spiritual formation training in seminary would have encouraged your intimacy with God benefiting your relationship with Jesus, your ministry, your family, healing, maturity, mentoring, or personal struggles?

19. What spiritual formation classes or training beyond the seminary master’s degree program have you taken?

20. For demographic purposes please answer the following questions:

   Seminary Graduation Date:
   Seminary Name:
   Degree:
   Gender:
   Age
APPENDIX B: DEMOGRAPHICS
# APPENDIX B: DEMOGRAPHICS

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