BAKKE GRADUATE UNIVERSITY

WALKING WITH SPIRITUAL DIRECTORS: AN ACT OF SUPPORTING, DISCERNING AND SUSTAINING

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

BY

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SEATTLE, WASHINGTON

JUNE 2012
To my wife Susan

To my son Benedict and daughter-in-law Janet

To my son Justin and daughter-in-law Amanda

To the Trustees of Spiritual Formation International (B.C. Canada, and Hong Kong)

To soul friends

But we all, with unveiled face beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as from the Lord, the Spirit.

2 Corinthians 3:18
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Glory to God!
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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this project was to explore the value and feasibility of sustaining a group of spiritual directors. The hypothesis was that by establishing spiritual friendship and providing spiritual nourishment by leading a group of spiritual director through a spiritual guidebook, the spiritual directors could be sustained and supported. As a result, the spiritual directors will be able to identify and endure the challenging demands in ministries. In addition, their spiritual well-being would be enhanced. They will also be empowered to express their compassion and hospitality to the directees, and enable them to become genuine shepherds to congregation or dedicated missionaries to the city.

Spiritual directors are not immune to external challenges. In fact, their needs in self-supporting and self-care may be even more intense. Their sense of loneliness is due more to the lack of mental and spiritual supports, and perhaps, to the lack of attention to their own spiritual well-being. Therefore, practicing of presence of God and self-care is of paramount importance to the spiritual directors.

The components of the project include first, Biblical and theological foundation, second, literature review, third, the ministry problem and data analysis. A literature review that explores theory, traditions and practices of spiritual direction will be carried out. Readings on how spiritual directors can be empowered, especially the topics on self-care, community and intimacy with God may prove helpful. Based on the readings of spiritual direction and the well-being of spiritual directors, Biblical and theological reflection, especially on the characteristics of a healthy spiritual director, will be done. The act of ministry will include the development of interviews with six participants, focus group and questionnaire to identify the real needs and effect of any changes, as well
as the preparation of a spiritual guidebook for the participants. The participants will be
given six weeks to practice the spiritual guidebook. Evaluation will be done to find out
the outcomes and changes in terms of affirmation of calling, self care, shared practices,
better self esteem and spiritual wellbeing, followed by recommendation of how spiritual
directors can be sustained.
CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION TO THE PROBLEM

Statement of the Problem

This project will explore the value and feasibility of providing spiritual nourishment for Hong Kong spiritual directors thus seeking to set out a spiritual companion guidebook for the spiritual directors. Previous research into the spiritual health conditions of some spiritual directors in Hong Kong has indicated that they experience varied degrees of loneliness and disconnection. Unfortunately, research in this area is extremely scarce. While many researches are conducted to find out how clergy and the congregation can be helped, researches relating to how to assist spiritual directors are few.

Assessing the spiritual health condition of a group of spiritual directors not only helps us to understand their experiences of loneliness and disconnection, but also provides us with guidelines toward helping them to cope with their struggle. As a result, they will be empowered to express their compassion and hospitality to the directees, and to enable them to become genuine shepherds to congregation or dedicated missionaries to the city. Robert Linthicum believes “spiritual formation is not an end in itself. It is a primary means to a far greater end…we reach outside ourselves by first reaching in to discover ourselves in Christ, to foster our relationship with God and to build Christian community.”

To a large extent, the theme of the guidebook reflects the needs of the spiritual directors, and hopefully, the content will also help to alleviate their sense of loneliness.

**Audience/Ministry Opportunity to be Addressed**

The audience of my dissertation is the spiritual directors in Hong Kong. This project intends to address to Christians and pastors who are trained as spiritual directors. In terms of spiritual growth, the spiritual director must first learn to make friends with oneself as they continue to walk with God and others.

The nature of the ministry itself and the spiritual director’s effort in sustaining himself / herself in ministry exasperates the tension. Amid all the tensions and challenges faced by spiritual directors, studies or researches along this line in the Chinese churches in Hong Kong are limited. Despite the attention to spiritual formation and spiritual direction, especially among certain seminaries, Christian publishers and the general Christian public, spiritual directors do not get enough attention and support.

Although there is an increasing tendency of endorsing the significance of the ministry, spiritual direction is not considered as a fundamental or primary channel of spiritual growth. As a spiritual director and lecturer of a seminary, Wong Pui Fong expresses her concern in the foreword of a local Christian journal: “Conversations: A Forum of Authentic Transformation” that “Christian leaders and members of Churches are not familiar with spiritual direction. As a result, they failed to engage spiritual direction as a resource of the Church.”\(^2\) And, hence, the spiritual directors find themselves alone and disconnected.

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The contribution of this project is described as follows. Firstly, this project will find out the meaning of spiritual wellbeing and characteristics of spiritual directors. Secondly, the contribution of this project is will reflect the positive effect of a spiritual guidebook that can be used by spiritual directors.

Spiritual growth is the formative experience of the paradoxical truth of dying and living, or, losing and gaining. Since the nature of spiritual direction is fostering spiritual growth, the spiritual director has to share with the directee the significance of formative experience. However, only those spiritual directors with first hand experiences of how life is transformed in paradoxical situation can share with the directees.

The tension faced by the spiritual directors can be considered as a formative experience because they are aware of the proper role of God’s guidance and yet the pull of human’s desire, all as part of the elusive characteristic of the spiritual journey. In the same token, caregivers including church ministers, counselors, and those who are serving as cell group leaders and spiritual leaders within the church and in the market place, etc. face the same tension. This project will also address their needs.

Finally, the feedback of the fellow spiritual directors would inform first, how the spiritual directors can take care of themselves, and second, how church leaders and congregations in Hong Kong can be transformed and empowered. In short, this project will contribute to the understanding of the depleted state of spiritual directors and in what ways the practice of spiritual guidebook can restore their spiritual vitality.

**Stakeholders**

I believe my project would benefit:

1. Spiritual Directors
2. Spiritual Directees

3. Church ministers


5. Congregation of local churches

6. Seminaries

7. Spiritual Formation International (SFI): SFI is a ministry founded by the researcher in 2002. The serving spectrum of SFI includes lay people, church leaders, as well as pastoral leaders, with its major emphasis on spiritual transformation. SFI also provides training and support to spiritual directors.

8. Other spiritual formation ministries, for example, Tao Fung Shan, a local institution focusing on developing spiritual growth of spiritual directors and Church leaders.

The Christian belief is that the Holy Spirit will continue to work in us to empower and to make impact upon the city’s greatest challenges. In co-working with the Holy Spirit, spiritual directors enable formation and transformation of leaders to sustain as healthy people in a crowded and confusing city, and ultimately, to become minister of the gospel.

The Background of the Project

The passion in doing this project is partly due to my own experiences of loneliness and partly due to my desire to walk with these fellow spiritual directors. My observation is that the experience of disconnection is the reality of spiritual directors in Hong Kong. The intention of this project is to create a spiritual guidebook that can help spiritual directors assess problems in their spiritual lives and discover some solutions that will benefit themselves as well as the people they work with.

Spiritual directors feel tired and lonely perhaps because of the urban settings of the crowded city and the lack of understanding and support from churches. Barry and
Connolly comment on the situation of spiritual directors by describing them, as “entering into deep relationships with many people and their own hearts are laid bare over and over again.” Spiritual directors can become spiritually depleted while directing others toward spiritual growth. In attending to the spiritual needs of others, spiritual directors may also neglect their own spiritual growth. Henri Nouwen talked about the wounds of church ministers as personal loneliness, professional loneliness and urged strongly that ministers should pay attention to their own pain and suffering as rising from the depth of the human condition which all men share: “For a deep understanding of his own pain makes it possible for him to convert his weakness into strength and to offer his own experience as a source of healing to those who are often lost in the darkness of their own misunderstood sufferings.”

Spiritual directors pay extra attention to wellness or holistic well being of leaders. Their influence to the society is not as immediate or apparent as those who are in the front line. Unlike the evangelist, spiritual director’s influence to the society and transformation appears to be indirect. But spiritual direction, as a ministry itself, is also a vessel where transformation can take place, or become hope for outcome of actual transformation of the city. In doing so, spiritual directors have to endure challenges from the city as they learn to build relationship with God, with themselves and their fellow brethren. Linthicum’s discussion on the objectives of building power in a church or community seems to echo with the ministry of spiritual direction:

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1. Seek to build the relational power of the people through thrill capacity to bring change to their situation. 2. Discover, call forth and build leadership among the people. 3. Create community across and organizational lines through the articulation and embracing of common values and a common spirituality.\(^5\)

This project will allow the participants to reflect on their spiritual well being as they will be provided opportunities of shared practices. It will also allow the researcher to listen to the spiritual directors sharing their spiritual journeys in a deeper manner. It is not enough for spiritual directors to identify their difficulties, they must find out the unique factors leading to depletion. The spiritual directors need to deepen their faith experience by cultivating their contemplative attitude and hospitable mentality. Furthermore, learning to taking care of oneself is indispensable in the process of becoming a holistic and healthy caregiver.

**Description of the Project**

Although a sense of depletion and loneliness can be weaknesses, they can also be seen as guideposts towards self-care and spiritual discipline. We may say the problem of health is reflected in the lack of space in terms of the physical surroundings, workload, relationship, spiritual practices, but above all, the well being of the spiritual directors are closely related to their needs of mental and spiritual support.

The goal of this project is to create and provide a spiritual guidebook, which the spiritual directors may find helpful. The creation of this tool for personal use will serve as a faithful companion to the spiritual directors. The design and writing of a spiritual

\(^5\) Linthicum articulates the values of relational power that bind people together by common values in a relational culture. This is based on his belief of the spirituality of relational power, which is Christ’s resurrection witness to us. If we place our trust in Him, we too will experience resurrection power in our own lives, even death or our sin or the array of our society’s systems and structures. Christ’s resurrection is not for us only. It is for all of creation. See Robert Linthicum, *Transforming power: biblical strategies for making a difference in your community* (IL: Intervarsity Press, 2003), 180.
guidebook would be a means to achieve this purpose. This may also be considered as an attempt to establish rapport and spiritual friendship in order to support and sustain the spiritual directors.

The research question of the project is phrased as follows: How might following a set of spiritual practices as set out in a spiritual guidebook serve to sustain the spiritual wellbeing of spiritual directors living and working in Hong Kong?

Many studies have explored the possibility and made suggestion of assisting pastoral workers mainly from relational approach. The researcher’s belief is that self-care is indispensable in the process of becoming a holistic and healthy caregiver. Personal transformation is closely related to city transformation. A continually transformed life can make a tremendous positive impact on his/her family, working environment, church, community, which ultimately lead to city transformation.6

This study will focus more on awakening the spiritual directors to the importance of self-care and shared practice. By doing that, the participants will be given chances to reflect on their own spiritual wellbeing. Going through the process of interviews, group sharing and discussion, as well as doing the practices in the spiritual guidebook, the participants will become more alert to their own needs, the significance of intimacy with God in cultivating contemplative attitude and hospitable mentality.

Before the actual writing of the guidebook, interviews and focus group are conducted with the six participants of this project to find out their own experiences as well as their viewpoints of a healthy spiritual director. At the same time, a questionnaire

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6 With this conviction, the researcher will conduct this research focusing on the spiritual director, with the assumption that their personal transformation is closely related to transformation of their directee or followers, and ultimately the city.
is presented to them to confirm my understanding of their situations. I will design the topics of the guidebook as soon as feedback is received from the participants. Then, the participants will be given time to read and practice the spiritual guidebook.

Afterward, the participants will be invited to join a forum in which discussion will be carried on to find out in what ways the designed spiritual exercises and the practices are relevant to their needs. Finally, the original questionnaire will then be sent to the participants to verify their changes. To achieve this purpose, the researcher explores changes particularly in the areas of self-knowledge, self-management and self-motivation. The researcher will also pay attention to changes in the area of self-intimacy, intimacy with others and intimacy with God.

**Desired Outcome of the Project**

The outcome I anticipate would be a contribution in an area that has not been explored by the Hong Kong churches. As educator, spiritual director serves as agent of transformation although he or she does not bring about city transformation immediately. Perhaps, it is good enough if this project is able to increase the awareness of the spiritual directors in maintaining healthy and sustainable spiritual practices. Although spiritual enlightenment itself can be perceived as an indicator of increasing awareness, the effectiveness of this project can only be determined by asking whether the spiritual guidebook has adequately addressed the needs of the spiritual directors.

Spiritual awareness may lead to behavioral and attitudinal changes, but it is important to assess whether the participants’ practices of the exercises of the spiritual guidebook has been able to bring about some transformative changes in their lives and restore their spiritual vitality of the participants. As mentioned, changes experienced in
the areas of self-knowledge, self-management, and self-motivation are significant indicators.

The different responses of the questionnaires before and after they use the guidebook will reflect any changes that have taken place in the spiritual lives of the spiritual directors. This will help to acquire an accurate understanding of the meaning and the effectiveness of this particular act of this ministry.

Last but not least, the spiritual practices and process of shared practices that the participants have gone through will enable them to find out the significance of one of the major characteristics of transformational leadership: being an incarnational leader who also becomes more and more aware of Christ-centered transformation and its implication that being a spiritual director is no different from being a servant.

**The Contribution of the Project to Transformational Leadership**

Transformational leadership is defined as corporate efforts of leader and followers in pursuing a common goal. When people talk about transformational leadership, they refer not to transactional rationale, but to values, intention, authenticity, charisma and service, etc. The rationale of Christian transformational leadership has different bearings because it is based on Christ centered principle, which also implies stewardship and spiritual gifts. The transformational goal that BGU set for Christian leaders is important and inspiring:

1. Calling-Based Leadership
2. Incarnational Leadership
3. Reflective Leadership
4. Servant Leadership
5. Contextual Leadership  
6. Global Leadership  
7. Shalom Leadership  
8. Prophetic Leadership  

Since this project is about nurturing or sustaining spiritual directors, all of the above models are important. From a contextual viewpoint, my contention is that the calling-based, incarnational, shalom and servant leaderships are more urgent needs of leaders and spiritual directors in Hong Kong.

It is important that they will be helped to understand their unique role, their vitality of serving in every season of life is closely related to the clarity about their calling and spiritual gifts. We affirm that God calls and renews us in our ups and downs, but we have to respond to His call. One way of doing that is the willingness to walk with God in solitude and at the same time, commit to walk with fellow spiritual leaders and friends, so that shared experiences, shared plights, shared hopes, shared knowledge and shared tasks can become a reality.

It is of equal importance that they will come to deeper self-knowledge that they are just servants who are called to follow the example of their master to minister to the needs of spiritual directees with compassion. Finally, as the spiritual director is leader who works toward the wellbeing, abundance, and wholeness of the community, as well as individuals, learning and practicing of shalom leadership is their greatest need as they experience their own reconciliation with God. Without that foundation, they can hardly reconcile people to God and bring reconciliation to the community of God and the workplaces.
Bass, who defines transformational leadership in terms of how the leader affects followers, advocates a kind of transformational leadership which de-emphasizes charisma and upholds authentic transformational leadership grounded in moral foundations. As such, it has four components, namely: 1. Idealized influence, 2. Inspirational motivation, and 3. Intellectual stimulation and 4. Individualized consideration.7

Thus, transformational leaders guide followers by providing them with a sense of meaning and challenge, giving them room to create, empowering them to make decisions and providing the needed support to implement their decisions. We may call this a teamwork approach or consider it as a collective pursuit, but modeling has the highest priority in Bass’ thinking. That’s why the moral character of the mentor is of utmost importance.

The above discussion on transformational leadership has given us pointers of spiritual formation for spiritual directors and church leaders. As they continue to live and minister amidst a turbulent city like Hong Kong, they have to pay attention to their own well being by implementing or practicing the above principles. Gradually, they will find themselves being sustained and becoming healthier.

My observation is that the experience of disconnection is the reality for spiritual directors in Hong Kong. Loneliness and disconnection are not the only challenges faced by the laity. Spiritual directors also encounter challenges. Reviewing the Bible and Church history, especially the spiritual traditions, helps us to understand how spiritual

directors can be empowered. Providing a Biblical and theological perspective for this project is also the first and foremost consideration.

I praise God for giving me the opportunity to walk with the participants as I interview, share and going through a spiritual guidebook with them. Hopefully, we have realized the real meaning of supporting, discerning and sustaining.
Residents of Hong Kong live in a fast-paced but fragmented world. As an urban city advocating professionalism and success, Hong Kong’s environment is like a hot “Chinese wok,” with crowded people and traffic everywhere. Such a hectic environment, when combined with the huge demands of the ministry of spiritual direction, may render spiritual directors stressed and drained.

The following demographic information will show the challenges faced by this Asian metropolitan city. Hong Kong is one of the most densely populated cities in the world, with 6,200 people per kilometer of land. During the past 40 years, the population has grown from 3 million to over 7 million in 2008. The population continues to grow due to an influx of immigrants from China. Since 1997, the estimated number of immigrants coming to Hong Kong is around 45,000 per year. As new immigrants come in, problems like housing, education, unemployment rate, social problems, and the gap between rich and poor keep growing. Behind that crowdedness is the sad reality of political and financial instability as well as many social problems. Ordinary people want to know how they can secure better jobs and better living conditions, whereas Christians

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1 A “wok” is a Chinese cooking utensil. It is used metaphorically to express a state of stress and anxiety.

2 Hong Kong Mid Year Census 2006, Hong Kong Census and Statistics Department, Hong Kong Government.
may ask how they can practice virtues of faith, hope and love, when they feel bitter and despair. It is against this background that spiritual direction has begun resurgence in recent years.

Similarly, the SARS crisis in 2003 exposed the inadequacy of the biomedical model of healthcare system. All of the expensive high-tech medical equipment and cure-based medical knowledge prove useless in the war against a deadly, highly infectious disease, when there is no easy diagnosis and no known antidote. Despite the courageous efforts and compassion of front-line healthcare professionals, 299 people died of SARS in Hong Kong. Their heroic efforts have demonstrated the indispensable role of compassionate and spiritual care.

Hong Kong citizens are still making adjustments to the impact of “One Country Two Systems.” Since then, political tensions have intensified as democrats and human rights supporters confront the policies of the Hong Kong government, which seems to always favor the instruction of the Central Government.

Lien Yi Zheng, the chief editor of a newspaper, and a member of the advisory committee to the Hong Kong government exclaimed that the central government’s unyielding insistence in suppressing all different voices:

In the beginning of the handover, Beijing’s struggle for power over HKSAR was not explicit. But when it came to the second term of HKSAR government, “management alliance “ marked with patriotism began to take its place. The definition of “executive power” was so crooked which eventually led to the legislation of “Article 23 of the Basic Law”, resulting in a massive strike on July 1, 2003. I was still with the Central Policy Committee then, and was sure that if

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3 SARS stands for severe acute respiratory syndrome.

4 When Hong Kong was handed over in 1997, the Central Government announced the concept of “One Country, Two Systems,” stating that Hong Kong is a special administrative region that would be given a free hand in all areas.
the struggle went on, HKSAR government would make serious mistakes, and it would do no good to anybody at all.⁵

On the other hand, people are facing social problems like family disintegration, increasing divorce rate, child abuse, teens taking drugs and committing suicide. As a consequence, there is a great demand for educational reform and a great need for counselors and social workers. If urbanization implies depersonalization, Hong Kong is experiencing depersonalization in many areas, particularly within the family.

The global financial crisis in 2008 has also affected Hong Kong deeply, and financial loss leads to more unemployment. Underlying this financial hurricane is a deeper crisis in family and relationships, which is acknowledged by people who are in the helping professions. For example, the latest statistics from the Hong Kong Council of Social Services indicate that 1.3 million citizens live in low-income housings. There are all together 111,000 children under the age of 14 who received Comprehensive Social Security Assistance (CSSA) in 2008.⁶

Another survey was done to identify problems faced by families with young children and to explore the needs of school social work service in pre-primary schools. Family problems are not only reflected in broken and conflicting families and couples of low income, but also in the intensity of burnout experienced by many helping professionals. Young teachers commit suicide as they feel overwhelmed by increasing

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⁶ See http://www.immd.gov.hk/ehtml/hkvisas_4.htm for the 2008 figure of children receiving CSSA. High population density typically implies lower per capita cost of providing infrastructure and basic services. Refer to Nelson W.S. Chow, “Quality of Life of Tuen Mun Inhabitants,” Asian Journal of Public Administration (Dec. 1987), 194-20. The problem of poverty has become a very difficult structural problem of Hong Kong as it goes through a transitional period.
workloads and as they witness the traumatic realities of their generations. The findings of another government survey, with statistics that show just the tip of the iceberg, have troubled many:

Among the 10,247 students, 18% (1865 children’s families) has a variety of potential family problems… Among these 1865 children families, there are 24% (440 children) of the families suspected to have emotional disturbance/behavior problem; 30% (567 children) suspected to have development delay/short attention span, 17% (323 parents) suspected to have emotional disturbance/mental problem; 36% (675 parents) have difficulties in parenting their young children.

Szeto Wing Fu also pointed out several major factors contributing to the sad and gloomy atmosphere of Hong Kong. Being the executive director of a large chain stores and a marketplace researcher, he advised us to face the challenges of pessimistic working attitude and emotional problems among the Christian population. His research showed that 84 percent of the interviewees said to work is to make a living or survive. The interviewees are work long hours and the reason for resignation is due to dissatisfactions or increasing demands in the workplace. Four reasons are given as follows:

1. Impact of globalization: merging of companies and competitions in workplace led to more unemployment. In order to secure a job in pressurizing environment, enriching oneself became the only way out.

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8 Council of Non-profit Making Organizations for Pre-primary Education (CNOPE) and the Hong Kong Council of Social Service (HKCSS) jointly conducted a survey on Potential Crisis in Family with Young Children from December 2007 to January 2008. The survey was taken from 100 Pre-primary Schools; 730 professional childcare workers and 10,247 Pre-primary School students were involved in this survey. See http://www.hkcss.org.hk/cy/20080629_PressRelease.

9 Wing-Fu Szeto, “Marketplace Ministry: How to assist believers facing negative emotions and transforming working Concept,” (金融海嘯下的職場牧養) in Pastoral Conference Series II: The Vocation of Pastoral Ministry, ed. Simon Yiu-Chuen Lee, Hong Kong: Divinity School of Chung Chi College, 2009. 148-161. Most of the study, like this one, focuses mainly on study on marketplace and needs of the middle class professional. The needs of lower class and the poor get less attention.
2. From lack of satisfaction to lack of meaning: sense of achievement, exhaustion and boredom ensued more questions about the meaning of life.

3. Negative emotions: anger, guilt, shame and depression may cause by bad relationship, bad performances and injustices in workplaces.

4. Alienation: lack of support and sense of a genuine community.

It is clear, then, that financial problems are not only job-related problems, but also closely related to parenting difficulties, emotional problems, and strained relationships among family members. Therefore, the intensity of the spiritual distress is a real problem, which makes practicing spiritual direction in Hong Kong more difficult.

**B. Historical Background**

*Ministerial Settings of Hong Kong*

There is a sizable Christian community of around 560,000 in Hong Kong, including about 320,000 Protestant Christians and 240,000 Roman Catholics. In terms of doctrine, most of them are influenced by reformed theology. Evangelism is the top priority. Many evangelical churches also pay attention to moral education or urban life issues among their congregations, but the focus on character formation and spiritual development is minimal. Pastoral staffs are working in program-oriented church settings, which demand great deal of administrative effort to promote evangelism and educational programs.

The phenomenon of the Hong Kong churches can be considered from the angle of institutionalism and professionalism. On one hand, churches, either because of their denominational background, or due to the mentality of institutionalization, expect

10 The above figure represents church members; there is a discrepancy between members and attendants.
pastoral leaders to perform like CEOs while still acting as spiritual leaders. On the other hand, the tendency of professionalism has become more intense as seminary education seems to put too much weight on academic performance. The high social development has caused churches to grow big in size. Even those churches with only limited space increase congregation size by means of holding more than one Sunday services. As a result, they have to employ more pastoral staff. Unfortunately, the turnover rate is high. Ministers may be challenged to build mega-churches, for example, while still have to carry out the pastoral ministries of visitation and counseling. According to one report, one’s sense of satisfaction was affected by heavy workload and role confusion.\(^{11}\)

Many young seminarians and graduates have experienced burnout. A report from the Church Renewal Centre in Hong Kong indicates that the rate of resignation of pastoral staffs has made a dramatic jump during the last five years. The percentage of pastoral staffs resigning and changing places of ministry within one to five years has grown from 45 percent (1994-1999) to 53 percent, (1999-2004). As shown in the following table, the time span of a church minister working in a church has shortened. In addition, almost 70 percent of the churches noted staff changes during the past five years.\(^{12}\)

\(^{11}\) Lung Kong Lo (盧龍光) and Chung Man Lau (劉仲明), “Sense of Satisfaction of Pastoral Staff” (教牧在事奉上的滿足感), in Report Kwan, Shui Man, (關瑞文), editor, Chinese University of Hong Kong, 2000.

\(^{12}\) Hong Kong Church Survey 2004, Hong Kong: Hong Kong Church Renewal Movement, 2006.
Table 1. Staff Changes in Local Churches-2004

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time Span</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Number of People/ Staff</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 year</td>
<td>6.2%</td>
<td>105</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-6 years</td>
<td>33.4%</td>
<td>564</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-10 years</td>
<td>22.6%</td>
<td>382</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Over 10 years</td>
<td>36.4%</td>
<td>615</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

_Source: Hong Kong Church Survey, 2004, Hong Kong Church Renewal Movement, Hong Kong_

According to a survey on Hong Kong churches in 2009, in the past five years, churches with pastors’ resignation reached 67.6 percent, a bit lower than the 68.5 percent in 2004, but higher than the 66.3 percent in 1999. The following table, however, reflects a clearer picture of staff change in the past decade.

Table 2. Staff Change in Local Churches 1999-2009

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Years</th>
<th>1999</th>
<th>2004</th>
<th>2009</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Resigned in</td>
<td>32.3%</td>
<td>28.8%↓</td>
<td>26.5%↓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-2 years</td>
<td>36.1%</td>
<td>34.7%↓</td>
<td>32.3%↓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2-6 years</td>
<td>15.9%</td>
<td>17.8%↑</td>
<td>17.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-10 years</td>
<td>15.6%</td>
<td>18.7%↑</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More than 10 years</td>
<td>15.6%</td>
<td>18.7%↑</td>
<td>23.3%↑</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Ironically, as the size and numbers of churches grew in recent years, rates of resignation have also increased. In addition, while there are books and reports indicating church growth, the actual number of attendants has not increased. In fact, the increasing percentage of resigning pastoral workers reflects the worries of pastors who are able to


14 See Appendix 1.
deal with the challenges of complex urban settings and the needs of the congregation. It is important to find out the reasons why pastoral ministry has become such a burden. Is it their concern about personal performance, or is it the negative effect of mega-church growth mentality, or is it the pressures from the congregation or church leaders who may use “growth performance” as the sole assessment of pastoral workers?

A research done by Simon Lee highlights four factors contributing to the high number of resignation within evangelical Churches in Hong Kong.¹⁵

1. Commitment of the pastoral workers
2. Support of the congregation
3. Pastoral identities or role
4. Seminary education

In a research done by the Chinese University, the researchers wanted to find out the level of contentment felt by pastoral staffs.¹⁶ Sixty interviewees were involved in this research, and five major causes were identified as the factors leading to discontentment: poor job description, uncertain or unclear accountability, low salary, heavy workload, and role conflict. One or more of these five factors led to some degree of burnout and, as a result, lack of satisfaction. One may consider this phenomenon from the perspectives of seminary training, the institutionalization of churches, and the purely functional

¹⁵ Simon Lee and Tak Fok Wong (李耀全、王德福), “Reflection on the 2004 Church Survey, Hong Kong,” Christian Times, 2004. He questions: Are pastoral staff members willing to commit? Do congregations support the pastoral staff? Do pastoral staffs recognize their specific roles and are they given opportunities to exercise their spiritual gifts? Are we equipping Bible or theology scholars or pastors? See also Choi Chi Keung’s research on development of pastoral ministry in “Growth Amidst Changes-Studies on Hong Kong Churches,” Hong Kong Church Renewal Movement Ltd., 2006.

¹⁶ Ibid., Lung Kong Lo (盧龍光) and Chung Man Lau (劉仲明), 28-40.
mechanisms, which renders the lack of a sense of belonging and the lack of a supporting community.

A survey on the conflicts experienced by pastoral staff was conducted by Liu Tak Hon last year, among which 70 percent of participants indicated that they have encountered changes caused by pastors’ resignation in the church they served. About 30 to 40 percent have experienced negative feelings, thus resulting in a decrease in caring ability or efficiency, depletion in inter-personal relationships with church members, a negative impact on self-value / calling, and loneliness etc. About 70 percent of them expressed the resources from church was not adequate to help pastors to face conflicts. Liu also attributed pastors’ reluctance to share their difficulties with others, even their spouses, to a fear of having it spread out. They were worried that their friends or spouses would form a negative impression of churches. Chaos in their hearts, together with no advice from spiritual directors, eventually led them to switch to another local church, with wounds and hurts in their hearts.

Ministerial setting and church tradition

To some extent, church tradition in Hong Kong is related to denominational backgrounds. As mentioned, mainline churches are evangelical background. In

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17 Liu Tak Hon (廖德漢) expressed in a conference 牧職衝突臨爆點教牧座談會 that a total of 77 questionnaires were collected, and 70 percent indicated that dramatic changes was due to resignation of pastoral workers. See Christian Times, 27 September 2009.

18 There is no intention to paint a picture of the overall situation of the churches in terms of their rationale in planting and building churches. A brief discussion of the tradition will serve as a footnote of the phenomenon of church development ion Hong Kong. The atmosphere is not favorable to spiritual directors. I understand that this is just a personal observation although there may be extensive evidence as we look into the specific program of churches and seminaries. We may also look at data regarding Christian functions and meetings, to get an impression of the orientations of the churches in Hong Kong, which
addition, different theological and spiritual perspectives have affected the way of evangelizing, managing and nurturing disciples, etc. Although there isn’t any statistic or document supporting the viewpoint that evangelism is the spearhead of most of the churches, numerical growth is a major concern of church leaders, and the lopsided phenomenon of emphasizing individual salvation seems to be the case. As a result, church leaders pay less attention to spiritual formation and direction.

On the other hand, there are over thirty theological seminaries and Bible schools in Hong Kong. The curriculum of most of the denominational seminaries and other seminaries follow the evangelical tradition, but also keep in step with their western counterparts in terms of the content and method of training. In short, seminary training in Hong Kong is pro-academic and does not lean to spiritual praxis and spiritual formation. Therefore, it is not surprising to see church leaders emphasizing teaching as the basic instrument of Christian education. On top of that, programs related to personal needs, training/skills to serve, etc. are held to meet the “needs” of the congregations. Market place theology and urban ministry are among the most welcomed programs recently. Unfortunately, the formation of Hong Kong Christians is limited to rational thinking or practical skills, and lacks the depth of genuine spiritual formation. The pragmatic or utilitarian approach of churches in Hong Kong is reason why issues of globalization and incline toward evangelism. The effort in building disciples with mindsets and abilities, for example, of servant leaders or incarnational leader, is not sufficient.

19 This contradicting phenomenon seems to indicate that on one hand some Christians tend to be more rational, yet on the other hand, some of them are not rational at all. See for example, Chong Ho Yu (余創豪), Tradition of evangelical anti-intellectualism (福音派的反智傳統), Creative Wisdom, Internet, available from www.creative-wisdom.com/education/essays/religion/anti_intellectual2.shtml, accessed 12 January 2012. The charismatic tendency and development has become more and more obvious in the last twenty years, but theological reflection in this area demands church leaders to look deeper into the real situation of the real motive and needs of Christians.
urbanization are neglected. If spiritual formation makes us more aware of the realities of one self and the world, the interest in spiritual development and spiritual experiences is not obvious. Urban Holmes is one of the first writers who attempt to categorize the various religious experiences of the Church in his writing. It is impossible to go into details of how Christians have experienced God down the age considering the scope of this paper. The following table is an illustration of religious experiences of various traditions.

![Ways of Experiencing God](image)

**Figure 1. Ways of Experiencing God**

Traditionally, kataphatic tradition follows the apostolic tradition but at the same time, pays attention to contemplation, for example the Jesuit, or those who practice centering prayer. Their aim to enter the world with mission and their intense pursuit of the knowledge of God helps them to become intimate friends of God. On the other hand, apopahatic tradition or mysticism is an approach, which places particular emphasis upon

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20 Urban Holmes, *A History of Christian Spirituality* (N.Y.: Seabury press, 1981). He argues that Christians experience God in two bi-polar scales, the kataphatic/apophatic scale and the affective/speculative scale. Simply put it, the kataphatic practices contemplation but also encourages encounters God in daily life, the apophatic encounters God in mystical prayer, the speculative encounters God in their mind, and the affective encounters God in affectionate prayer.
the relational, spiritual or experiential aspects of the faith. The mystics seek to grow in knowledge and love and they talk about the wisdom of God. At the same time, these religious experiences must be related closely to finding out the reality of one self and God. Although it is hard to decide which tradition the evangelical churches are inclined to, it may be safe to say that not many of the leaders are influenced by the apophatic and kataphatic tendency of the Christian tradition.

It may be hard to classify Hong Kong churches as speculative too, simply because the orientation of the general congregation tends to be practical oriented despite the pursuit of the seminaries in promoting theological and Biblical studies. Without negating the authentic enthusiasm of some of the Christians, the researcher finds it hard to affirm the Hong Kong churches as affective. The desire to “grow bigger” in terms of church building and number of converts has completely overshadow the real needs of growing deeper in faith experiences. Hence, the spiritual needs and the significance of spiritual formation and direction neglected.

**Ministerial settings of the six participants**

The six participants come from different church backgrounds. Four of them have been serving in the church ranging from twenty to twenty-five years. Among these four pastors, one has changed his ministry setting to seminary and works as the chaplain of the seminary. One participant has been working as a nurse for twenty years and one of them has served mainly as hospital chaplain but also served in two local Churches.

From table 3 one can conclude that the participants are experienced pastoral workers who have received basic theological training as well as trainings in different areas. All but one has studied spiritual direction. All have practiced some forms of
spiritual disciplines and received spiritual direction from mentors. Only three participants are meeting their supervisor or spiritual director on a regular basis.

Table 3. Background and experiences of the six participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>C</th>
<th>D</th>
<th>E</th>
<th>F</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marital status</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>Single</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>Single</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family</td>
<td>2 children</td>
<td>2 children</td>
<td>nil</td>
<td>No children</td>
<td>2 children</td>
<td>nil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Degree</td>
<td>M.A. in Counselling</td>
<td>M.Div. in Counselling</td>
<td>M.A. in Counselling</td>
<td>B.Th</td>
<td>M.Div.</td>
<td>M.A. in Counselling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Past experiences with supervisor/spiritual director</td>
<td>Very Positive</td>
<td>Positive</td>
<td>Very positive</td>
<td>Positive</td>
<td>Very Positive</td>
<td>Very Positive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Years of Serving in Church/Organization</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Major Role in Church or Christian Organization</td>
<td>Associate Pastor</td>
<td>Associate Pastor</td>
<td>Lecturer and Spiritual Director</td>
<td>chaplain, Assistant pastor</td>
<td>Senior Pastor Counsellor</td>
<td>M.Div. Studies (Head chaplain)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Years of practicing Spiritual Direction</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supervision</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regular Retreat</td>
<td>Seldom</td>
<td>Once in a while</td>
<td>Often</td>
<td>Once in a while</td>
<td>Very often</td>
<td>Often</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Participant A ministered in an institutional church set up since more than a century ago. It is one of the most ancient churches established by Missionary Society.
The church also ran a kindergarten and an evening high school. Over the years, the Church has expanded, in terms of numerical and financial growth. Being a mission-minded church, the mother church has also planted a few churches. His responsibilities in the church are counseling and education.

Participant B is ministering in one of the largest denominational Churches in Hong Kong. Its history is about fifty years. The church is considered as a model to other churches.

Participant C is serving in a Church she found twenty-five years ago. Her husband is also a Church minister. Together, they found the Church since they graduated from Bible school. The church is situated in a low cost housing estate.

Participant D became a Church minister as assistant pastor after graduation from Bible Seminary. It is a denominational Church. After studying clinical pastoral education, he has become a chaplain. Recently, he resigned from CPE ministry and starts working in a small church.

Participant E ministered in a church for 10 years before he resigned and began his D.Min study. He is serving in a medium size church now.

Participant F used to be a head nurse, helping out in the Church regularly, freelance teaching in nursing school and doing part time counseling ministry. She is studying for her master of divinity.

The spiritual experiences of the six participants show that they are dedicated Christians who have visions for themselves as well as for their congregation. Their desires are shown in their pursuit in spiritual disciplines and trainings. Their understanding of spiritual wellbeing (question 6 in interview) has reflected their correct
Biblical understanding. Also, all have mentioned their ups and downs in spiritual journeys (question 7). For example, participant A mentioned he is expecting a breakthrough, participant B mentioned that she is less enthusiastic in pursuing God, and participant F wanted to experience more peace, etc. The obstacles to their transformation are varied (question 10), but their professional challenges, particular their conviction of calling in spiritual direction, is similar.21

The pastoral experiences of some of the participants are stable and encouraging, despite the demanding ministry. Participant B, D, and E had struggles with team members and congregation before. Three of them have left their first position and began their ministries in other settings. Their struggles, especially B and D are intense. Feeling strained in ministries for some of them is related to personal relationship.

C. Geographical Description and Demography

1. Participant A: The student body of about 150 that participant A is serving comes mainly from middle class, and most of them are professionals, ranging from 25 to 40 of age, and their church and family backgrounds, family backgrounds etc. are different. Participant A also helps out in another church during the weekend.

2. Participant B: The congregation of about 1,500 members comes mainly from lower middle class. There are some middle class and professional. Among the congregation, at least one third is youth, one third is middle-aged couples and one third is elderly and children. In terms of social and economic status, upward mobility can be observed in the congregation.

3. Participant C: The congregation of about 350 members comes mainly from lower middle class. Most of them are young professionals with university qualification, but there are also high school graduates, young couples, teens and children. In terms of social and economic status, upward mobility can be observed in the congregation.

21 Refer to interview question in chapter 5.
4. Participant D: Participant D is serving a middle class congregation of about 50 members. Several families support this small church financially. They are also leaders of the church. There are some youth, teens and elderly too.

5. Participant E: The congregation of about 150 comes from middle class background. Among them are social workers, teachers and civil servants, etc. One fourth of the congregation is older couples, one fourth is younger couples, one fourth is youth and teens and one fourth is elderly and children.

6. Participant F: Participant F used to be a head nurse. She has enrolled in the M.Div. program in seminary now. Apart from church internship, she helps out in various settings, including nursing school, prison ministry etc.

D. Current Situation

Personal Status

Participant A is a chaplain of a theological seminary.

Participant B is the associate pastor of an expanding church. The senior pastor resigned about one year ago and several pastoral staff also resigned.

Participant C The Church is expanding. As the senior pastor, she has to take care of plenty of executive work but she also has a heart for pastoral care.

Participant D The small Church that participant D is serving is very traditional. There is a lack of mobility and vitality.

Participant E The medium size church that participant D is serving is expanding.

Participant F is a seminary student, a part time lecturer and counselor. She will graduate next year.

Concerns of the Participants-Result from interviews

Participant A is studying part time for a Th.M degree and he is busy.

Participant B found herself feeling bad with the direction of the church.
Participant C is expects herself to be more resilient so that she can take care of the ministry in an orderly manner.

Participant D is a recovered cancer patient. He is very health conscious.

Participant E considers himself as a perfectionist.

Participant F comes from a single parent family. She has the feeling of being abandoned.

**E. Relevant Personal, Congregational, Community and Global Issues**

Spiritual Formation International will celebrate its tenth anniversary in 2012. When the ministry was founded in 2002, the founders have identified some key words and phrases, which will become guidelines for the direction of a spiritual formation ministry. They are:

- Formation
- Holistic Growth
- Spiritual care
- Connection
- Community

We also affirm that our ministry should be grounded on the Word of God, the inspiration and power from the Holy Spirit, and the model of spiritual pilgrims. At that time, we thought the above guidelines and the foundation, upon which we built our ministry, are relevant. Today, as we prepare a series of conference and meetings for our tenth anniversary, we confirm that we are meeting the needs of local churches, especially the leaders and spiritual directors.
We are fascinated about what God has done in the past decade as we witnessed classes, seminars, workshops, retreats were held, and lives transformed. We are especially thrilled as we see leaders being transformed. Among them are pastors, medical doctors, counselors, teachers and other caregivers. It is a privilege that we were able to reach out to hundreds of congregations. Many were encouraged and uplifted, and among them, some have enrolled in seminaries; some have begun to help out in spiritual formation ministry in various settings and some have thought about responding to the call of being a spiritual director.

In evaluating the ministry of spiritual direction, we set our focus on the overall development to clergy and other caregivers, including teachers and social workers. While we firmly believe that spiritual direction is not for the privileged few, we have been expanding our services among groups either in the commercial setting or those who work as manual labor. To meet this target, we are thinking of conducting more talks on spirituality and setting up spiritual formation groups among teachers and business executives in the future.

The urbanized settings, as mentioned above, are a challenge to any plan of spiritual formation. Ministry has become difficult because the city is becoming diversified. While we confirm the needs of evangelistic work, discipleship training, we are aware of this significant and indispensable effort of a spiritual formation ministry to re-connect and re-create a community. Philemon Choy expressed his regret by saying: “Leaders of Hong Kong churches are short sighted because they often confine their scope of ministry within their churches and failed to look further. They do not have a good
understanding of globalization.” I agree with his observation in general. However, the challenges of the effect of globalization and urbanization cannot be underestimated.

F. Transformation of Spiritual Director

Church leaders have to realize the needs of their congregations and the needs among different groups/sectors in the city. Their vision to reach out to serve in different settings can be fulfilled ultimately. In other words, transformation must first take place in their lives. Here, I am referring not to spiritual practices that will uphold them, but rather to, deeper awareness of their own spiritual needs. When leaders begin to address and tend to their own needs and those of fellow clergy and caregivers, a transforming community will begin to emerge.

Transformation must take place in the lives of those who are serving as spiritual directors now. As spiritual formation and spiritual direction programs begin to take shape and grow in number, I anticipate more personal care and spiritual friendship will take place so that they feel supported and sustained. Indeed, there are pastors, chaplains and lay leaders who have the desire to minister as spiritual director so that more Christians can find support from them. They should be supported and guided with greater effort from the congregation and other leaders too.

CHAPTER 3
OTHER PROPOSED SOLUTIONS

A. Literature Review

In qualitative research, literature review is used as an evaluative report of studies found in the literature related to the selected area of study.¹ This review should describe, summarize, evaluate and clarify this literature so as to establish a theoretical basis for the research. A number of works that are central to this research will be studied so that we can grasp hold of what have been discussed and articulate the relationships between the literature and this research. In short, the basic purpose is not only able to inform the researcher to learn from previous studies on the subject, but also able to ensure the value of this research. Finally, this literature review, particularly literature on nourishment and supervision of spiritual directors, will shed light on how to walk with spiritual directors. It will also show us the insufficiency of previous researches. Hopefully, the researcher’s effort is able to demonstrate to the readers that this research is not only worthwhile, but has provided additional understanding and knowledge of the field.

¹ Conducting a literature review for research relating to spiritual formation and transformation is definitely a difficult task. The researcher is aware of the prolific writings on this topic down the centuries. The task becomes more difficult because spiritual formation and transformation has become an interdisciplinary topic. For instance, one will find it hard to decide which spiritual classics and which contemporary work should be included. It is also hard to sort out theological writing and practical instrumental guide. The researcher’s intention is to include some major works here and present the solutions that contribute to the understanding of this specific topic.
B. Working Definitions

**Spiritual Direction**

It is a general understanding that in the practice of spiritual direction, the triune God is the primary director, since He is the One Who calls and initiates the relationship, and He is always present with us. In particular, we can refer spiritual direction as a process of guiding or affected by the Holy Spirit. For Barry and Connolly: “Spiritual direction is help given by one Christian to another to enable that person to pay attention and respond to this personally communicating God, to grow in intimacy with this God, and to live out the consequences of that relationship.”\(^2\) For our purpose, I will provide another working definition, which is quoted from Joann Crowley, who echoes with Barry and Connolly that the goal of direction is to deepen the relationship between God and the directee, but also contends that spiritual direction allows “the relationship between director and directee to be the place where one’s life and prayer are examined, and where acceptance, affirmation, support and challenge encourage the directee’s spiritual growth.”\(^3\)

**Spiritual formation**

Spiritual formation is a modern term of the doctrine of sanctification, the work and process through which God initiates to set us apart and form our lives in Christ. Thus, spiritual formation must be Christ-centered. Terms like discipleship or spiritual growth

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\(^2\) Barry and Connolly, 1982, 8.

have been used in churches, but our understanding of spiritual formation has not emphasized the work of the Holy Spirit and spiritual traditions. Indeed, there is a deficiency of a holistic approach.

Michael Burer defines spiritual formation as a synthesis of theology and practice found within the Bible on the one hand and church History on the other.\(^4\) From three angles, Dallas Willard tries to tell us that spiritual formation is a big category. First, it can be referred to certain activities as “spiritual” work or exercise. Thus, spiritual formation is training in these special spiritual activities. Secondly, spiritual formation is the shaping of the inner life, the spirit, or the spiritual side of the human being. Thirdly, the formation work and process is shaping by the spirit or by the spiritual realm, and by the Holy Spirit and other spiritual agencies involved in the kingdom of God, especially the Word of God. Then he concludes:

> Spiritual formation in Christ is accomplished, and the Great Commission fulfilled, as the regenerate soul makes its highest intent to live in the commandments of Christ, and accordingly makes realistic plans to realize this intent by an adequate course of spiritual disciplines.\(^5\)

One has to come to term with the phenomenon that the study of spiritual formation is considered from a multidisciplinary perspective and is hard to give a simple definition. In defining spiritual formation, James Wilhoit lays down some helpful pointers as follows.\(^6\)

1. Spiritual formation is the imitation of Christ


\(^5\) Dallas Willard, Spiritual Formation in Christ, download from Dallas Willard Articles, 30 December 2011.

\(^6\) James Wilhoit, Spiritual Formation as if the Church Mattered: Growing in Christ through Community, (MI: Grand Rapids, 2008).
2. It has to be done in the church and community

3. Spiritual formation is the work of the Holy Spirit.

4. Spiritual formation is facilitated by formative practices.

**Spiritual Practice**

Spiritual practices are the constitutive acts of individual and community that both identify us as and form us into person or people who belong to that community. Yet, Christian practices are means of grace by which God strengthens individuals and the church to live faithfully in Him. Dallas Willard considers practice as “forming habits on the basis of grace of God…If we refuse to practice, it is not God’s grace that fails when a crisis comes, but our own nature. When the crisis comes, we ask God to help us, but He cannot if we have not made our nature our ally.”

In addition to that, practice must be considered as self-critically reflective experience of intellectual learning and practical disciplines. On the other hand, the understanding of practice from the perspective of spiritual formation is necessary because “practice is a pattern of meaning and action that is both culturally constructed and individually instantiated.” In order to bring out a lived spirituality in our lives, it is important to actualize and practice what we learn or study until a particular habitus is formed.

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**Spiritual well-being**

Spiritual wellbeing is closely related to self-worth. The most important meaning an individual should realize is his or her intrinsic worth in Christ. Ongoing spiritual wellbeing is spiritual fulfillment for individuals as they are awakened to nourish themselves to pursue wholeness in self in a process of spiritual growth and meaning making. Spiritual wellbeing refers not to an idealistic healthy condition that is stress free and a condition that is pressure free. As Christians, our belief is that spiritual wellbeing is inseparable from the Biblical truth of salvation. In short, God has made us whole and holy. We are well because we are related to the triune God through Jesus Christ our Lord. Wellness, therefore, does not imply the absence of disease or afflictions, etc. In terms of wholeness, spiritual wellbeing is harmonious relationship with God, with oneself and others. In terms of vocation, a spiritually healthy person, therefore, is having a sense of purpose and direction in life. Therefore, spiritual wellbeing is the holistic expression of belief, values and action in maintaining one’s vision or particular calling. Finally, spiritual wellness implies holistic living in physical, social, emotional and spiritual aspects, and the goal is spiritual maturity.

Spiritual wellbeing assumes the existence of adversities and other forms of challenges. Shalom or peace is not only a Biblical concept, but unshakeable belief to the Hebrews, who hold on to the belief of a God Who delivers, heal and save despite a fallen or depersonalized world.

**Transformation**

We can consider transformation as a process by which God forms Christ’s character in believers by the ministry of the Spirit. The Bible tells us that God engages us
in the process of transformation of the whole person in thoughts, behaviors, and styles of relating with God and others, and it results in a life of service to others and witness for Christ. Ruth Barton understands transformation as follows:

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

Since the Biblical meaning of transformation (metamorphoo) denotes complete change, one possible working definition for transformation would be: a process of becoming more Christ like as we experience deeper change in the inner person as well as in character, thought, intention, action and attitude.

C. Spiritual Practices to sustain a transformational ministry

Before we discuss spiritual practices, some basic but fundamental understanding of a Biblical spirituality is needed. There is a lack of published information to sustain the clergy and spiritual directors in Hong Kong. Substantial and in depth study in the area of spiritual formation and supervision to spiritual directors is scarce. In the following, we will look at the answers offered by various scholars.

A Biblical Spirituality for Ministry

Spiritual theology and spiritual formation are important concepts that any researcher must grasp hold of. Their relationships with the understanding of spirituality have become popular topics since late sixties. Many researches with different

implications have emerged since then. Fundamentally, Christian spirituality is response to God, but this response is no longer considered from the interior life, but also from a holistic viewpoint, which embraces the theological understanding of holistic growth on one hand, and of implementing the commandments of Christ on the other.

Kenneth Boa, the writer of “That I may Know God-Pathways to spiritual Formation,” emphasizes the need of a Christ-centered theology as there are many facets and different kinds of spirituality:

Biblical Spirituality is a Christ-centered orientation to every component of life through the mediating power of the indwelling Holy Spirit. It is a journey of the Spirit that begins with the gift of forgiveness and life in Christ and progresses through faith and obedience.10

From an experiential and academic viewpoint, Sandra Schneider’s highlights the importance to study spirituality both as an academic discipline and spiritual practice:

Spirituality is the field of study, which attempts to investigate in an interdisciplinary way spiritual experience as such, i.e. as spiritual and as experience. I use the expression “spiritual experience” to indicate that the subject matter is not only religious experience in the technical sense but those analogous experiences of ultimate meaning and value which have transcendent and life-integrating power for individuals and groups.11

Philip Sheldrake, from theological viewpoint, reinforces the notion of a contextual spirituality as he says:


11 Sandra Schneider’s, Spiritual in the Academy, Theological Studies 50 (December 1989) pp.676-697.She mentioned: The methodological style of spirituality as a discipline must be described as participative. It is certainly the case that most, if not all, students in the field come to the discipline out of and because of their personal involvement with its subject matter. And virtually all intend not only to do research and teach in the field when they graduate but to “practice” in the field in some pastoral sense of the word.67 But the question of the relation of praxis to the discipline is most complicated in regard to the actual “doing” of spirituality. Like psychology, spirituality deals with material that often cannot be understood except through analogy with personal experience. Spirituality deals with spiritual experience as such, not merely with ideas about or principles governing such experience (although these certainly have a role in the research).
In the context of the city, the idea of spirituality as a way of living publicly is not a placid acceptance of things as they are. If the “mission of God” is to reconcile all things to God and all people to each other, authentic Christian practice is necessarily an *act of resistance* to everything that divides people from each other or seeks to repress diversity and eliminate otherness.12

Ben Campbell Johnson and Andrew Dreitcer concentrate their study of spirituality from a ministerial perspective. For them, spiritual growth is a faithful quest to follow Christ, Who will recognize our love for Him. It is the love Christ that sustains us as Christ will love us and continue to manifest himself to us. Thus, for Johnson and Dreitcer, Christian spirituality is grounded in baptism, informed by the example of Jesus, and empowered by his living Presence will gush forth as spiritual power in the life and ministry of church leaders.13

These three dimensions of a vital spirituality: 1. A spirituality grounded in baptism, 2. Informed by the example of Jesus and 3. Empowered by His living presence is also a spirituality that aspires sacramental, vocational and mystical beliefs and values.

Johnson and Dreitcer echo with the spirituality advocated by Eugene Peterson, particularly to Peterson’s message in his work—“Working the Angles.” For Peterson, the visible lines of pastoral work “are preaching, teaching, and administration.” Although the visible lines are the expected pastor’s duties, it is the angles, which dictate everything. “The small angles of this ministry are prayer, Scripture, and spiritual direction.”14 Hence, they disapprove a spirituality of ministry focusing on the lines and advocate a spirituality

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12 Philip Sheldrake, Christian Spirituality as a Way of Living Publicly: A Dialectic of the Mystical and Prophetic, Spiritus 3 (Spring 2003), 28, 34.


of ministry that finds its life in moments of reflection on the experiences of giving and receiving, listening and discerning, and hearing the words of others as Christ’s words.  

**Understanding Vocation and Compassion**

Vocation and compassion are interrelated concepts that inspire and move us to serve. This is especially true to clergy and spiritual directors. In the following, I will first discuss the views of some authors on vocation followed by the views of compassion.

In his work “Let Your Life Speak-Listening for the Voice of Vocation,” Parker Palmer shares his experiences of wearing other people’s faces. For a long period of time, he was influenced and guided to believe vocation implies distrust of selfhood. His realization of self-value and the true meaning of vocation is suggestive:

> Today I understand vocation quite differently—not as a goal to be achieved but as a gift to be received…The deepest vocational question is not “What ought I to do with my life?” It is the more elemental and demanding “Who am I? What is my nature?”

For Palmer, the vocational journey is full of unknowns. Yet, this is a pilgrim’s journey toward the truth that awaits them. Ministry grows out of relationship and purpose, without which the ministers or spiritual directors will become just workers obeying commands, and neglect the focus that Christian servant-hood grows out of our son-ship and that we are free to follow the vision. In Wilkie Au’s words,

> As the response of the total self to the Lord’s invitation to covenant partnership, a vocation goes far beyond a particular type of job or career. Rather, it involves the orchestration of our leisure, our relationship, our work, our prayer life, our private

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15 Ibid., God’s intimate presence and spiritual development will be briefly discussed in the following and in Chapter Four.

life, our public life, and of the resources we steward, so as to put it at the disposal of God’s purposes in the services of God and the neighbor. 17

Although vocation is revelatory and closely related to personal vision and responses to the callings of God, it also relates to the development of the whole person, and in particular, a heart of compassion. Compassion literally means to “suffer with,” or it can be considered as a form of love, aroused within us, when we are confronted with those who suffer or are vulnerable. Without compassion, spiritual directors will not have the strength and love from God to serve or minster those who come to them.

In *Compassion: A Reflection on the Christian Life*, Nouwen, McNeill and Morrison focus on the communal experience of God’s goodness and compassion. 18 The writing emphasizes the significance of listening to the voice of God and responding as a community. As such, it demands a deep experience of God in prayer and patience, and the church’s response to the call to compassion. On top of that, Christian community must seek first to find solidarity with the poor through hearkening presence, loving presence without fear of displacement and through disciplines such as prayer, patience and activism.

For the writers, compassion is not primarily making oneself “useful,” but it is a kind of “entering in” which is intimately linked to a real presence. The natural result of this presence will be true solidarity. To make this possible, the writers remind us the classical teachings of obedience, servant-hood and discipleship. But all these can be boiled down into one quotation from the book: “Simply being with someone is difficult


because it asks of us that we share in the other’s vulnerability, enter with him or her into the experience of weakness and powerlessness, become part of the uncertainty, and give up control and self-determination.

An introduction to the Devout Life is a very detailed spiritual manual written by Francis De Sales. Practices like purgation, practice, prayer, passion and perseverance are mentioned. To Francis, devout life is inseparable from moral and spiritual disciplines from which the disciples will experience purging as they notice their sins and other imperfections. Practice, however, is not considered as merely external behaviors, neither should pursuits of perfections be considered as virtue. True virtues, especially humility, require constant and persistent practices out of love. In fact, it should be a vocation for all to pursue a truly compassionate and God-centered life.

Through confession, contrition, remembering the goodness of God, we are able to understand and experience the warmth of heavenly love, which in turn will help us to experience the loving presence of God. In addition, we must always prepare ourselves by exchanging dialogue of love, and aspiring by ardent darting of our hearts, towards God so that we will be always in a state of spiritual alertness.

Francis De Sales also mentions self-surrender in love for the sake of love as we conform our individual will to the will of God. The consequence is that we shall be liberated from falsehood and fear. Following the tradition, he believes that obedience, chastity and poverty are the three ways to acquire charity. Above all, true devotion is seeking the love of God and experiencing the divine love of God. The primacy of love in

\[19\] Ibid., 12.

practicing devotion is indispensable as we are also challenged to encounter God in a deeper and more intimate manner. Francis De Sales, however, is only one of those disciples following this long tradition of the teaching and practice of charity.

In Chapter 4, the researcher will discuss in more extensive and deeper manner the significance of a theology of compassion. It is worthwhile here to introduce the work of Oliver Davies, *A Theology of Compassion*, briefly.\(^{21}\) First, he talks about the possibility of a new being. Second, he talks about a new language. Thirdly, he talks about a compassionate God. Guiding us through theological and Biblical landscapes, Davies invites us to totally reverse the logic of metaphysics, which prioritizes the principle of difference, and begin to re-consider compassion as the way out of nowadays’ dilemmas:

There, in difference, survives the possibility of a new kind of being. In the resistance to evil, through compassion on the part of Etty Hillesum and Edith Stein, we found the outline of a dispossessive and decentred model of the self which redemptivity recapitulates the dispossession of evil and accordingly, manifests both a new radicality of goodness and the possibility of a new and truly contemporary understanding of being.\(^{22}\)

D. Spiritual Traditions as Guides to Spiritual Director

In 1981, I received two books, one by Richard Foster, and one by Henri Nouwen from two close friends. The book by Foster is *Celebration of Disciplines* and the book by Nouwen is *A Cry of Mercy*.\(^{23}\) Both books have made a great impact on me. While Foster


\(^{22}\) Ibid., 22.

\(^{23}\) Richard Foster, *Celebration of Discipline* (London: Hodder &Stoughton, 1978); Henri Nouwen, *A Cry of Mercy* (Maryknoll: Orbis Book, 1981). Learning or studying spiritual disciplines have actually become part of the seminary’s curriculum. Many pastors or spiritual directors have come across these materials. But they may be foreign to them because knowledge of spiritual traditions is different form practice of spiritual disciplines.
has aroused my interest in studying spiritual traditions, Nouwen has planted a seed of becoming a genuine and authentic person in me. As I conduct this research and reflect on how spiritual directors can be supported, I think more about the latter. Many scholars, including Foster, have done researches on spiritual traditions and have used them to guide us. These are valuable materials, which provide us with pointers and guidelines as to how to be a better spiritual director. The following writers are included because the message is traditional, personal and relevant.

**Spiritual Disciplines**

Kenneth Leech is pioneering in the area of spiritual formation. His understanding of spirituality and his discussions on the role of the spiritual directors are helpful. The writing of another author that would be drawn upon is Henri Nouwen. His work *Reaching Out* is insightful in terms of its guidance on spiritual wellbeing in the context of ministry and the act of hospitality as main characteristics of spiritual directors.

In his work *Soul Friend-An Invitation to Spiritual Direction*, Leech spells out clearly a perspective that is Biblical and yet, also aligns with the ascetical and contemplative tradition.²⁴ For him, however, a spiritual director is neither a therapist nor technician, but a seeker, who walks with another seeker, his or her directee, in a current of spirituality and in a divine-human process of relationship.²⁵ If prayer, study and ascetical theology


²⁵ Ibid., 34.
are vital to any clergy, the spiritual director is also called to practice these disciplines regularly and consider that as ordinary pastoral work.\textsuperscript{26}

The reflection of Henri Nouwen in one of his major works: \textit{Reaching Out: The three Movements of the Spiritual Life} is definitely an essential guidebook to spiritual directors and leaders.\textsuperscript{27} Not only has he conveyed an important message of spiritual development or the three movements of transformation, through which the spiritual directors and leaders will become more mature leaders, he has also challenged us to face the paradoxes in lives and ministries.

My understanding is that the first movement, from loneliness to solitude is related to connection or befriending oneself. The second movement is about relationship with others, and finally, the third movement, relationship with God. Although the loneliness and hostility Nouwen mentioned in his book might be quite different from what we experience in Hong Kong, he has pointed out an important fact that mankind is all fearful, lonely and tend to be hostile sometimes. On the other hand, he invites us to become sensitive to ourselves, to become hospitable to others and to have deeper relationship with God:

The life of Jesus has made it very clear to us that the spiritual life does not allow by-passes. By-passing loneliness, hostility or illusion will never lead us to solitude, hospitality and prayer…when Jesus asks us to take up our cross and follow him (Mark 8:43) we are invited to reach out far beyond our broken and sinful condition and give shape to a life that intimates the great things that are prepared for us.\textsuperscript{28}

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{26} Ibid., 35.
\item \textsuperscript{27} Henri Nouwen, \textit{Reaching Out: The Three Movements of the Spiritual Life} (Collins, 1976).
\item \textsuperscript{28} Ibid., 20.
\end{itemize}
Dallas Willard considers spiritual training by dividing spiritual discipline into discipline of abstinence and discipline of engagement. In table 4, he describes how these disciplines will guide us:

**Table 4. Willard’s spiritual disciplines**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Discipline of Abstinence</th>
<th>Discipline of Engagement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Solitude</td>
<td>Study</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Silence</td>
<td>Worship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fasting</td>
<td>Celebration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frugality</td>
<td>Service</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chastity</td>
<td>Prayer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secrecy</td>
<td>Fellowship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sacrifice</td>
<td>Confession</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Submission</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

While Willard affirms the absolute necessity of the spiritual disciplines for our faith, and is convinced of the revolutionary results of practicing these disciplines, he does not negate a grace-filled or Christ like life as the work of God:

> The Spirit of the disciplines is nothing but the love of Jesus, with its resolute will to be like him whom we love. In the fellowship of the burning heart, “exercise unto godliness” is our way of receiving ever more fully the grace in which we stand, rejoicing in the hope of the glory of God (Rm 5:2).³⁰

Margaret Silf’s concern is how to deepen our relationship with Christ. The specific question she asks is in what way Ignatius spirituality can help us in our transformative journeys. Being influenced by the Spiritual Exercises of Ignatius of Loyola, She follows the tradition and demonstrates to us the way towards finding God in all things. In her work *Inner Compass*, Silf asks three questions: where am I, how am I and who am I are introduced to the reader to help them discern their brought up. In a

three circles diagram, Silf explains the “where circle” is things that one cannot change, that is family, culture, education, natural giftedness and inborn shortcomings, etc. The “how circle” is an area of one’s life where one can exercise some choice, and the “who circle” is the person I most truly am before God.

When we open ourselves to God in prayer, we invite him to enter our Who centre, bringing the gifts of the Spirit into the heart of our lived experience…As the transforming work is done, the Spirit in turn carries our needs and longings of all those for whom we pray, back to the heart of God…This deepening from Where through How to Who is the hallmark of all personal prayer…

Silf coined the term “Godseed” to explain life changes as one move toward the inner circle. Through this journey, we do not only find out our past, our attachments and detachments, but also our deepest desires. The freedom gained in the process is a sign of spiritual growth.

Abraham Heschel’s understanding of Sabbath and its implication is insightful. Heschel made it very clear that Sabbath is a concept of time, not space. Therefore, the meaning of the Sabbath is to celebrate time. Work and routines or things of space have imprisoned us. On Sabbath we must try to become attuned to holiness in time. It’s not only a time for celebration, it is actually the moment we share in what is eternal in time. Sabbath is also a time of wonder or amazement to God’s creation and salvation as we remember God’s loving-kindness. Heschel challenged us to let go of the obsession of space and begin to observe the sacred moments in life. To be obsessed by space may be characterized by many secular values, such as our attachment to consuming and


possessing. Only when we come to the awareness that our attachment to space, including our work, then we begin to reunite with one self in rest and celebration, with family and fellowman, and with God.

**Practicing the Presence of God**

Brother Lawrence once stated, “The most holy practice, the nearest to daily life, and the most essential for the spiritual life, is the practice of the presence of God, that is to find joy in His divine company and to make it a habit of life.” To become habituated, therefore, is an important aim of practicing the above. Being a Carmelite, Brother Lawrence was practicing monastic rule. Besides, there’s no guidebook or manual to be followed. In fact, most of the spiritual classics were written not in the format of a manual. His profound peace and joy came from his contemplation and service, to the extent that practicing disciplines has actually become his second nature. Although some of the major principles were recorded in his writing, most of them were records of spiritual experiences.

Adele Ahlberg Calhoun’s *Spiritual Disciplines Handbook* is a comprehensive book covering important concepts and practices that spiritual directors may find helpful. Apart from the practical exercises and reflections, the writer also emphasizes the importance of desire in spiritual practice. The following is an example of one of the exercises: Practicing the Presence:


35 Ibid., 59.
Table 5. Lawrence’s practicing the presence

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DESIRE</th>
<th>To develop a continual openness and awareness of Christ’s presence living in me</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>DEFINITION</td>
<td>Practicing the presence is an invitation to see and experience every moment as a gift of God. It is to live alive to union with the Trinity.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SCRIPTURE</td>
<td>“Your new life, which is your real life – even though invisible to spectators – is with Christ in God. He is your life. When Christ (your real life, remember) shows up again on this earth, you’ll show up, too – the real you, the glorious you. Meanwhile, be content with obscurity, like Christ.” (Colossians 3:3-4 The Message)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“The word is very near you; it is in your mouth and in your heart so you may obey it.” (Deuteronomy 30:14)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“You have your heads in your Bibles constantly because you think you’ll find eternal life there. But you miss the forest for the trees. These Scriptures are all about me! And here I am, standing right before you, and you aren’t willing to receive from me the life you say you want.” (John 5:39-40 The Message)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| PRACTICE INCLUDES | ● Developing a rhythm of living that brings God to mind throughout the day  
● Intentionally recollecting yourself before God as you engage in the activities and duties of life  
● Seeking to see others through the eyes of God  
● Stopping throughout the day to listen to God  
● Carrying or placing symbols in your office and home that remind you of Christ’s presence  
● Using breath prayer, centering prayer |
| GOD-GIVEN FRUIT | ● Keeping company with Jesus all day long  
● Having a deeper union with Christ  
● Living a new way of being by letting go of your need to manipulate, compete and control  
● Living as though the present moment has no competition  
● Receiving each moment as sacred  
● Abiding in Christ so that you see him in those who drain, irritate and anger  
● Seeing yourself through God’s eyes rather than the eyes of others  
● Finding Christ as your joy, sorrow, emptiness and fullness  
● Remaining open and teachable at all moments  
● Growing in awareness of your constant need of God |

Calhoun’s book is a good tool in the sense that it is comprehensive and “user friendly.” At the end of each chapter, reflective questions, suggestion of spiritual
exercises and resources on practicing God’s presence are provided. In the appendix section, Calhoun also provides many detailed and useful information.

Jonathan Wilson shows us the significance of the theological understanding of practice in his writing: *Gospel Virtues: Practicing Faith, Hope and Love in Uncertain Times*. His contribution in this area is unique because of his insights of virtue ethics and his effort to relate it to the Biblical virtues of faith, hope and love. He also presents to us how these Biblical virtues should be related to our practices. We will continue his discussion on the practice of hospitality and the virtues of love in Chapter 4.

**Contemplative Pastor**

Spiritual directors have to learn to take care of themselves since the need for spiritual direction is increasing as Christians seek guidance to make discernments in both their active and contemplative lives. In terms of spiritual growth, the spiritual director must first learn to make friends with oneself as they continue to walk with God and others.

Eugene Peterson also stresses on spiritual disciplines and refuses to consider spiritual direction as any specialized form of ministry. In his groundbreaking work, *The Contemplative Pastor: Returning to the Art of Spiritual Direction*, he reminds us the art of pasturing is closely related to the elementary lesson of becoming an unbusy, subversive and apocalyptic pastor. If spiritual directors are honest to their calling, as Peterson suggested, becoming subversive, then, the Word should be considered as

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sacramental, prepare to share gift, shortcomings, pain, failure, and watch for the signs of
God’s grace. In other words, he urges us to become a pastor who prays, a pastor who
preaches and a pastor who listens. Indeed, his “cure of soul” message to the spiritual
director appears to be simple, as he suggests:

The cure of souls, then, is the Scripture-directed, prayer-shaped care that is
devoted to persons singly or in groups…is a determination to work at the center;
to concentrate on the essential…Curing souls is a term that filters out what is
introduced by a secularizing culture…38

In short, the book has not only provided a framework for a healthy pastor and
essentials of pastoral ministry, it also points out the need of vocational reformation. Like
what he describes in another work: *Working the Angles: three basic acts of scripture,
prayer and spiritual direction*, he strongly recommends clergy to practice the essentials.
What is important may be actually things happen in daily life, including small talk with
the congregation, noticing God who is also in the midst of traffics.

Thomas Merton has never written any book on the topic of spiritual formation,
nor has he spoken specifically on how to sustain as clergy, but the advice he offers to
clergy is indeed very valuable. It is hard to summarize all his teachings and how he
expresses himself as a spiritual director who engages deeply with God, and fully with the
world. Annice Callahan’s observation of Merton’s life as a monk, a spiritual director, a
theologian, and a poet is very helpful:

1. Solitude as Necessity: A way to Compassion
2. Self–Acceptance as Integration: A way to the Real Self
3. Spiritual Direction as Growth in Interior Freedom: A way to Union with God

38 Ibid., 57, 59.
Callahan contends that Merton’s struggle to integrate his vocation as a monk and that of a writer in his solitary journey is actually a form of essential nutrition in the formative process of becoming more compassionate. Likewise, Merton’s openness in distinguishing his identity is a sign of opening to God as he led a life of prayer and treated it as a way to the awakening of the real self. As a spiritual director, Merton insists on the necessity of spiritual direction, considering it as a process of continuing formation and guidance. His conviction is that it is in finding God that he will truly experience freedom. From Merton’s point of view, all the practices mentioned above are personal and communal. That’s why he advocates peace that transcends racial difference. For him, peace is the touchstone to demonstrate the Truth. It is not difficult to understand why he is anti-war on one hand, and stresses on the responsibility to his fellow countryman on the other. Last but not the least, Merton is contemplative. Callahan says: “Merton demonstrated his balance as spiritual guide by indicating the close connection between liturgy and contemplative prayer.” This balance is maintained neither by human effort nor any astute disciplines, but through a lifelong practice of seeking God’s will, desire Him, and finding God’s mercy.

Thomas Merton is one of the modern mystics who help us to differentiate knowing God to knowing about God. In the process of truly knowing God, we are able to identify our true and false selves. Thus, religious experiences bring about awakening and


40 Ibid., 110.
increasing self-awareness. Although self-discovery is not necessarily followed by the change in moral behavior, but realization of our true selves will help us to develop a free and mature personal identity.  

E. Spiritual Depletion and the Search for a Relevant Spirituality:

Advice from Mentors on Self-Care and Spiritual Practices

When we come to the topic of spiritual depletion, some scholars pay attention to the problems of clergy or causes contributing to their depletion. It is of equal importance to recognize the fact that spiritual growth is a journey of ups and downs. Depletion and transformation are related concepts. Hence, understanding spiritual development and taking into account of God’s grace in this process should be included in the discussion. I will look at how scholars discuss this topic in the following manner: (1) Significance of a relevant spirituality (2) Depletion (3) Self-care and intimacy (4) Transformative learning and Spiritual development.

Significance of a relevant spirituality

Prolific writings have been published and conferences held to uphold clergy to deal with their spiritual depletion. These efforts attempt to answer why Christian leaders experience depletion if they are transformed and in what ways they are affected by their view of spirituality and ministries.

41 Thomas Merton’s principal metaphor for the spiritual life is that of a Journey. For him, spirituality is simply a journey from the false self toward the true Self. For discussion on Merton’s viewpoint on spiritual development, see for example, M. Basil Pennington, True Self/False Self: Unmasking the Spirit Within (Crossroad, 2000).
From the perspective of a spiritual director, depletion, burnout, and depression can be seen as a process beginning with lack of energy, and moving to gradual withdrawal, indicating a lack of interest in ministry, relationships, or prayer life. While it is common nowadays to borrow the term compassion fatigue to describe their situations, most of the efforts seem to focus on finding out the symptoms and resolving the “problem” and failed to go back to the basic. For me, therefore, a relevant spirituality is fundamental to any understanding of depletion and transformation. Waajjman reminds us:

The fundamental structure of the spiritual life is the dynamic ‘created-uncreated polarity. Within that polarity it is the pole of the Uncreated who gives to the spiritual life its own unique dynamic and structure. A concomitant of the anthropological side of this process of human life as becoming – which is based in the very nature of the development of all life – is that the spiritual life is lived within the triadic tension of a beginning-middle-and-ending: a tension which not only encompasses the spiritual life as a whole, but also inwardly structures every phase within it.42

In another article, Waajjman describes the process of transformation as follows:

(1) the transformation from non-being into being — the creation by God; (2) transformation from being deformed to being reformed in God’s re-creation of man; (3) someone’s becoming conformed to a divine-human transformation model which introduces a person into divine reality; (4) transformation in love in which the soul is led into God, while God takes up his abode in the soul; (5) the transformation in glory which awaits us after this life but of which the transformation in love already contains a sketch.43


43 Kees Waajjman, Conformity in Christ (Acta Theologica Supplementum 8, 2006), 42.
In this process of becoming, spiritual directors have to acknowledge transformation as a winding journey as they seek God and wait for God’s transformation. It should be a universal experience that clergy, including spiritual directors to experience weakness, burnout, failures, and burdened by sin, shame and guilt. It is important to find out what aspects of experiences of spiritual directors are identical or different, and whether there are signs of isolation and disconnection. Do directors experience personal loneliness or peace and serenity as well as self-understanding in the process of leading others to God? Do they face similar difficulties? Finally, what are some of the issues facing spiritual directors in Hong Kong, and why does it matter to gain a better understanding of them?

**Depletion**

Archibald Hart talks about burnout and emotional chaining. His suggestion is that learning how to prevent emotional chaining can help depressive persons to face life’s disruptive situation or even disaster. As a result, recovery becomes possible and resumption of normalcy quickened. As a student of Christian spirituality, I affirm the interdisciplinary approach in studying the subject matter. Without doubt, psychoanalysis is one of the major areas we should explore. On the other hand, we may have to admit the complications, and even the limitations, of the study of psychological experiences. To this end, I list out a table in the following for our reference.

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Table 6 attempts to identify the distinct characteristics of burnout, depression and depletion.\textsuperscript{45}

**Table 6. Characteristics of burnout**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Burnout</th>
<th>Depression</th>
<th>Depletion</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nature</td>
<td>Psychological</td>
<td>Pathological</td>
<td>Physical</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pathological</td>
<td>Clinical</td>
<td>Psychological</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Characteristics</td>
<td>Chronic fatigue</td>
<td>Unable to sleep, eat and concentrate</td>
<td>Lack of energy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Physical)</td>
<td>Withdrawal from work</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Characteristics</td>
<td>Isolated, disconnected, feeling sad, fear, and angry</td>
<td>Feeling of loss, emptiness, total futility, thoughts of death, crying</td>
<td>Stress, anxiety, loneliness, frustration, disappointment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Emotional)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Characteristics</td>
<td>Cynicism and negativism about self, others, ministry, and the world generally, Doubt, complaints</td>
<td>Restlessness, feeling of guilt, remorse, low self esteem or self depreciation, Feeling cut off, separated from God</td>
<td>Compassion fatigue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Spiritual)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Lack of empowerment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consequences</td>
<td>Meaningless, without purpose, feeling helplessness and hopelessness</td>
<td>Worthlessness, addictions, strong feeling of failure and misfortune</td>
<td>Panic, disorder, disorientation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Self-care and intimacy**

I agree with David Benner that soul care and self-care are not synonym. Benner contends that care of souls as an act of neighbor love is more essential, although the principle of self-care is implicit in Jesus’ teaching.\textsuperscript{46} Benner supports his argument by

\textsuperscript{45} The above table is a compilation of data derived from the writings of Hart and Maslach. See Christina Maslach, *Burnout: the Cost of Caring* (New York: Prentice Hall, 1982).

quoting Clebsch and Jaekle, who reckon the four elements of soul care as: healing, sustaining, reconciling and guiding.\textsuperscript{47}

To some extent, this is due to overemphasizing self-care as individual care, which often gives an impression that self-care is individualistic and fails to look at it from a more holistic and personal perspectives. In addition, many discussions on self-care focus either on the clinical aspects, or tried to integrate emotional unhealthiness with theological understandings, without a theological basis.\textsuperscript{48} Hands and Fehr’s approach is Christian and focuses more on the spiritual condition. For them, clergy feel the estrangement; they sense the absence of the reality of God from their conscious lives. The dissociation of head and heart is especially noticeable…The split between understanding and feeling is perpetuated by their failure to spend time regularly in personal prayer…Their flight from self knowledge is inseparable from their avoidance of silent, personal encounter with God.\textsuperscript{49}

The approach from the perspective intimacy and consider moving towards intimacy as a healing process is very inspiring. They attempt to compare this healing process to the tradition of the three ways: purgative, illuminative and unitive. Further, they delineate the three phases of intimacy with self, interpersonal intimacy and intimacy with God. We will discuss in details their insights of intimacy in Chapter 4.

\textit{Clergy Self Care} and \textit{Care for Clergy Living in Unholy Stress-An interview with Jim Robey}, both published by the congregational resource guide, are very helpful first

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{47} Ibid., 31-2.
  \item \textsuperscript{48} This is the reason why the discussion of compassion and a theological basis grounded on it is so important.
  \item \textsuperscript{49} Hands and Fehr, 13.
\end{itemize}
hand materials in studying depletion and self-care. 50 In this small booklet, Jones points out dangers being a spiritual director:

1. the danger of ‘pouring out one’s cup’ of wisdom, inspiration, and encouragement, without ever getting that cup filled up.

2. the great danger of being eloquent about the spiritual life for others without living the spiritual life oneself.

3. the danger of becoming addicted to substances and/or compulsive behaviors in order to escape from the intolerable burden one is carrying and to avoid facing one’s own long-buried resentment, emptiness, etc.

4. the danger of losing one’s own faith (the occupational hazard of the clergy) … the awful possibility that it might all become hollow, just the work of one’s own mind and hands (for others), with no more power or truth for oneself.

To safeguard the spiritual directors from falling into the above traps, Jones points out the significance of balancing life style and attitude in four aspects, namely: emotional, physical, intellectual and spiritual. A spiritual director has to grow in these areas so as to avoid depletion. An example of spiritual wellbeing is given in table 7.

Table 7. Spiritual wellbeing

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key Concepts – Positive</th>
<th>Key Concepts – Negative</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>balance *</td>
<td>Burnout</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>boundaries</td>
<td>Emptiness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grace*</td>
<td>Overload</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Renewal*</td>
<td>Overwork</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reserve</td>
<td>spiritual dryness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resilience</td>
<td>stress</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>rest</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sabbath *</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sabbatical</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>time</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transformation*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wellness</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wholeness</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Among the key concepts impacting on emotional wellbeing are (1) balance and boundaries, (2) the body’s need for adequate rest, (3) the rationale for Sabbath and sabbaticals, and (4) the appropriate use of time. Although these concepts are discussed separately, they cannot be compartmentalized; they overlap and flow into one another in multiple ways. For example, Sabbath is related to rest; boundaries assist in keeping our personal time from being infringed upon; and sabbaticals help to restore balance.\(^{51}\)

As a retreat master and active member of the Spiritual Director International, one of Joel Giallanza’s concerns is healthy living and continuing formation in a hectic world. His understanding is that “given the sublime and sacred nature of the ministry of journeying with others on their spiritual path…it is possible for us to neglect dedicating sufficient attention, time, and energy to our own continuing development as human beings.”\(^{52}\) Keeping alive spiritual hunger and cultivating the desire to know God more are important, but we must attend to our own concern, maintain a realistic perspective on our continued growth and development.

Christian self-care is characterized by contact with one’s deepest self, as one opens his or her life before God and befriends with oneself. We may describe this process as exercising spiritual disciplines, but at the same time, appreciate one’s uniqueness and direction and purpose in life as flowing out from the center of personality.

\(^{51}\) Ibid., 7, The positive concepts relevant to each topic are highlighted and marked at the beginning with an asterisk. For example, in the area of emotional wellbeing, Jones also considers boundaries, rest and sabbatical as important elements.

Benner explains the idea of spiritual development by quoting Adrian Van Kaam:

“Spirituality in the most profound sense resides in the core of my being, in my deepest self or spirit, where I was willing unite my will to the will of God for me.” For Benner, Van Kaam’s view of spirituality helps us to understand the role of self-discovery in spiritual growth. When self is pursued in the presence of God, we are able to find our true and original spiritual self – something that will forever elude us if self-fulfillment is pursued apart from the Origin and Ground of self.53

As a psychotherapist, Benner’s position on transformation and spiritual development is Biblical and theologically sound. He regards spiritual growth as evolving from our false self to our true self and assumes that the revealing of the true self will be the ultimate goal of spiritual development. He thinks religion is a counterpart of spirituality as religion connects us with the mystery of our being:

Deep religion orients us to the transcendent and helps us remain open to mystery…Deep religion teaches us to respond to the inscrutable with wonder and awe rather with our default reaction of analysis and attempt at control. Deep religion grounds us in this life, never simply preparing us for whatever may come after death. It helps us to live more honestly, fiercely, and courageously.54

Benner is not a spiritual development theorist, nor is he advocating transformational characteristics in rigid manner. The answer offered by Benner is different from other authors. I will discuss in detail his understanding of soulful spirituality in Chapter 4.


the meantime, it is worthwhile to look at the solutions or alternative provided by other writers.

Transformative learning, transformational leadership and spiritual development, etc. are terms that we are accustomed nowadays to describe theories and investigations toward better understanding of learning, growth and maturity. Rickie L. Bradshaw provides three assumptions for transformational leadership:

(1) The Lord Jesus Christ’s main purpose of presence is to transform the world through transformed people. (2) God’s only means for Global transformation was and is through transformed individuals. (3) Transformed followers of Jesus Christ passionately engage in displaying the transforming power of the gospel locally and globally.55

Bradshaw also claims the leaders’ actions are similar to Jesus Christ in practice. The five core practices are (1) practice of spiritual and relational vitality (2) ability to establish a core of followers (3) ability to engage and influence the core in reproducing His purpose (4) ability to achieving and maintaining widespread impact by cultivating and empowering followers into leaders and (5) ability to encourage the core to create an eye on their community to expand the vision community of reproducible followers.56 Bradshaw’s advice is personal transformation and imitation of Christ, but he also emphasizes that transformational leadership is goal oriented.

In “The Critical Journey,” Hagberg and Guelich, contend: “the reception of God into our lives effects a continual process of growth rather than a point of arrival.”57


56 Ibid.

journey of spiritual growth is versatile and always changing because our relationship with God is fluid and dynamic and that our experience is continual and expanding.\footnote{Ibid.}

Nonetheless, they think the journey can be divided into stages or development as followed:

Stage 1 the discovery and recognition of God

Stage 2 a time of learning and belonging” labeled “the life of discipleship”

Stage 3 the productive life

Stage 4 “the journey inward” – “a deep and very personal inward journey” that “almost always comes as an unsettling experience yet results in healing for those who continue through it”.

Stage 5 “the journey outward” where our “focus is outward, but from a new, grounded center of ourselves”. At this stage, “we surrender to God’s will to fully direct our lives, but with our eyes wide open, aware but unafraid of the consequences”. We possess a newfound confidence that God loves us fully, just as we are.

Stage 6 – “the life of love” where God’s love is demonstrated through us “to others in the world more clearly and consistently than we ever thought possible.”

Hagberg and Guelich indicate clearly that the stage model theory is descriptive rather than prescriptive. As they define the six stages of development, they also add a seventh component: The Wall. They suggest that the breakthrough to deeper level requires losing ourselves. In fact, only through self-acceptance of our imperfections and surrender to God’s can one go “through” the Wall to deeper levels of spiritual growth. “The power behind the transformation at the Wall is this: learn to embrace your whole story with loving, forgiving detachment.” \footnote{Ibid., 254.}
In his writing, Benedict Groeschel employs the “Three ways” or the “Ladder of Perfection” developed by Pseudo-Dionysius, to explain human development and three stages of spiritual growth. His attempt to analyze and integrate personal development and spiritual journey reminds us of the complexity of human development. Nevertheless, Groeschel’s advice on spiritual development is fundamental to our discussion of spiritual growth. He reminds us that our spirituality is inextricably tied to every other aspect of life and human development, our unique history and experience condition the way we perceive God. Groeschel differentiates religious and spiritual development, claiming that the latter is built on divine grace. Although we have to find out who we are psychologically, there is always a difference between psychological adjustment and spiritual growth.

In delineating the psychological development of the three ways: purgation, illumination and union, Groeschel is convinced of the transcendent aspect which plays a significant role:

In this season of purgation or purification, our trust is tried through experiences of external trauma and internal conflicts. Key invitation here is to trust God in a time when we don’t understand the pain or loss He is allowing in our lives. We learn this in the dark places where we come to realize of our absolute insufficiency in the face of God’s utter sufficiency. 60

Likewise, illumination is a movement from awareness of a transcendent ‘God out there’ toward a more intimate awareness of Him within us. Groeschel considers this movement as deepening relationship with God that moves us from the ‘God out there’

experience towards an understanding that it is ‘Christ in me.’ Finally, union represents the moments of deepest experience of God in spite of the absence of God.

Transformation necessarily involves changes in every aspect of our lives. Thus far, we have presented answers provided for transformation from the fundamental needs of spiritual directors, namely, vocation, spiritual discipline, spiritual practice and self-care. These suggestions imply the need of commitment to vocation, increasing awareness, behavioral or habit changes. In the above, we have also identified the importance of understanding spiritual development. Apart from the truth that the Holy Spirit convicts us of the Truth, it is necessary to point out that transformational learning will bring about perspective or perceptions changes as one goes through a new meaning making process.

As a student of personal transformation, Paulette Gabriel concludes in his study that “key shifts in perspective not only yielded outcomes identified in the literature, but also built awareness about assumptions enabling development of a leadership frame of reference that facilitated credible and authentic leadership, built visionary leadership capability, built confident leadership, and enhanced openness to learning that enabled further transformation in the leaders themselves and in others.”

For Loder, transformation or “the logic of transformation” consists of five steps: (1) a conflict arises and persisted in spite of what the human spirit do to try to resolve it, (2) an interlude for scanning for solution involving both conscious and subconscious searching, (3) an insight arises and is felt powerfully, (4) there is a release of psychic

energy built up during the search, and (5) interpretation and a reality check of the insight. Transformation, however, does not necessarily follow the above sequence. For him, “Transformation [occurs] when within any given frame of reference hidden orders of meaning and coherence arise to call the axioms of that frame into question and reorder its elements accordingly, transformation has occurred.”

For Loder, true transformational learning involves an encounter with God. But knowing truth is not as important as encountering Truth. Although appropriate intentional teaching will bring about transformation, transformational learning is not only cognitive but encompasses the whole person.

Jack Mezirow is another major figure of transformative learning. According to Mezirow, learning is understood as the process of using a prior interpretation to construe a new or revised interpretation of the meaning of one’s experience in order to guide future action. Former assumptions and frame of references that “structured the way of interpreting our experiences,” will affect the way we think and perceive: “Learning may be defined as the process of making a new or revised interpretation of the meaning of an experience, which guides subsequent understanding, appreciation, and action.”

Meaning making is important because when it is used to guide decision-making or action, it becomes learning. On top of that, meaning schemes are habitual, implicit rules for interpreting, and perspectives provide principles for interpreting. Three types of experience can result in transformative learning. These three common themes

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characterize Mezirow’s theory of the mechanism of transformational learning in the classroom are: 1. Experience of disorienting dilemma, 2. Critical reflection and 3. Rational discourse. Transformation may take place as one experiences disoriented dilemma, which causes significant level of disruption. Through critically re-examining one’s belief and attitude, and identifying embedded assumptions and underlying premises, transformation occurs. Finally, rational discourse or deep dialogue can assist transformation, leading them to a shift of perspective.64 The transformational leaders’ self-awareness and perspective changed or deepen their learning process in work settings. According to Posner, Strike, Hewson, and Gerzog, “this awareness and perspective development can be construed, at least in part, to be about a set of personal epistemological beliefs that in and of themselves are subject to transformative development for both leaders and followers.65

Parker Palmer, in a lecture, “The Violence of our Knowledge: Toward a Spirituality of Higher Education”, suggests that “transformed understanding of knowing” involves four components: (1) All learning is personal. (2) All learning is communal because truth can only come out of conflict as we interact and conflict with one another in all aspects of our lives. (3) All learning is reciprocal because while we are seeking


truth, truth is also seeking us. Palmer describes it as a “reciprocal dance between the knower and the knowing.”(4) All learning is transformation because knowing truth will transform us.66 Coming from a Quaker background, Palmer is definitely not a theorist of developmental theory. Rather, prayer and sense of transcendence are important elements in Palmer’s understanding of learning. Palmer’s views of spiritual development relates closely with our spiritual experiences that: ‘we are known in detail and depth by the love that created and sustains us, known as members of a community of creation that depends on us and on which we depend.’67 In short,

The goal of a knowledge arising from love is the reunification and reconstruction of broken selves and worlds. A knowledge born of compassion aims not at exploiting and manipulating creation but at reconciling the world to itself. The mind motivated by compassion reaches out to know as the heart reaches out to love. Here, the act of knowing is an act of love, the act of entertaining an embracing the reality of the other, of allowing the other to enter and embrace our own. In such knowing we know and are known as members of one community, and our knowing becomes a way of reweaving that community’s bonds.68

Summary

In the above, I have clarified some basic concepts and surveyed literatures especially those, which are helpful for our discussion. I have tried to present solutions offered by different writers and traditions. We have explored guidelines, disciplines, practices that help to sustain spiritual directors. But are these advices relevant? Are they practical? Since we contend that this research intends to help directors toward better self-


67 Parker Palmer. To Know as We are Known: Education as a spiritual journey (San Francisco: HarperSan Francisco. 1983).

68 Ibid.
knowledge, self-management, self-motivation and intimacy, can we confirm the above literatures have given us satisfactory answer?

Guidance for spiritual directors towards maturity is expressed in various manner and levels. There are many ways to sustain spiritual directors. Compare to Mezirow’s transformative learning, does Eugene Peterson’s contemplative pastors appear to be more helpful? To what extent and in what way do we need stages or developmental theories? Do they need spiritual discipline more or challenges that lead them to perception change?

The title of this dissertation is walking with spiritual directors, which is an act of supporting, discerning and sustaining. Transformative learning is one way of identifying the actual situation of spiritual directors. One way of sustaining clergy, including spiritual directors is to help them discern whether they are walking in the right direction and in what ways they are making progress or regress.

Christian spirituality is represented not only by the image of a journey but also by images of growth, development, and transformation. Christian spirituality is not simply a stagnant state. But when we consider it as a process, we have to answer the following questions: How do we justify changes? How do we assess and confirm whether clergy is undergoing depression and depletion? How do we evaluate or measure changes and spiritual growth?

Elizabeth Liebert reminds us that

For a change to qualify as development, it must be demonstrate three conditions. It must increase in complexity, it must encompass and surpass the prior level, it must be a new order of ordering, and once attained, it must not be lost, though it could be unused.69

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While the analysis and answers provided by the above authors are very meaningful, the researcher has yet to find out the better alternative for spiritual directors. In Chapter 4, the focus will be on theological reflection. The information will help us to decide whether the advices above are helpful. In the meantime, perhaps, the advice offered by Dallas Willard in his work “Renovation of the Heart” will serve the purpose of a good reminder.

The message in his book is foundationally Biblical as it calls upon us to become like Christ. To Willard, the revolution of the human heart is a gift of grace and not human attainment. The heart is transformed not by human effort nor through integration, it is renovated when all the aspects of the human heart is submitted to love God and of the neighbor as oneself. Thus, spiritual formation is always being formed as one follows Christ in the Spirit driven process of forming the inner world of the human self in such a way that it becomes like the inner being of Christ himself.

In fact, spiritual transformation will only happen as each essential dimension of the human being is transformed to Christ likeness. Therefore, the acknowledgement of our ruins as human being is indispensable if the spirit of the heart is to follow Christ from the inside out. To cooperate with God, we have to grasp hold of the ideas of vision, intention and mean (or VIM) so that ongoing spiritual changes will become a reality. Christians have to visualize spiritual formation into Christ likeness as a life process of total dedication to God. In the same token, Christians must have the intention to become
a kingdom person. Intention is significant because it actually involves decision and with the appropriate application of means or tools, we can experience genuine renovation.70

Willard also urges us to live a life of obedience, single-mindedness and joyous devotion to God and His will by listening to God and making choices according to His will. Indeed, as Willard mentions in the beginning of the book, “The spiritual life is our life”. If Dallas Willard’s Renovation is God’s blueprint of spiritual growth and has provided the answer for pastors and spiritual directors in the English speaking world, can pastors and spiritual director in Hong Kong consider that as an alternative too? Is it a relevant blueprint?

CHAPTER 4
THE BIBLICAL AND THEOLOGICAL BASIS

In the first chapter, I have stated the depletion for the spiritual director is due to compassion fatigue and lack of support. Study in this area will inform us how to support the spiritual directors in Hong Kong. Chapter 2 explores the urban context of Hong Kong as well as personal context of the participants. In chapter 3, I survey literatures, which may be solutions or guidelines for clergy, particularly the spiritual directors who are facing challenges. The quoted resources have recognized the significance of supporting and sustaining clergy, as well as helping them to make discernment. To a certain extent, the understanding of spiritual care is affected by humanistic-existential and psychotherapeutic values. We can divide the reviewed literatures into two main categories, namely, literatures inclined toward instrumental approach, and literatures based on theological and transformative approach. The researcher believes in the utilitarian value of the instrumental advices, but spiritual care must be grounded in theological conviction.

In this chapter, I will explore theological themes and Biblical motifs relating to this study. First of all, I will explain compassion as a significant component contributing to the spiritual growth of spiritual directors. In order to sustain themselves, spiritual directors have to take care of his or her spiritual wellbeing. Practicing self-care should be considered as a growth orientation of spiritual directors. As such, self-care or self-intimacy is considered as a spiritual quest without preclude the understanding of self-care also as the capability of self-knowledge, self-management and self-motivation. Then, we will discuss the meaning of spiritual development and transformative learning because
these understanding will inform us what exactly the implication of spiritual growth is. To deepen our understanding in this area, the researcher will look at three archetypes of spiritual direction. Finally, we will explore the theology of hospitality through which we will be able to identify its close relationship to intimacy with others and with God.

It is the common understanding that vocation is an indispensable factor in pastoral ministry. Spiritual wellbeing refers to a sense of purpose or calling to be transformed and serving God. However, the Bible also emphasizes compassion should form the core of learning and practice of spiritual leaders. While both are fundamental to training and practice of spiritual directors, my argument is that compassion is the most important factor motivating one to respond to God’s calling and practice servant-hood ministry. The triune God exemplifies compassion as the Father, who sent His only begotten Son to become humble servant, and died for us on the cross. Out of this sacrificial love, the Son assured us that the empowering presence of the Holy Spirit would be with us until the end of the world.

In the following, the researcher attempts to show how compassion is closely related to the themes of hospitality, caring and charity, all of which are characters and practices expressed by spiritual directors. To illustrate and substantiate this theological rationale, I will introduce first, the insights from contemporary perspective of self-care and self-intimacy, followed by understanding of spiritual development and transformative learning. Three archetypes will be used to demonstrate their adherence to this theological bearing. Finally, we want to affirm it is God’s compassionate hospitality, which sustains our relationship with Him as well as our relationship with his people.
A. Compassion: a Theology of Pastoral Care

In the Old Testament, the root of the word compassion *raham* and *hesed* means assurance of God’s unfailing love, loving-kindness that is active, social and enduring. (Exodus 34:6) The verb *raham* (pi) can indicate either the compassion of a king or the familial compassion of a father for his children. In particular, *raham* and *rahum* are cognate with *rehem*, meaning womb, and together that suggest the fellow feeling of a sibling group born of the same mother. God’s compassion is also essential for the maintenance of the covenant and his people praised him for it continually (Ps 78:38; 86:15; 103:13; 145:8). Finally, God also restores his people through God’s compassion as a mother (1 Kgs 3:26).

In the New Testament, compassion bears a messianic connotation, which is used for Jesus. It also points at intense emotional feeling, which carries eschatological and ecclesiological significance. The word compassion (*splagchnoisomai*) means sympathetic, to be merciful and to let one’s innards embrace the feeling or situation of another. Thus, compassion is profound feelings and emotions. In addition, the word compassion is used in instances of feeding, healing, comforting, and weeping etc. (Mk 6:34, 8:2, 9:35-6, Lk 7:12-3, 19:41-42).

From a biblical point of view, compassion is Christian response to God’s love and God’s command to love. In order to give us peace (Shalom), Jesus humbly incarnated, ministered, served and subsequently died for us (Phil 2:5-13). By looking at the theological analysis of writers, I will try to establish a concrete foundation of the theology of compassion.
For Oliver Davies, “compassion is a human condition, which is constituted by the simultaneous interplay of cognitive, affective and volitional dimensions.” ¹ Compassion, however, is not a one-way expression because compassion does allow one’s feeling to be molded by perspectives of other. The German “Einfühlung” has the meaning of empathy and feeling into. Paul’s letter to Philemon best illustrates this as we see how he feels into Philemon and Onesimous. Although the intention to act for others is so intense that it hurts, a genuine compassionate person will not be discouraged by his or her inability to alleviate the other’s suffering. The intensity of commitment to compassionate care can actually be seen most clearly in the expression of Jesus.²

Jesus enters into people’s hurts and pains. In expressing his grief and anger (Jn 11:33-35) he embodies them. In mourning and weeping, he loves them (Mt 5:4). The compassion of Jesus can be further viewed from two sides. On the one hand, it is a frontal attack upon the dominant culture. His criticism is not in anger, but in pathos, for none loves the city more.

Thus the compassion of Jesus is to be understood not simply as a personal emotional reaction but as a public criticism in which he dares to act upon his concern against the entire numbness of his social context...Jesus penetrates the numbness by his compassion and with his compassion takes the first step by making visible the odd abnormality that had become business as usual.³

On the other hand, Jesus identifies with individual and family of Mary, as well as the suffering world as he humbly shares our humanity and lays down his life on the cross.

¹ Davies, 239.
² Ibid., 242.
The theology of compassion, in a way, is inseparable from the theology of incarnation because the latter marks the point at which God freely enters human history, emphatically recognizing who we are and affirming us compassionately in the fullness of who we might become. This divine act of loving compassion, which expresses as truth, way and life, can also be understood from the manifestation of Jesus as divine reality. Since the compassion enacted and fulfilled in the person of Christ, who has fulfilled the meaning of human existence, full comprehension and experience of it’s meaning is most necessary.

In Dianne Bergant’s study, the word compassion refers to the inmost being womb, which means more than profound emotion:

[compassion] comes from the root that yields the word with the exclusively meaning ‘womb’, Hence the word compassion presumes a kind of intimacy that itself carry a fundamentally feminine connotation regardless of the subject of its attribution.4

In her study, she uses three words: oiktirimones, splanchnon and eleos to explain what compassion is. Oiktirimones is referring to the compassion of God and that of Christians toward each other. For Dianes, the Greek translation: splanchnon, denotes profound feelings or emotions, and it also means to be sympathetic and to be merciful. Finally, eleos is the word that denotes emotion roused by underserved suffering in others. The meanings of these words seem to denote the deep yet interweaving nature of compassion.

Bergant also relates the understanding of compassion with God’s Covenant. Because God is always merciful, He pours out His life even to the unfaithful. It is the

wounded covenant love that invites individual sinner to repent, but this message also addresses to the whole nation. But this love is seen most clearly in the deep-seated emotion of Jesus’ compassion. Thus, Dianne contends that the two parables: the prodigal son and the Samaritan woman illustrate God’s compassionate love and Christian’s love to one another.

An expanded understanding of compassion

The understanding of compassion will not be complete unless we consider the following aspects: suffering for others, imitating the suffering of God, and the vision of compassion. For Nouwen, a compassionate person is not only aware of the sufferings of others; he or she is also non-judgmental. This requires the inner disposition to go with others to the place where they are weak, vulnerable, lonely and broken. In fact, when Nouwen talks about the spirit of genuine compassion, he considers that as a process of recognizing oneself as a human and wounded healer:

The compassionate man stands in the midst of his people but does not get caught in the conformist forces of the peer group, because through his compassion he is able to avoid the distance of pity as well as the exclusiveness of sympathy. Compassion is born when we discover in the center of our own existence not only that God is God and man is man, but also that our neighbor is really our fellow man.⁵

Although some may consider compassion as a joyful process of dispossession, the action of compassionate care should not be egocentric. Instead, the motive of caring is always related to the wellbeing of others. Paul Wong reminds us:

Compassionate care is patient-centered rather than disease-centered. The focus is on the patient as a person in totality. The Christian moral grounding for

compassionate care is that we treat our patients as fellow human beings, created in
God’s image and for whom Christ died.⁶

Compassion is fundamentally a radical openness to the sufferings and pathos of others. Oliver Davies’ suggests that understanding of suffering of others precedes the feeling of suffering with them. This feeling of suffering with people will become one’s own suffering as one’s emotion, reason and volition continue to suffer with those who are in deep distress.⁷ Therefore, suffering with is an intimate feeling and can be described as the involvement of our total being:

to be compassionate entails a specific structure of cognition, affirmation and volition, whereby we recognize the other in their world-centeredness, at the nodal point of their own interweaving narrative, and actively affirm and nourish their existence, even at our own risk.⁸

Davies used Moses as an example to explain risky commitment, which is active, affective and participatory. Above all, the ontology of compassion involves the process of recognizing, sharing in the sufferings of others and the acting out in sacrificial actions for others. This sacrificial action is effective and meaningful only when we stand in the place of the victims. Wayne Whitson Floyd Jr. suggests:

To suffer with another, one first must suffer with another. This means, to ‘suffer’ the other, to listen, to hear the cry of the other, as God has done in Christ. Second, this means not merely to experience the sentiment of ‘compassion,’ but to enter into the place, the context, of the other, including the other’s suffering.⁹

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⁷ Davies, 233.

⁸ Ibid., 272.

⁹ Wayne Whitson Floyd Jr., *Compassion Theology*, in Compassionate Ministry, 52.
On top of that, compassion must be perceived from the perspective of the suffering or the pathos of God. For example, the discussion of the theology of the crucified God, as suggested by Moltmann, who argues that, ‘a God who cannot suffer is poorer than any man deserves attention.’ If God is incapable of suffering and injustice does not affect him, then he is a being who cannot be involved. In no way can we talk about a compassionate God. On the contrary, God as our lover suffers with the beloved who is suffering. In fact, if our sufferings have any meaning at all, it is because of Christ’s suffering.

We may argue that the theological foundation of religious compassion is humanity’s imitation of the pathos of God-in-Christ, and the affirmation of humanity created in the image of incarnate- and-crucified-divinity. Thus, a Christian theology of compassion depends upon whether or not one can conceive of God’s suffering, the passion of God’s own self for the sake of His creation.

Finally, Davies attempts to relate compassion to vision. His contribution in the discussion of compassion is reflected in his viewpoint that a self is never an isolated individual:

Compassion and solidarity flow from a vision of the self in which connection is a central motif. To be a self in this vision is not to be a separate and isolated individual, but rather to be widely and deeply related to the world and other selves, being shaped by them and in turn shaping a world.  

The fact that we are baptized into Christ and were exhorted to let Christ formed in us seem to be a guarantee of being transformed into a compassionate person. While a


spiritual director is fully aware of the fact, lack of self-care and intimacy with God may render their vision becoming blurred and their spiritual lives affected. To sustain compassionate care, one must return to the foundation of love, the belief that God is love and He is the source of goodness, kindness, patience, and compassion.

B. Nourishing our Spiritual Well-Being

Without compassion, we become coaches, managers or providers of services rather than spiritual care. The truth is there are limits to compassion. That’s why proper self-care and spiritual support are necessary inner resources; otherwise, we will reach a point of physical and psychological exhaustion. Burnout is more likely to occur in an organizational culture of mistrust, secrecy, conflict and bureaucratic control. Certainly, there are many reasons causing the depletion of spiritual directors, but compassion fatigue may be considered as a major cause. If compassion is foundational to the ministry of spiritual directors, they have to identify how they should nourish their spiritual wellbeing so that they can become competent and sustainable spiritual directors.

Unlike physical nourishment, Christian spiritual nourishment is established upon a belief that we are saved, transformed and blessed as we grow in Christ. Indeed, it is the triune God who takes initiative to nourish our spiritual wellbeing. We may consider transformation as the seed of Christian’s spiritual life and spiritual formation, and the process of planting or cultivating. While spiritual intakes in terms of learning, acquiring practical ministerial tools and spiritual practices are important; the Scripture focuses more on how we offer our lives and being transformed. In terms of self-care, cultivation of intimacy and hospitality seems to be the main concern. In a way, dedicating one’s lives to God implies self-care and self-intimacy. On the other hand, a concrete and relevant
explication of spiritual development is indispensable without which the spiritual directors will not have guidelines toward spiritual growth and will not be able to empower other leaders.

_A contemporary understanding of transformation from the perspective of self care and self intimacy_

Traditionally, the meaning of transformation is confined mainly to Biblical principles. Evangelical theology considers transformation mainly from the approach of the doctrines of justification and sanctification. To Christians in Hong Kong, following the model of Jesus Christ refers mainly to the changes in thinking, behavior and the command to love and serve others. They are unfamiliar to the relationship with oneself or self-care. In his work “Self Care,” Ray Anderson suggests:

> The growth of the person into a self-identity takes place in a context of social and spiritual interaction, with intentionality of love as the motive force. The integration of the various components of the self into an I-Self reality is part of the construct of an I-Thou experience.\(^\text{12}\)

It is of equal importance that we place emphasis on formation and relationality, especially the inner dynamics of relationality. In other words, complete understanding of transformation should include the understanding and experience of self-care and self-intimacy. Waajjman’s view on transformation also echoes with the above viewpoint of relationality:

> ‘Trans-form-ation’ carries within itself the word ‘form’: a concrete whole characterized by a certain inner configuration, relative independence vis-à-vis that which surrounds it, and a measure of permanence. In spirituality, we are concerned with experiential paths, which generations of humans have trod so intensely that they resulted in _forms_, which in turn serve other generations as

access roads to the same experience. So in spirituality we are concerned with forms’ which people in the past made totally their own and which, once formulated, can also accompany other people in this process of appropriation. These forms find their roots much more in experience than in truth or the validity of values.13

Waajjman goes on to describe this ongoing transformation by pointing out the initiative of the Unconditional, which is not bound to a specific time or place. This encounter with the Thou not only constitutes the beginning and principle of the I-thou relation, but also verifies that formation can only be possible through “the act of opting for being chosen or letting one involve in this intimate relationship.”14

To some extent, the contemporary understanding of transformation is related to the challenges faced by clergy today. As mentioned, spiritual directors will experience compassion fatigue, which may lead to burnt-out. In contrast to typical burnout in which one becomes less empathetic and more withdrawn, compassion fatigue occurs when one feels extremely tired and disconnected.15 It is a deep physical, emotional and spiritual exhaustion accompanied by acute emotional pain. They also have difficulty in maintaining healthy balance between empathy and objectivity. As a result, self-care is often eliminated perpetuating the downward spiral. Charles Figley postulates that there are four reasons why clinicians develop this condition, namely: 1. Poor self-care, 2. Previous unresolved trauma, 3. Inability or refusal to control work stressors and 4. Lack of

13 Kees Waajjman, *Toward A Phenomenological Definition of Spirituality*, Studies in Spirituality 3/1993, p.45 This experiential path or involvement can be viewed from three distinct angles: 1 from the pole of the Unconditional; 2 from the angle of the human subject; and 3 from within the relation itself.

14 Ibid., 56.

15 Compassion Fatigue (also called Vicarious Traumatization and Secondary Trauma): resulting from trauma experienced by patients. Burnout is result from increased workload and stress.
satisfaction for the work.\textsuperscript{16} It is upon this background that the concept of spiritual health has come to our attention.

\textit{Self-care and Self-intimacy}

Based on the discussion above, our understanding of self-care and self-intimacy is always related to intimacy with God.\textsuperscript{17} Simply put it, self-intimacy and self-care is holistic care of oneself. In designing the questionnaire for this project, I am aware of the fact that three components are utilized to find out the responses of the participants to their spiritual growth. The three components are the aspects of intimacy with God, with oneself and with others. In particular, the three aspects can be referred as personal prayer life, self-care, and room for others. They are interrelated and may affect one another, positively or negatively. Since all three levels of intimacy and experiences are intertwined, its dynamics is complicated and sometimes, demands us to discern and make meaning for that experience.

In order to understand self-intimacy, we have to briefly look into the meaning of the state of intimacy. The English word intimacy is derived from two Latin words: \textit{Intimus} refers to that which is ‘innermost’ and the word \textit{intimare} means ‘to hint at, announce, publish or make known.’ Hence, the words intimate and intimacy mean ‘to make known that which is innermost.’ A general understanding of intimacy is that it is a process of revealing or disclosing oneself, especially the innermost truth in the presence

\textsuperscript{16} Charles Figley, Compassion fatigues: Coping with secondary traumatic stress disorder in those who treat the traumatized (New York: Brunner/Mazel, 1995).

\textsuperscript{17} When intimacy is considered as the complete sharing of our lives with others, it bears a similar connotation with hospitality, and relates to some extent to compassion. The group of words seems to share a state of being known, being accepted and being loved as people share their lives completely. All thoughts, experiences and feelings, including fears, hurts, joys, hopes, etc., are shared with the other.
of another person. The revealing of oneself includes sharing personal details about your life, including your feelings, thoughts, opinions, beliefs, and any other part of your experiences as a human being. This research focuses on the emotional or affective intimacy. William M. Gardiner suggests:

Emotional self-intimacy is defined by the individual’s capacity to be close to themselves on an affective level. Self-awareness and acceptance is foundational to such capacity. This means an individual has learned to be aware of what they are thinking and feeling. Further, the individual has progressed sufficiently in his or her own evolution to feel a sense of his or her own uniqueness and individual worth.\(^{18}\)

A person who takes self-care seriously understands and experiences intimacy by getting in touch with the innermost or core of self or befriend with oneself. Self-intimacy, therefore, implies intimacy as a resource to live closely with one-self and others, and that it is always a spiritual quest. Melander and Eppley also contend that self-Care means living the life God has intended for you…the person God has called you to be. This includes creating a vision for your life and then crafting a life that honors that vision. It includes caring for your body, mind, spirit, and the resources God has given to you.\(^{19}\)

The movement of intimacy

According to Hands and Fehr, “the movement toward intimacy is a matter of (1) increasing self-discovery and self-appreciation (2) more and more healthy, satisfying relationships with others, and (3) ever more intimate relationship with God.”\(^{20}\)


\(^{20}\) Hands and Fehr, 71-75. These three spheres of intimacy are not isolated aspects, but closely related to one another. Self-appreciation is grounded in the love and appreciation received from other human beings in relationships and most profoundly in the gratuitous, affirming creative Love that God is.
They attempt to demonstrate the psychological and ascetical parallels in the process of uncovery, discovery and recovery. This indicates that the clergy has to unmask their idealized image, discover the Divine Reality and restore the loss of being the child of God. Regardless of the complexity of healing, self-disclosure and experiences of intimacy affirm one’s worth in God’s eyes; and integrate human sexuality into meaningful contexts of intimacy. Together with the practice of spiritual disciplines or a rule of life, clergy will become whole or healthy clergyperson.

On the other hand, true intimacy with others is made more and more possible and actual to the extent that self-appreciation and self-intimacy increases. Most of the supervisors, or mentors to spiritual directors will remind them the importance of attitude, openness, and humility, willingness to surrender, and always desire God. Barry and Connolly point out the importance of moving toward deeper and more intimate experience:

Growth as a spiritual director cannot be superficial; it must take root in the core of the person, in the heart, in that centre where directors meet God and other people most intimately….To develop in this way (open and discerning, with faith hope and love), they have to relate to God and also to their supervisor in depth.  

Self-Knowledge

In spiritual tradition, self-knowledge refers to the knowledge of one’s own unworthiness of God’s grace that we gain from getting to know God and ourselves in prayer. Knowing oneself is seeking to know oneself and the pursuit of God. This self-knowledge, which breeds humility, is learned in prayer, which is essential to

Hence, self-appreciation cannot be attained in isolation, but only by opening oneself increasingly to these interpersonal relationships.

21 Barry and Connolly, 179.
contemplation and genuine spiritual growth. To the mystics, or those who follow the affective tradition, self-knowledge is not a concept. For them, those who know God know love. This love gives us courage to look deeply and intimately into ourselves. Intimacy is related to self-knowledge or self-awareness and our attitudes towards learning and praying. Pat Collins reminds us that intimacy is related to truth revealed as we go beyond external appearances to discover deeper reality. This intimate knowledge will deepen our desire for God as we grow simultaneously in self-intimacy. 22

Margaret Kornfield also contends that self-knowledge is indispensable:

It is one’s self that listens, empathizes, thinks, and connects. You use your own experience, and your imagination. You use your woundedness, your strength, your faith. You use your doubts. You listen with your whole self, not just your mind. You understand with your heart…you must know yourself, while continuing to learn about yourself. 23

Some will describe this learning as holistic and some will consider it as self-realization. Teachings in Bible and tradition, however, confirm that Christians are learning or discovering who they are – in Christ, not just by identifying it, but also by learning to live it out completely.

Vulnerability

Nurturing self-intimacy requires us not only to practice spiritual disciplines, but also the courage to disclose the shadow material and examine them honestly. Areas of self-inadequacy must be addressed and self-empowerment attained. Areas of darkness

22 Pat Collins CM, Intimacy and the hungers of the heart (Dublin: The Columba Press, 1991), pp.17-18. We are not dealing with the self-knowledge or the “double knowledge” discussed by John Calvin, who placed God’s goodness and benevolence towards us in the first place. Besides, Calvin understood this knowledge of the self to be moral in nature rather than psychological. Thus, it is the soteriological aspect that Calvin is upholding, not the therapeutic aspect.

and emotional hurts must be confronted and the process of healing enacted. To be intimate with oneself, therefore, relates closely with self-awareness and emotional honesty. The act of becoming intimate with oneself prepares the individual to receive divine love, so that one can become more and more compassionate. Thus, self-intimacy is possible only when a person is open and vulnerable. “Genuine transformation requires vulnerability. It is not the fact of being loved unconditionally that is life changing. The ability to love and serve is the experience of being loved and forgiven. It is the risky experience of allowing myself to be loved unconditionally.”24 David Benner also notices the necessity of vulnerability, and considers that as preparation for soul care: “Vulnerability holds immense potential for growth”. When spiritual directors disclose life issues and invite friends to give feedback, this will tremendously benefit their growth and wellbeing:

The experience of receiving soul care should make us more capable of caring for both our own souls as well as the souls of others…In caring for our own souls, we are better able to care for those of others, and in caring for others, we learn to better care for ourselves.25

Transformation, therefore, is related to our acknowledgement and experience of our need to be loved and the truth that we are being loved.

**Spiritual development and Transformational Learning**

When we talk about spiritual development, we refer to the stages of spiritual growth or spiritual process during which transformation occurs in developmental process

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24Ibid., 76.

and through which we become mature Christians. A spiritual developed life involves the whole person and entails personal integrity or wholeness. Integration of the whole person is an essential characteristic of spiritual development. Spiritual development also implies the understanding of thoughts, feelings and emotions, and ultimately, a developing recognition that insights, principles, beliefs, attitudes and values should influence, inspire or guide us in our daily life. Therefore transformative learning is important to spiritual directors because it also enhances the development of insight and attitude, which transforms and guides us. In short, understanding of spiritual development and transformative learning affirms the need of development of a sense of identity, self-worth, personal insight, life meaning and purpose. Dallas Willard reminds us: “We need to take a conscious, intentional hand in the developmental process. We need to understand what the formation of the human spirit is, and how it can best be done, as Christ would have it done. This is an indispensable aspect of developing a psychology that is adequate to human life.”

Biblical understanding of spiritual development

The Biblical understanding that transformation takes place in a continual process is obvious. The Scriptures uses images of pilgrimage and journey to symbolize spiritual growth and our relationship with God. The Psalm of Ascent is just one of the examples to illustrate the experience of the spiritual stages of ascending and descending, a journey of rich experiences, encounter with God, deliverance, healing and salvation. Jesus has stated that one must become like a child to enter the kingdom of God (Mt 18:4). He also states

that the kingdom of God belongs to those who are like children (Mk 10:14). Christ compares His disciples to youngsters (Mt 11:25). In the book of Hebrews (Heb 5:13-14), spiritual maturity is compared to spiritual immaturity, using the human growth analogy. Elementary truths are considered to be milk for infants, while mature Christians are to eat “solid food.” In the Book of Ephesians 4:14-15, Paul echoes: “Then we will no longer be infants . . . blown here and there by every wind of teaching...instead, speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into him.” Likewise, Peter compared young Christians to children: “Like newborn babies, crave pure spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow up in your salvation” (1 Pt 2:2, NIV) Peter writes: “Now, like infants at the breast, drink deep of God’s pure kindness.” The process mentioned above is inspired and initiated by God through the Holy Spirit.

The New Testament is full of ideas of progress. First John 2:12-14 provides such a biblical paradigm, distinguishing three discrete stages of faith development: Childhood, Young Adulthood, and Parenthood. Based on his study of the book of John, Don Willett explores eight characteristics, or milestones, that a believer needs to attend to and complete en route to Christian maturity.²⁷ For Willett, John’s model of growth is personally restorative as it outlines the maturation process within believers. He argues that the passage points to three distinct stages of faith and offers a compelling biblical model for Christian growth, which is consistent with apostle John’s teaching, meaning and intent. The three stages of spiritual growth--Childhood, Young Adult, and

²⁷ Willet’s viewpoint is that that the following passages 1 Corinthians 2:14-3:4, Ephesians 4:12-16 and Hebrews 5:12-6:3 signifies from infancy or childhood to maturity. “The evidence [from 1 John 2:12-14, 1 Corinthians 2:14-3:4, Ephesians 4:12-16, and Hebrews 5:12-6:3] supporting discreet stages of spiritual maturity is compelling and soundly defensible. The journey is not a puzzling dilemma or a disconcerting riddle.” See Don Willett, “A Biblical model of stages of spiritual development: the journey according to John.” Journal of Spiritual Formation and Soul care Vol. 3, Issue 1 (Spring, 2010): 88-102.
Parenthood also correspond to the development of a firsthand faith, a lived out faith and a rich and mature faith.\textsuperscript{28} As such, it is a process moving from brokenness to wholeness, from pretense to authenticity, and from spiritual immaturity to full-grown spiritual maturity. In the Parenthood stage, a monumental shift from being self-centered to other-centered also occurs as they come to know God deeply and experientially.

Spiritual development, however, is not only characterized by stages and changes, it also relates to the context of development. In a way, it is unique and individualistic. By looking at the drives toward authentic formation and the willingness to become more intimate with self, God and others, we may have a clue of how to assess the development.

\textit{Perspective from Spiritual Tradition}

We find out in church history or philosophy that ancient teachers did use stages or levels to describe spiritual growth. Scholars nowadays are more rational and scientific, whereas when people like Augustine or Teresa of Avila used linear description of steps or stages to describe spiritual growth. They refer to actual spiritual condition that they themselves have experienced. In other words, their description depends not on logic or study, but on personal encounter with God and on discernment. Louis Bouyer also considers the “spiritual life” from a developmental approach as he suggests that life is not in isolation but in the awareness of a spiritual reality. He insists that “spiritual life” is not simply the “interior life,” that includes imagination, thought, and emotion generally associated with poets and artists, but actually goes beyond the consciousness of the individual.

\textsuperscript{28} Ibid.
In chapter 3 we have highlighted Groeschel’s viewpoint. Here I will focus on discussing his viewpoint on spiritual development and formation. First of all, Groeschel’s language is basically related to his understanding of mysticism and theology. Spiritual development takes into account the action of grace and the theological virtues of faith, hope and love. Unlike physical growth, spiritual development is more a cyclical than linear process. He uses the three categories: purgative, illuminative and unitive to explain his viewpoint, and contends that they are not mutually exclusive. Thus, an individual may be in more than one state of growth at the same time. Throughout this cyclical development, awakening is a major factor of life changing towards maturity as one goes through light and darkness, being lifted up and cast down. Thus, Groeschel concludes: “Spiritual development…is built on divine grace…Spiritual development related primarily to a person’s willingness to respond openly to God, and an equal willingness to embrace the truth, at least as one knows it.”

At the same time, there will be more integration, harmony and wholeness. In the stage of purgation, moral development and integration will take place, followed by the illumination stage, during which reverence and awe as well as intimate feelings with God are growing in one’s inner life. While dark night still appears in this stage, the zeal or desire for the presence of God, enlightenment and increase sense of the presence of God persists. In the unitive stage, God’s total and absorbing love attracts us as we contemplate Him in quiet joy and loss of all defenses. From the psychological viewpoint, there will be decline in defensiveness and anxiety, but from the theological viewpoint,

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29 Groeschel, 94.
30 Ibid., 118.
This is considered as growth in faith and trust towards God. An increased sensitivity to the urge of that drive is an indication of increased spiritual maturity and a determinative of possible further spiritual development. Ray Anderson describes this development as: “the recovery of the image of God as the intrinsic value of the original self, resulting in positive self-esteem as empowerment for feelings of self worth...”

*Spiritual development and human development*

As mentioned, the levels of development in spiritual journey are sequential stages, although they do roughly indicate where a person is at on the spiritual journey. If spiritual formation tends to focus on the transcendent and the mystical part, the psychological understanding of human development may help us to come to an objective understanding. Love and Talbot (1999), whose interest is in spirituality and student development, argue that students’ spiritual development involves four interrelated and often concurrent processes. These are:

1. Spiritual development involves an internal process of seeking personal authenticity, genius, and wholeness as an aspect of identity development.

2. Spiritual development involves the process of continually transcending one’s current locus of centricity.

3. Spiritual development involves a greater connectedness to self and others through relationships and union with community.

4. Spiritual development involves deriving meaning, purpose, and direction in one’s life.

31 Ray Anderson, 104.

Thus, spiritual development is not to be considered primarily a religious or theological phenomenon because the four elements also specify human development. The history of the study of human development is short, comparing to other disciplines. But it has affected us tremendously. What fascinates us are the theories advocated by different theorists, such as Maslow’s paradigm of self-actualization, Erikson’s eight stages, Carl Jung’s theory on the shadow and unconsciousness, etc., all but a small part of theories attempting to paint a clearer picture of human development. My understanding is that all human development is a process of self-constitution, and should be complimented by spiritual development. Therefore, it is worthwhile to point out at least two common concerns, namely, the reality of regression and life crisis. In the process of becoming a mature person, life’s crisis challenges us to face the reality of regression, regardless we are Christians or not. This regression or falling down, however, may be opportunity of growing stronger. Spiritual development also begins at the critical turning point in lives as it entails self-critical and self-responsible growth. Since both human and spiritual developments concern one’s growth in authenticity, there is always room for dialogue.

*From Development theories to transformative learning*

Our age has become inundated with developmental theories, and it is interesting to see how Christians deal with such spiritual development. First of all, the learning of Christian spirituality is about the changing of the heart, growing as a person toward wholeness and recognizing the deepest human need is to be loved. Thompson reckons:

> Christians believe that God is present and active in the events that change our inner climate, that Jesus Christ invites us into transition and enables us to respond to the invitation, and that God’s Spirit companions us as we separate from
outworn images and learn to float in between, waiting patiently for new, more life-giving images to emerge.  

Our understanding of developmental theories, therefore, cannot be separated from the above reality - the reality that Christians is formed by Christ’s loving-kindness and grow by God’s grace. If understanding one’s spiritual development is significant, and that the spiritual director requires some clear pointers or something like a spiritual map as their guidance, the changes brought about by transformative learning is able to motivate and empower him or her for continuous learning and further action. As mentioned in Chapter 3, new and revised interpretation of the meaning of an experience will affect and guide subsequent understanding, appreciation and action.

Transformative learning

Learning is a process of making a new or revised interpretation of an experience, which guides subsequent understanding, appreciation and action. Transformative learning relates especially to perception and perspective changes. In traditional learning, the questions are how to analyze the problem or how to deliver the message. In transformative learning, the students are taught to make meaning out of their experiences, interpret it, and use the interpretation to guide them. Peter Barnes contends that in transformative learning, people are taught to revise their previous views through the practice of reflection.” Our concern is how that happens and why it is significant. Mezirow strongly emphasizes that transformational learning takes place through

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discussion and exploration of concepts relating to these kinds of experiences. He is not an advocate of creating intense emotional experiences in transformational learning. On the other hand, Mezirow places less emphasis on the influence of life events of the learner. For me, the contribution of Mezirow in transformational learning lies in his belief of the possibility of personal growth toward becoming a person who is autonomous, free from coercion, able to reflect independently and willing to look for alternative or common ground. Above all, transformative learning that rooted in communicative learning will enhance greater autonomy as a person.

He further distinguishes the difference between instructional and communicative learning in the following manner:

In instrumental learning, the truth of an assertion may be established through empirical testing. But communicative learning involves understanding purposes, values, beliefs, and feelings and is less amenable to empirical tests. In communicative learning, it becomes essential for learners to become critically reflective of the assumptions underlying intentions, values, beliefs, and feelings.35

In a way, this is similar to spiritual direction because the facilitator focuses on the power and potential of the person:

The facilitator encourages learners to create norms that accept order, justice, and civility in the classroom and respect and responsibility for helping each other learn; to welcome diversity; to foster peer collaboration; and to provide equal opportunity for participation. The facilitator models the critically reflective role expected of learners. Ideally, the facilitator works herself out of the job of authority figure to become a co-learner by progressively transferring her leadership to the group as it becomes more self-directive.36

Finally, Mezirow also identifies several ways to stimulate transformational learning, including journal writing, metaphors, life history exploration, learning contracts, learning contracts, learning contracts.35


36 Ibid., 11.
group projects, role-play, case studies, and using literature to stimulate critical consciousness. Mezirow also includes ‘religious doctrine’ in the philosophical category of meaning perspectives. He believes that all of the above can stimulate critical reflection and rational discourse.

The theory on transformative learning is a very useful educational theory. Its scientific approach helps students to understand and clarify what they learn objectively. Loder argues that true transformation is inseparable from encounter with God. Transformational learning is not only cognitive but encompasses the whole person. This learning interconnects with the other dynamic process elements of spiritual formation as a holistic approach to learning. In a way, transformational learning fulfils the goal of Christian spiritual formation and may be considered as our partnership in the redemptive work of God. In fact, Loder argues that an insight or imagination leap is necessary:

The imaginative indwelling aspect of knowing, always inevitable to some degree and more widely essential than recognized, keeps knowledge alive and open to change and makes it evident that the ‘world’ is very much our composition of things.37

True transformational learning involves an encounter with God. Knowing truth and perspective change is helpful, but for Loder, knowing truth and encountering Truth is different. From the perspective of spiritual formation, the Bible must be central in transformational learning. For transformation learning to take place, there must be appropriate intentional teaching or instruction to direct us toward the Truth. Walter Brueggemann also insists “the educational process, faithfully carried out, can be

performed by those who submit to the canonical process.” It is obvious that spiritual formation is not only about critical reflection, which engages the student on the cognitive level, but also engages the student on the affective level. Finally, Liebert reminds us that spiritual practice is irreplaceable:

Not only should the practice of spirituality not be banned from academic study of Christian spirituality…practices provide one of the constitutive elements of our disciplines approach…Practices offer a possible context for the access to the immediate experience of the spiritual life, the subject matter of the discipline. 39

Although the input from studying spiritual development and transformative learning is helpful, the internal value of faithful practice, which leads us to religious experiences of self-intimacy and intimacy with God, should be confirmed.

Summary

Spiritual development is a winding road, and to some extent, contemplative and even elusive. The dynamics may be too complicated to be reduced to steps or stages. It does remind us that we are connected or relate with the transcendent. Understanding life’s development helps us to be aware of crises and stages of faith in our life.

Spiritual formation and spiritual growth cannot be quantified, nor can it be mended or repaired. In “The Mentored Life,” James Houston makes it very clear that there is no compromise with the professional mentors who are disguised as hero, stoic or therapist. A spiritual director must be a friend of God and not a fixer. In recovering the

38 Walter Brueggemann, The Creative Word: Canon as a Model for Biblical Education (Philadelphia, Fortress Press.1982), p.7. By the canonical process, Bruegemann means that Bible interprets Bible in a hermeneutical move that breathe fresh life into biblical theological knowledge. Brueggemann agrees that it is only as we understand the interactions of the Christian story and our stories that we come to the true understanding of the text.

theological teaching of Kierkegaard, Houston attempts to reveal the strong individualistic and secular tendencies of modern mentor. Commercialized mentoring, with theories and skills they advocate, has caused more confusion. Houston’s vision follows the example of Kierkegaard who said: “Before God, I regard my whole work as an author as my own education. I am not a teacher but a learner.” He warns us to beware the heroic mentor, who pursues excellence and self-fulfillment. On the other hand, he aspires for Fenelon’s model because “Fenelon cares more for the truth than for other people good opinion of him… Fenelon’s own selflessness is surely a vital key to his success in being such an effective spiritual mentor to others.”

Houston understands the significance of humility as a spiritual mentor. The rationalistic and perfectionist attitude of the Stoic has rendered them passionless beings who always have mental transcendence over any circumstances. To him, moral self-sufficiency contradicts Christian spirituality; regardless they are medieval virtues or enlightened rational thinking: “Stoicism’s motive is always for an ethic of rational control, the search for order in social chaos, the central role of moral admonition in education, and the application of moral egalitarianism in a hierarchical society.”

Houston has strong dismay in scholars of psychoanalysis, especially the Freudian’s approach, which is Gnostic, dualistic and contradicting the Christian view of reality. He also disagrees with the models of cognitive-behavioral, object relation and the so-called self-psychology movement. “Such an approach promotes more egalitarian

41 Ibid., 40-41.
42 Ibid., 54.
relationships between client and therapist, for it assumes that the curative benefits lie in the therapeutic process itself. The natural individual is to be replaced by transformation of personhood. In other words, we have to be discipled to be a person in Christ, discipled by the word of God, and discipled for worship in community.

C. Archetypes

The following archetypes can be considered as shalom leaders dwelling among people. They follow Jesus’ incarnational model, as they live out their unique characteristic as spiritual directors reconciling and mediating people to better relationship with God. These characteristics: desire, rest and hope, align with what we have discussed and they are fundamental to mature and compassionate spiritual directors.

The hospitable message—Desert Fathers

In the fourth century, a group of Christians began to flourish in Egypt, Syria and Palestine. They were people whose lives were characterized by great austerity and poverty, yet they were simple and practical. They lived out the Gospel in a drastic different manner as they wait for the coming of the Kingdom with eager expectation, using each moment as a step in their pilgrimage towards Christ. Contemplative prayer is at the heart of their spirituality because they consider contemplation as desiring and union with God. This positive desire for the Kingdom of heaven dominates their whole life of silence, not because of a proud and austere preference for aloneness but because they preferred listening to the Word of God. Hence, the sayings of the desert fathers

43 Ibid., 77.
(apophthegmata) are direct transmission of practical wisdom and experience, or perceptive wisdom from clear yet unassuming angle.44

Their mature lives should not be considered as fruits of practicing asceticism, but the recognition of their identity as children of God and the irreplaceable guidance of the Holy Spirit. The freedom they experience is due to the practice of detaching from all bondages as they wait before God in silence. While some may study the desert father from the angle of spiritual battle, spiritual discipline, and even mysticism, the researcher notices the availability of the desert fathers towards God and people.45 Fundamental to this life quality of available to God and people is their desire. “As a deer longs for flowing streams, so my soul longs for you, O God” (Ps 42:2).

There is the desire for one thing only, salvation; there is the immediate practical action of doing, not only thinking; there is the command to flee, to go away from what is familiar; then the idea of silence, solitude, aloneness, which is the desert; and the ideal of constant prayer for the whole of life. But there is also the ‘voice’; the direction, which comes from God at the very beginning of this conversion and this, is the first and perhaps the most vital of the ways of spiritual understanding in this tradition.46

Since their focus is first, on God, and then on the needs of others, they also listen well to God and others. In a way, this is due to their self-forgetfulness. In fact, the desert is a symbol for emptiness, implying “purity of heart” which is a kenosis of self and a

44 These life-giving “words” were collected and eventually written down by disciples of the first monks, and grouped together in various ways. It is not a literature of words that analyze and sort out personal worries or solve theological problems; nor is it a mystical literature concerned to present prayers and praise to God in a direct line of vision; rather, it is oblique, uniformed, and occasional, like sunlight glancing off a rare oasis in the sands. See W.H. Auden, Paradise of the Desert Father, The Nazarene Way of Essenic Studies, Internet, available from www.thenazareneway.com/paradise_of_the_desert_fathers.htm, accessed 14 January 2012.


centering on God. This detachment or “letting go” of self is coined as “white martyrdom.” No wonder Ernest Larkin contends that desert spirituality is best sum up by the beatitude of “Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.” 47 A few examples are given in the following to illustrate their wisdom on life together and hospitality:

- Abba Antony said, “Our life and our death are with our neighbor. If we gain our brother, we have gained our God; but if we scandalize our brother, we have sinned against Christ.”

- Once three brothers came to visit an old man in Scetis and one of them said to him, “Abba, I have committed to memory the Old and New Testaments.” And the old man answered, “You have filled the air with words.” The second one said to him, “I have written out the Old and New Testaments with my own hands.” He said, “And you have filled the window-ledge with manuscripts.” Then the third said, “The grass is growing up my chimney.” And the old man replied, “You have driven away hospitality.”

- A brother came to see a certain hermit and, as he was leaving, he said, “Forgive me Abba for preventing you from keeping your rule.” The hermit replied, “My rule is to welcome you with hospitality and to send you away in peace.”

Meditating on these words of the desert father helps us to understand their most authentic desire. For me, the first saying is about hospitality and brotherhood, the second saying is about modeling and serving, and the third one takes hospitality as a discipline or practice. My contention is that through living together in community and practicing contemplative prayer, the desert fathers are able to discern for those who go to them.

In Athanasius’ The Life of Antony, the topic of discernment is discussed in thorough manner. 48 The exhortations and the principle of discernment of spirit, as described in the book, have contributed to the spiritual growth of the disciples. At the end of the exhortation, Athanasius commented: “All were persuaded to despise the snares of


the devil, and everyone marveled at the grace which the Lord had given to Antony for the
discernment of spirits.”

The acquiring of discernment or diakrisis, therefore, is related
to the determination to practice “renunciation and practical spirituality…since both
slackness and asceticism can lead to spiritual disaster… intense inner discipline of spirit
in order to survive and progress, and St. Anthony sees that the formation of such inner
discipline can only arise from following the example set by the elders.” The desire of
God who has bestowed the gift of discernment is fundamental to discernment. Larken’s
comment aptly describe this desire:

They wanted to see God. This goal was not face–to–face vision, as heaven will be
(1 John 3:1–3); nor was it seeing God as an object, the way I see a person in front
of me. Neither was it simply a new understanding, a new image of God, or a new
perception. It was a seeing that meant presence, companionship, walking with
God. It was contemplative union with God. Contemplation follows purity of heart
as night follows day.

The Rest Message—Augustine

Consider the scholastic position and spiritual impact of Augustine, it is not
surprising that many echo his famous prayer: “My heart is restless until it finds its rest in
you.” Hawkins, who identifies rest, return and recovery, the three sources of Augustine’s
“Confessions” (the Neo-Platonic doctrine of return of the soul, the biblical story of
Prodigal son, and Vergil’s Aeneid), suggests that Augustine’s pilgrimage is “a journey of
recovery and return.” Apparently, one cannot ignore the fact of Augustine’s frequent use
of “peregrinans” in the “City of God” (Civitas Dei) and the obvious truth that when he

49 Joseph.T Lienhard, Discernment of Spirits in the Early Church, Theological Studies, Internet,
available from www.ts.mu.edu/content/41/41.3/41.3.2.pdf, accessed 3 January 2012.
50 Kenneth Leech, 141.
uses it, he is implying a destiny. Gerhard Ladner also notices that Augustine “uses the concept of viator almost as frequently as that of peregrinus.” Thus, it seems quite certain that, whether he uses peregrination to speak of wandering or employs viator to talk about travelling, he is designating a destiny. In addition to that, the massive and spiritual uses of the terminology in Augustine’s age must be considered:

The topic of xeniteis and peregrinatio, of pilgrimage, of homelessness, of strangers in this world, are among the most widespread in early ascetic literature, and not a few ascetics, monastic and otherwise, practiced it by voluntary migratory exile from their fatherland.

It is not difficult to recognize in the above quotation that the process of peregrinatio must have induced estrangement and alienations. What he depicts in the “Confessions” is a wanderer’s odyssey of estrangement from a continuous attachment to God. Augustine’s pilgrimage also involves the restless yearning and struggle of the soul in the deepest level. Interiority is, indeed, the most important concentration in Augustine’s “Confessions.” One may suggest that “Confessions” is a contemplative journal, recording the movements of the heart. Augustine has a quality that resembles the desert fathers. This quality, as serious readers of “Confessions” will identify, is a deeper quality than the matter of the world. Yet, it is important to point out that the here and now or the earthly city is also Augustine’s concern. Emile Perreau-Saussine suggests that Augustine does concern the people and the earthly peace the people aspire:

The earthly city, characterized by its exclusive love for earthly things, is still a “city”…The people in the second sense is the people of the earthly city, seeking something unsatisfactory, but nevertheless important: an earthly peace that the

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City of God needs… The earthly city is not only the wretched city, the sinful city. It is also a city, which pursues a good: the “maintenance of this mortal life”. The eternal city has to “obey the laws of the earthly city” to the extent that the earthly city pursues a good end, an end it has in common with the city of God. Even among the worst peoples, there is a kind of order, an order that enables them to form a “people.”

The Significance of Rest and Return according to “Confessions”

To rest, one must return, and in returning, one learns more about oneself. On one hand, the motivation of return is the restless spirit of longing, pressing the pilgrim to pursue the ultimate or fundamental. But on the other hand, it is the humble acceptance of God’s grace. As we study “Confessions,” a simple formula like “return-remembering-rest” comes out quite naturally. Augustine’s concern, however, is the soul’s encounter with God. As revealed in Book X: “Give Yourself to me, O my God, give Yourself once more to me. I love You; and if my love is too small a thing, grant me to love more intensely… my life should run to Your embrace and never be turned away until it is hidden in the secret of Your face.”

Emerging in this journey is a transforming life, which is brought to rest. The pilgrimage, however, is never meant to be a journey of calmness and perfect rest. On the other hand, it is a Biblical concept that should not be confused with illusion. First of all, rest (requies), a Christian rest, cannot be elucidated in terms of complete security. The true path of spiritual quest is never really constant settlement on the plateau, but constant

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55 Perreau-Saussine quoted Augustine in her article as followed: “so long as it lives like a captive and a stranger in the earthly city, […] it makes no scruple to obey the laws of the earthly city, whereby the things necessary for the maintenance of this mortal life are administered; and thus, as this life is common to both cities, so there is a harmony between them in regard to what belongs to it. (XIX, 17) See Emile Perreau-Saussine, Heaven as a political theme in Augustine’s City of God, in Markus Bockmuehl and Guy Stroumsa (ed.), (Paradise in late antiquity, Cambridge, 2009), 7. Thus Christians participate in the earthly city, and value its peace. (Cf. XV.4) Merely earthly peace is worth something. Augustine’s message is that Christians can cooperate with non-Christians in seeking worldly, but still worthwhile, order and peace.

56 Augustine, 43.
breakthrough and relapse on the narrow path. To Augustine, rest is a solemn yet liberated anticipation of the pilgrim who is able to experience quietness (quies) and at the same time, disengagement (vacare) as he goes on a sojourn. Michael Casey’s understanding of rest definitely pertains to Augustine’s ascent:

[Rest] is not a state of blankness characterized by mental void and lack of feeling… The soul is not doing anything because all its resources are involved in responding to what is acting upon it… this desensitization… is the automatic effect of a higher sensitization… and this psychological attitude transposes itself onto the physical plane if it reaches completion.57

Augustine’s utter dependence on God is considered as his spiritual breakthrough despite his continual tensions and anxieties, because his dependence is characterized by epochal advance to God with faith and the deeper experience of one’s being. Most of us will echo with Peter Brown’s description of “Confessions” as Augustine’s heart or feeling (affectus). Such feeling is expressed to God the Father Who is expecting his children to rest in Him. Augustine’s famous motto, “Our hearts find no peace until they rest in You,” is recorded in the first page of the book. Because of this earnest anticipation of God, Augustine is in a state of anxious waiting and returning. Such anticipation is interrelated with Augustine’s earthly journey, which is marked by anxieties -- in dealing with oneself, his parents, his wife and children, and friends.58

Augustine symbolizes himself, in “Confessions” as a soul like Adam, who turns away from God by exalting himself. So, in returning, he now returns to the Father Who is

58 From Augustine’s life and his writings, we observe a person who is preoccupied and even excessively conscious of their responses. His anxious love to Monica is an obvious example. From the letters written by Augustine, we also get the impression that he treasures friendship. He is troubled by his adhesion to Manichaeism, which is a kind of escapism -- from guilt, and adhesion to Neo-Platonism, which stresses the fall of the soul.
the Creator, and recognizes himself in humility as only a creature. Thus, in the last three books of “Confessions” Augustine employs the Genesis account as God’s answer to evil and sustenance of His creation. By the time he writes “Confessions,” he should have true understanding of the true image of Christ Himself. Augustine himself has spelled out in “Confessions” the doctrine of incarnation and rest in the Spirit. While accepting that Augustine’s Divine Fatherhood is established on the concepts of “mutual recognition, knowledge, and intimacy” one cannot ignore the image of the incarnated and the crucified Christ whom Augustine has recognized as the eternal Truth.

On the other hand, Augustine’s utter dependence on God is reflected on his personal love to God. It is not merely a reaction borne out of the Oedipal conflicts. His affective heart and his honesty are much greater than his Oedipal “neurosis.” An excerpt from Peter Brown may help us to appreciate an affectionate heart:

It is yearnings that make the heart deep…If to be a “Romantic” means to be a man acutely aware of being caught in an existence that denies him the fullness for which he craves to feel that he is defined by his tension towards something else, by his capacity for faith, for hope, for longing, to think of himself as a wanderer seeking a country that is always distant, but made ever present to him by the quality of the love that groans for it, then Augustine has imperceptibly become a Romantic.59

Of course, we do understand the meaning of Confession (confessio) -- accusation of oneself and praise for God. The need to confess is therefore a realization of man’s humble status before God. Confessions then, lead him to enter his innermost, conscious, or unconscious experiences in a deeper and deeper manner. In Donnelly’s word: “I see the Confessions… as the incredible self-disclosure of Augustine’s search for meaning with no parallel in literature or history to compare with it in honesty, self-analysis, and

admission of weakness so untraditional in the dramatic conversion stories of the Late Classical [period].”

From a psychological point of view, Augustine is a wounded child but the “touching hands” of God the Father Who not only soothes his hurts as a wounded child, but also satisfies his intellectual riddles and other deep emotions heal him. Thus, “Confessions” demonstrates an ongoing process of healings on God’s side and praising on man’s side. Augustine’s conversion, therefore, can only be considered as a response to Divine grace. In remorse at his own ugliness, selfishness, guilt, and finally his limited human effort in attaining truth, Augustine throws himself into the embracing arms of God. Hawkins has termed this turning as “crisis conversion”– denoting a process of “tension-climax-resolution.” Focusing on the inner tensions and the intense conviction of sin seems to me the only acceptable alternative for Augustine.

The hope message—Julian of Norwich

Julian of Norwich is indeed a product of an age of flourishing and inauspicious spirituality. As a Christian pilgrim, the images presented in her heart’s journey are hope of warmth, affection and triumph. Amidst this strong sense of humanity, we perceive a gentle response towards sin and evil, as well as to her inner struggle. In the following, I will briefly summarize her spiritual journey, and then I will focus on her central spiritual foci.

As a medievalist, Julian is very much aware of the phenomena of pilgrimage practices, with all their complicated motivations, and the benefits or disadvantages it

brings. Julian’s pilgrimage appears to be an inner journey characterized by visions, prayers, and unceasing dialogue with God. The fact that she has employed different metaphors and images to illustrate this journey convinces us that she is familiar with not only the external meaning, but also reflects the desire of a spiritual pilgrim. As a recluse in the mid fourteenth century, an era of impotence and vulnerability of life, Julian, who “wants to be actually there with Mary Magdalene and the others who loved him,” has asked for grace that she may suffer with Christ. This should be regarded as a sign of desire for union, which is basic to every authentic pilgrim. In this respect, Jantzen says:

Julian’s request for a vision, however, is not a desire for mystical ecstasy… Rather she states that her request was made as a means to an end…that she might be able to identify more fully with Christ’s suffering and be in unity with those who deeply loved him.61

Moreover, her longing and desire for more intimate identification does not stop after the revelations shown to her. Apart from the waiting, the “Showings” must be viewed as an ongoing quest of things that Julian failed to understand.62 Although she has witnessed the Passion, she is puzzled over questions of sins and evils, which constitute intense conflict within her. Certainly, Julian’s conviction of Christ’s redemption, healing and transformative power is not to be doubted. It is, however, her sensitive empathy with the suffering world that exacerbates her intention to know more about the God of Goodness.


62 The sixteen revelations can be divided into four parts starting from 1 to 7, to 8 and 9, then from 10 to 12 and finally 13 to 16. The first part includes the vision of the Passion, the sustaining grace of God who is the “Maker, Keeper and Lover” and the heavenly joy. The second part discusses the close relationship between the Passion and Trinity, particularly God’s goodness through the incarnation and the “remaking” of humanity. Then in the third part, more assurance of Christ is shown.
Obviously, Julian has lived a life of solitary. But she breaks her silence from time to time to listen, counsel and pray for those who go to her. We must keep in mind that Julian adheres quite closely to the Cistercian sense of pilgrimage -- that it does not emphasize literal traveling, nor does it encourage the “stages” toward perfection, but rather focus on the desire and compunction of the heart. In Julian’s own words: “The whole Trinity was involved in the passion of Christ, giving us an abundance of virtue and grace by him.” Finally, in the fourth part, the problem of sin is dealt with, but we also witness a hopeful scene in which God’s motherhood and Lordship are fully elaborated. The “Showings” ends with recognition of the sinful reality of mankind, but also the indwelling of the blessed Trinity.

Instead of using the traditional metaphor of journey, Julian has depended on a concept that I would call “Homecoming.” A strong “Homely” sense is vividly portrayed in the “Showings.” So if we look at the structure of the “Showings,” we may picture a journey of contemplating from Christ’s Passion, to the homely love of the God of goodness, and finally, back to human response again. Thus, Julian has forsaken the use of medieval descriptions of pilgrimage or ascending of the soul, a linear and purgatory type of movement. She is focusing, after integrating the abundant heritage of pilgrimage, on the Passion and the goodness of God as a centre to which we must return. What we observe in the “Showings” is as Pelphery says, a cyclical movement: “For her our progression towards God is more like a circular movement, or perhaps a spiral… In a sense we learn the same lessons over and over again in different ways.”

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63 Brant Pelphery, Love was His Meaning: The Theology and Mysticism of Julian of Norwich (Austria: University of Salzburg, 1982), 84.
Spiritual progression, then, is different experiences in different stages, but revolving around the focus of Passion and the goodness of God. Abandoning the use of words like negation and ecstasy, Julian talks about the progression candidly by emphasizing the path of spiritual understanding -- the pilgrim being drawn by the affective love of God. Like the Cistercian fathers, who say the soul has entered into the stage of spiritual marriage, Julian talks about the stage of “ever-beholding” the vision of the Passion. Although Julian is not as systematic and epistemologically oriented as Pseudo-Dionysius, who depicts a movement from the perceptible to conceptual and further to unknowing, she resembles the fifth century mystic in terms of her identification of (1) biblical interpretation and (2) contemplative experience of spiritual progression. Yet, Julian’s teaching is Scriptural and Christocentric.

Julian’s pilgrimage is also characterized by a tension of knowing against unknowing as the pilgrim encounters the reality of life’s journey. The tension between the state of knowing versus unknowing is the result of sin, but it is also related to the desire of living authentically. Let us cite a few examples from the “Showings:”

In this “little thing” (hazelnut) I saw three truths. The first is that God made it; the second is that God loves it and the third is that God sustains it. But what he is who is in truth Maker, Keeper, and Lover I cannot tell for until I am essentially united with him, I can never have full rest or real happiness…

In this famous imagery of the hazelnut, Julian knows very clearly that God reveals and sustains the whole created order including all humanity. But she also exclaims that she does not yet know or experience the real union, which entails the tension of restlessness and a series of questions. The consciousness of this existential tension

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aggravates the tension and in turn, deepens this consciousness. No wonder there is an Augustinian sense of “cleaving” in the “Showings.” Another example of knowing versus unknowing is by looking at the meanings of prayer in the “Showings.” Pelphery contends that there are three kinds of prayer namely: petition, contemplation and praise in Julian’s pilgrimage. In contemplation, the soul does behold the clear vision of Passion, but Julian keeps saying that this vision needs to be deepened, implying that there are things she needs to know more. Then of course, her self-blame concerning her own “blindness” is the main cause of unknowing. Thus, her pilgrimage is one that seeks to know more about oneself. The following quotation represents this kind of thought: “On that day, we shall come to our Lord knowing our self clearly, possessing God completely. Eternally “hid in God” we shall see him truly and feel him fully, hear him spiritually, smell him delightfully and taste him sweetly.”

As the full knowledge of self is only an anticipated reality, Julian must be aware of the perplexity caused by this unfulfilled reality. Here, I visualize that the kernel of Julian’s theology of hope is nurtured in a process of differentiating consciousness and painful waiting. In spite of the existential tension, Julian is assured of the possibility of luminosity. To her, hope is the optimistic perfection and restoration of human nature. This is grounded on the truth of incarnation, which is the gracious downward procession of God himself. The spiritual journey that lasts for twenty years, as Julian tells us, then, signifies a sojourner finding her resting place.

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65 Ibid., 129-130.
D. Theological Foundation of Hospitality:

Sabbath-Intimacy with God and Intimacy with Other

Hospitality is the practice in the Bible. The Bible actually begins with a story of hospitality. God’s hospitable character is reflected in His relationship with His creatures: Adam and Eve, who were allowed to live freely and eat whatever fruits they wanted. Out of His intimate relationship with them, God clothed Adam and Eve after the fall. After all, Adam and Eve did not break a rule, but a relationship. In the Old Testament period, hospitality is generally regarded as a moral imperative. Israelites were commanded to take care of the alien who resides with them and treat them as citizen. (Leviticus 19:33-34) The Greek word for hospitality is *philoxenos*, which means “lovers of strangers.” It has the same root as the word Philadelphia that means “brotherly love.” Both Old Testament and New Testament teachings underscore the linkage between intimate relationship and hospitality.

Hospitality to others and to God is seen as one thing, not two. “Whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes me,” Jesus taught his disciples (Mt 18:5). On one hand, God commands us to practice hospitality. “Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers,” the Epistle to the Hebrews recorded, “for by doing that some have entertained angels without knowing it” (Heb 13:2). On the other hand, the command of loving your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind”; and, ‘Love your neighbor as yourself” is obvious (Lk 10:27). It’s essential that we maintain a life of intimacy with God and with others.
Sabbath-Intimacy with God and others

The understanding of hospitality can only be completed by looking at the meaning of Sabbath, which symbolizes man’s intimate relationship with God as he or she finds rest and joy in celebrating His presence. The root of Sabbath can be traced back to the Old Testament (Gn 2: 3) as God rest after creation. Sabbath keeping is also a command according to the Book of Exodus. According to the Anchor Bible Dictionary, the experience of “Sabbath rest points to a present ‘rest’ (katapausis) reality in which those ‘who have believed are entering’ (4:3) and it points to a future ‘rest’ reality (4:11).”

Thus, Sabbath is generally considered as rest and intimate moment in God’s presence. Heschel made it very clear that Sabbath is a concept of time, not space. Therefore, the meaning of the Sabbath is to celebrate time. Works and routines or things of space have imprisoned us. On Sabbath we must try to become attuned to holiness in time. It’s not only a time for celebration, it is actually the moment we share in what is eternal in time. Sabbath is also a time of wonder or amazement to God’s creation and salvation as we remember God’s loving-kindness. Sabbath can also be seen as the rhythm of maintaining the balance of worship God and with our service to others. As transformational leader, spiritual director understands that they live as a mediator of grace or agent of hope and at the same time, a receiver of grace and hope from God.

The identity of a mediator denotes the spiritual director’s relationship with the directee, and the identity of a receiver implies the spiritual director’s relationship with God. As a mediator, it is important for the spiritual director to become more others-

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67 Heschel, 10.
centered. For Davies, the important belief is that the self is not prior to the other but exists rather in a relation of mutual grounding with it. Full realization of the self is only possible via the other, and so the other is implicated at the very core of the self.68 Both identities, however, are closely related to hospitality. In the following, I will try to explain their relationship.

First, hospitality is not a duty or responsibility; it is more a response of love and gratitude for God’s love and a spiritual practice. In practicing Sabbath rest, spiritual director learns to give thanks and respond with love or desire, knowing that this Sabbath rest will ensue intimacy and bring forth the fruits of the Spirit naturally. Jesus explain this truth wonderfully as He used the word abide to describe this intimate relationship. If we abide in Him, He will abide in us. Stay connected to Jesus as a branch is connected to a vine and to dwell with Him on a continual basis. The consequence is that we will be able to show hospitality to others. The Apostle Peter wrote: “we are to offer hospitality to one another without grumbling (1 Pt 4:9).” He also encourages us all to, “Share with God’s people who are in need. Practice hospitality (Rom 12:13).” He teaches Titus that a leader “must be hospitable (Ti 1:8).”

Second, hospitality means total openness. In the story of Martha and Mary (Lk 10), Martha is seen as impatient and anxious while Mary’s hospitality is shown in her receptiveness of Jesus’ teaching as she grasps the opportunity to listen and stay with him. On top of that, Mary’s choice of sitting at His feet indicates the determination of looking beyond the hunger of her flesh to the hunger in her spirit, which can only be satisfied by Jesus. Jesus demonstrated this openness himself after his resurrection.

68 Davies, 45.
In Luke chapter 24, when Jesus, “the stranger” walks with the two disciples on the way to the village of Emmaus, he has demonstrated to us an important lesson of hospitality. By approaching them in friendly gesture, Jesus walks with them patiently as he listens to their stories despite their ignorance. Jesus is giving them freedom and space to share their innermost emotions. Despite their blindness, Jesus’ companionship and exhortation brings consolation and hope in spite of what the disciples had said. At last, when Jesus, “the guest” breaks the bread, they recognize him and they find their hearts filled with warmth.

Third, hospitality is giving freedom to others and allowing God’s work to unfold freely. Hospitality is about creating an environment where others feel welcome and safe. It’s about the willingness to enter and develop deep and rich relationships. Being hospitable gives us the opportunity to share God’s love and grace with others. In his book *Reaching Out*, Henry Nouwen writes

> In our world full of strangers, estranged from their own past, culture and country, from their neighbors, friends and family, from their deepest self and their God, we witness a painful search for a hospitable place where life can be lived without fear and where community can be found. Although many, we might even say most, strangers in this world become easily the victim of a fearful hostility, it is possible for men and women and obligatory for Christians to offer an open and hospitable space where strangers can cast off their strangeness and become fellow human beings.”

It is hard to imagine how Christians can be transformed in hostile environment and actually overcome hostility and become hospitable person. It is even harder to believe one can become free from all cares and fears, and even touching pain and death with compassion. Indeed, there is a big gap between hostility and hospitality. It takes a lot

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of courage to create space for strangers. Spiritual directors must remember the reality of a hostile world, which makes them painful, fearful, and trigger them to react. Hospitality will not take place unless they are offered space in soul care where changes can take place. Nouwen’s viewpoint is

Hospitality is the virtue, which allows us to break through the narrowness of our own fears and to open our houses to the stranger, with the intuition that salvation comes to us in the form of a tired traveler. Hospitality makes anxious disciples into powerful witnesses, makes suspicious owners into generous givers, and makes closed-minded sectarians into interested recipients of new ideas and insights.70

Fourth, hospitality is a journey from humility to sacrifice. When Jesus washed the feet of the disciples, he wanted to use that particular action to illustrate the love of a humble servant, who committed himself unconditionally to his disciples. Through this intimate and yet hospitable action, Jesus wanted his disciples to see clearly his affection to them. Eugene Peterson discussed Jesus’ humble and sacrificial model when he expounded on the passage of Jesus sitting with the disciples during the last Supper.

For him the four verbs that Jesus used in the Eucharist — “take” and “give”, and “bless and break” have special meanings. “Take and give” are terms of generous exchange- and “bless and break” are terms of sacrifice. Jesus is exemplifying a life of “given to the others in generosity and service.”71 As such, it is a deliberate act as we set ourselves obediently and expectantly in God’s presence in order that our lives become


formed sacrificially. Finally, Peterson also emphasizes the daily immersion of this generosity and that blessing and breaking reach into the common place of our lives.

Fifth, hospitality is filled with awe and gratitude, intimacy and love before the triune God. Instead of being preoccupied by one’s own wearies and tension, spiritual directors are motivated by a sense of giftedness of life and by great desires for themselves and for all God’s people. Thus, he or she is able to pay full attention to the guest. Fagin contends that it is because the attention has been shifted to God:

Guided by a listening heart, a discerning and wise heart, a welcoming and compassionate heart. Rooted in a lived experience of the Paschal Mystery that calls each day to conversion. Attuned to the presence of Christ so that the director walks each day in the joy and hope of the risen Lord.

From what we discuss above, hospitality is not the movement from weakness to power but the movement in which we become less and less fearful and defensive and may be more and more open to others and his world, even when it leads to suffering and death. For me, this is the character of the incarnational leader whose service is out of compassion and truly rooted in Christ. This is also the expression of the shalom leader who pursues reconciling relationship all the way, acting for others’ best interest in spite of emotional risk.

Compassion and Hospitality

Compassion and hospitality can be considered as two sides of a coin. God is a compassionate God Who showed His mercy to us sacrificially by providing us the space and the freedom to grow in Him. Spiritual directors follow the example of God in his or

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72 Ibid.

her practice. Patricia A. Ennis designs the following equation to illustrate the close relationship of compassion and hospitality: “The Friendly Reception and Treatment of Guests or Strangers + A Feeling of Deep Sympathy and Sorrow for Someone Struck by Misfortune, Accompanied by a Desire to Alleviate the Suffering = Compassionate Hospitality.”

Foundational to hospitality, therefore, is the attribute of our heavenly Father. In fact, compassion originates from God’s mercy, which implies all the emphatic qualities of God’s character. If compassion represents the deep empathy of God toward us, the intimate and friendly expressions shown in our hospitable actions or practices must be other-centered. Thus, hospitality is not to change people, nor to show sympathy to people. It is about deep or intimate relationship with our fellowmen. And it can only be cultivated by means of receiving it from God as we abide in Him more and more. Ennis is convinced that:

Through his strength, if you make his compassion yours, your “Compassionate Hospitality Equation” will move away from being ego centered, be directed toward the needs of others rather than your own, and most importantly, reflect his character.

John 15 emphasizes the truth that “you can’t produce a thing unless you make yourself at home with me…you make yourself at home in my love and remain intimately at home in my love.” Indeed, compassionate hospitality or intimacy to others is by way of experiencing God’s love, and secure that love deep in our hearts.

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75 Ibid.
**Intimacy with God and Self-intimacy**

God desires us, and wants to have relationship with us. Abraham Heschel reminds us that: “Sabbath is the exemplification of a divine attribute of God, an illustration of God’s need for human love.”\(^{76}\) Sabbath is more than an armistice, because the Sabbath represents not only rest from work nor true happiness. The Sabbath is celebrative and joyful because man is brought into union with God. From a theological viewpoint, Sabbath denotes at least three things, namely: creation-commemoration, salvation-experience, and eschaton [end-time]-anticipation.\(^{77}\) The spiritual rest that Christians should pay attention to now is the spiritual rest through Christ.\(^{78}\) We can infer from this viewpoint that why intimacy with God is important. Although He is the host, He also wants to be the guest who receives human’s hospitality.

The Sabbath is no time for personal anxiety or care, for any activity that might dampen the spirit of joy. The Sabbath is no time to remember sins, to confess, to repent or even to pray for relief or anything we might need. It is a day for praise, not a day for petitions… For the Sabbath is a day of harmony and peace between man and man, peace within man and peace with all things.\(^{79}\)

Finally, nurturing self-intimacy works hand in hand with intimacy with God. Apart from regular spiritual practices, the spiritual director must first become intimate with his or her deepest, true intimate self. Pat Collins, in quoting Merton, says:

> he believes that the discovery of the in-dwelling of God is only made possible when we become aware of the love of Christ as it is mediated to us through

\(^{76}\) Heschel, 60.

\(^{77}\) Ibid.

\(^{78}\) Our understanding of Hebrews 4:10 about entering the spiritual rest must be based on what Jesus said about resting in Him. When Jesus invited us to find rest in Him, He was actually inviting us to stop relying on our efforts and come to Him-the REST. This understanding also aligns with the primary meaning of the word Sabbath, “to desist from exertion” or “to cease.”

\(^{79}\) Heschel, 30.
contemplation… In other words, by means of transcendental intimacy we have religious experiences whereby we become consciously aware of both God and the true self, immersed as it is in his divine love.\textsuperscript{80}

Intimate experience of God is not a utopian experience. Pain is necessary and struggles may be formative, especially when we are in crisis. Michael Fiorello noticed in the Book of Job a model of authenticity and intimacy, which is characterized by mutual accountability and sense of closeness. Apart from Job’s personal knowledge of God, Michael’s argument focuses on the relationship between intimate relationship with God and Job’s authenticity.

Intimacy with God is grounded on one’s understanding of God’s nature but this in itself does not constitute an intimate relationship. Intimacy can be defined as a deep and profound friendship; a close familiarity that affects one’s innermost being, rooted in a sense of belonging which results in confidence.\textsuperscript{81}

Job’s authenticity is based on God’s identification of him. It reveals in Job’s monologue and direct address to God. Job questions God repeatedly, as he tells God everything, every fear and every doubt. Apart from God’s acceptance, Job’s authenticity is characterized by his ability to have intimate relationship with oneself.

**Summary**

Compassion and hospitality are Scriptural motifs that form the basis of training of spiritual directors, who must be alert of his or her spiritual development, and open to a transforming learning process. The spiritual practice of imitating Christ with desire, rest and hope, would enrich and empower the spiritual directors to make himself or herself available to God as well as to others. As such, Jonathan Wilson argues it is practice of the

\textsuperscript{80} Collins, 28.

church, which embodies and extends Christian virtues: “Thus, for example, hope is a 
Christian virtue that should pervade our lives. But worship is a practice of the church that 
teaches us against false hope that is built on illusory foundations…”82

Likewise, faith is a Christian virtue, which relates closely to the practice of 
education; and the virtue of love, to the practice of hospitality. In addition, the practice of 
education that forms in us the virtue of faith is also related to the virtue of character 
development. His description of this practice is that “It must be a complex activity…It 
must be socially embodied…It must realize goods internal to it…It must be rooted in a 
conception of the telos. It must extend our ability to participate in the virtues and in the 
eschaton that identifies our community.”83

In a word, the ministry of spiritual direction builds not only the desires and calling 
of the spiritual director, but also the virtues that become expressive in community and 
grounded in the community of faith. Above all, it’s the guidance of the Holy Spirit and 
God’s spiritual gift that sustain them.


83 Ibid., 73-75.
CHAPTER 5.

METHODS OF RESEARCH

A. Introduction

This research was aimed at finding out about the health condition of a group of six spiritual directors including three male and three female who were involved in this project. The method of gathering data in this project is mainly through qualitative research. In order to verify the gathered data, the researcher has decided to proceed by using: 1) Interviews; 2) Focus groups; and 3) Questionnaires. During the process, a spiritual guidebook designed by the researcher was sent to the participants who were asked to practice according to the guideline of the guidebook.1

Qualitative methods have been in use in philosophical, sociological and historical studies. Some researchers using qualitative methods adhere to a school of thought called phenomenology, and refer to their methods as phenomenological methods, which focuses more on the contents of consciousness, thoughts, feelings and perceptions. Unlike quantitative study, this project will incline towards phenomenal or descriptive approach and contend that not everything about human beings can be understood by measurement.

1 See appendix for the transcribed interview, the spiritual guidebook, complete record of focus group sharing and discussion.
B. Procedure

The research question is: “How might following a set of spiritual practices as set out in a spiritual guidebook serve to sustain the spiritual well being of spiritual directors living and working in Hong Kong?”

1. Interviews were conducted to find out the data that is necessary for this research.

2. A focus group was carried out to find out the needs of the participants. The results gathered in focus group will guide the researcher to confirm how he can help the spiritual directors to cope with their struggles.

3. Questionnaires were also sent to the participants to find out the participants’ experiences of their ministries and spiritual practices.

4. Spiritual guidebooks were passed on to the six participants.

5. The second questionnaire was sent to the participants in order to find out the differences between the two questionnaires.

6. A focus group was carried out to follow up and confirm the details of their responses.

C. Procedure of Generating Data

The interviews and the focus group discussions were transcribed. The researcher has read the transcribed manuscripts in an interactive manner in order to find out the real meaning of the participants’ responses and answers. The following method and procedure were employed to find out the real meaning of the responses.

Qualitative data analysis consists of identifying, coding, and categorizing patterns in the data. In classifying the data, it will help to confirm what is being analyzed. Resources such as key words, personal experience (stories) being told in interviews and focus group meetings will reveal experiences of the participants. Categories will also be created in order to analyze the data, group similar or related items, and classify key concepts. The essence of analysis involved the comparison of pieces of data of a
particular theme, in an effort to recognize the common feature of that theme. Finally, the themes will be identified and their characteristics confirmed.

**D. Interviews**

The interviews were done on an individual basis. Six participants were interviewed. The following questions were designed in a manner that they allow the researcher to understand the personal and educational background, spiritual vision, spiritual wellbeing and spiritual practice of the participants. The interview questions are presented as follow:

1. Can you briefly outline your overall ministry and your spiritual experiences?
2. How do you become a spiritual director? Can you tell me your training, and your preparation in becoming a spiritual director?
3. How would you describe your experience in being spiritually directed and in directing others?
4. Are you having solitude, retreat and meeting up with a spiritual director on a regular basis? Do you prefer more quiet time and solitude?
5. Describe for me your recent prayer experience and your relationship with God.
6. How would you define spiritual wellbeing? Can you describe your understanding and experiences of your own spiritual wellbeing?
7. In what ways do you think you have experienced spiritual crisis? How do you feel?
8. In what ways a spiritual director can sustain his or her spiritual wellbeing? In what ways do you think your spiritual being can be nourished? What are some of your specific needs?
9. What kind of material are you using in your spiritual practices? Have you ever used spiritual guidebook that you find helpful? Can you describe what you think of it?
10. What are some of your major struggles that prevent you from experiencing spiritual transformation?
General Observation

The participants see themselves in a situation that is dilemmatic. They are busy, and yet they find themselves not fully recognized as spiritual director. They lack support. They experience emotional ups and downs, but their desire to grow and serve is strong. A general observation of the thoughts and feelings of the participants are presented as follow:

a. We commit to serve and try very hard to make things happen. We are diligent, faithful, and try to maintain a balance in ministry.

b. Spiritual Formation is very important. Spiritual direction is needed.

c. Spiritual direction is my vision and my gift. (But we have not been able to exercise our gifts fully)

d. Our sense of calling is strong, but sometimes, not acknowledged, or supported.

e. We understand the meaning and significance of spiritual wellbeing.

f. Our love and compassion for people and spiritual directees are genuine, but we experience compassion fatigue.

g. Our ministries in pastoral ministry, including counseling and spiritual direction, etc. are affirmed, but we have too many duties.

h. It is not our usual practice to use a spiritual guidebook. We have read some books and some spiritual manuals are helpful.

i. Busy, tired, feeling lonely, irritated and disconnected sometimes.

j. Schedule of spiritual practices and ministry are mixed up. Spiritual practices are therefore skipped.

k. Lack of spiritual support from mentors, friends and congregation.

l. Past hurts and wounds, and wounds arising from family-of-origins are obstacles to spiritual growth.

m. Emotional stability is fluctuating sometimes. Struggling with self-care sometimes.

n. We desire to change and we want to be transformed.

o. The constraints are environmental, varied and personal.
p. The tendency to isolate oneself and unable to fully experience the support of community is observed.

q. In terms of experiencing God, the quest of being energized is important.

r. Facing difficulties in pastoral ministry, especially co-workers.

s. Self-perception and to some extent, self-understanding; incline towards over-demanding and self-imposing.

t. Not enough rest. The participants express frequently that they need both physical rest and spiritual rest in God. They refer rest mainly to time of solitude and prayer.

The interviews were mostly carried out in intimate and peaceful manner. The researcher is able to identify the participants’ passion in spiritual direction and their desire to grow in Christ, but their overloaded work always makes them busy, tired and stressful. There are other matters and people, who cause fatigue and bother them. As a result, they but find it hard to sustain themselves from time to time. They all want to relate deeply to God, expect breakthrough in spiritual life despite the factors leading to their constraints. Their needs are unique. Some personal growth issues are identified, but according to the participants, those are not major constraints affecting the participants.

**Summarized results from belief or faith, real life and attitudinal aspects**

Based on the interviews, the researcher will categorize the data from the following aspects:

a. Belief

   i. Importance of regular spiritual practices, prayer, quiet time, solitude, retreat.

   ii. Spiritual wellbeing is the capability to let go and let God, sensitivity to God, self-awareness, God is good, relying on God, trust Him.

   iii. Spiritual breakthrough and transformation are important.

   iv. Being directed, spiritual friendship, companions, healthy relationships with others are indispensable.
v. Life crisis and challenges are formative moments and opportunities

b. Real Life

i. Busy working and feeling lonely. Feeling of compassion fatigue is strong. Many interruptions lead to lack of energy and strength.

ii. Tired, stressful, burdened, not enough time to rest, exhausted (Participant D tried extremely hard, the “hollow person” who serves in order to gain more knowledge, provide myself with security and certainty, and did not really desire God sometimes.)

iii. Disturbed or interrupted by needs of ministries.

iv. Spiritual direction ministry not totally recognized and supported (the situation of participant C is better; participant D’s situation is most difficult)

v. Struggles related to personal growth and past hurts: mainly experienced by participants B, D, E and F.

c. Attitude

i. Peaceful, positive and willing to share both positive and negative experiences.

ii. Tendency of blaming the existing environment and problems.

iii. Positive wordings used: silence, rest, meditation, transformed, God’s presence, etc.

iv. Descriptive wordings used: aware, sensitive, energizing, etc.

v. Negative wordings used: tired, busy, lonely, exhausted, disconnected, lack of care, etc.

Table 8. Practices to sustain oneself according to the interview

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Practices</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>Devotion², Exercise, Soulmate, Bible Reading, Retreat</td>
<td>Regular Bible Reading and Exercise</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>Devotion, Physical Rest, Spiritual Reading, for example, Henri Nouwen</td>
<td>Regular Devotion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>Devotion, Retreat</td>
<td>Regular devotion, retreat occasionally</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>Devotion, Retreat</td>
<td>Regular devotion and retreat</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

² Silence, solitude, prayer, retreat, etc. Some of the participants have followed the Spiritual Exercises of Ignatius of Loyola, writing journals, etc.
### Table 9. Meaning of vocation as a spiritual director

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>quotation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>“I have not received formal training in spiritual direction.” **Uncertainty?**³</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>Calling is not as clear as before. “For example, churches in western countries might allocate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>resources for a retreat centre, needless to say, spiritual directors.” <strong>Lack of passion?</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>Enjoy the fellowship of being directed and in directing others. <strong>Vocation being affirmed?</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>“I found I was only a hollow person, the emptiness feeling because of lack of recognition, who</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>serves in order to gain more knowledge, to prove myself (because I feel inferior) to provide</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>myself with security and certainty, and did not really desire God.” <strong>Acknowledgement?</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E</td>
<td>“I am compulsive sometimes, as I try to do more to resolve all matters. Underlying, I believe is</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>the thought that I want to be in control or being known as famous is tempting.” <strong>Busy?</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>“I experienced lack of strength, “I am not good enough,” “I expect or want to be understood</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>and acknowledged.” <strong>Uncertainty?</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Table 10. Self-understanding and discernment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>quote</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>My self-awareness is good. I am healthy. Most of the time, I will not be driven by my past.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>I am an introvert… it is also true that I lack confidence and feel worry sometimes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>I involve in a lot of ministries. I give my all. I may experience compassion fatigue… <strong>When I</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>entered too deep into relationship, I felt the pain… too much empathy led to compassion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>fatigue, and brought me a sense of heaviness.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

³ The underlined words are questions the researcher wanted to ask when he evaluates the data. The
italics are thoughts and feelings that deserve special attention in analyzing.
“It occur from time to time that I feel inadequate because I am a person who desires love and to be loved very much… I think it may be the question of my educational background, which always triggers my sense of inferiority.”

“I couldn’t listen well when I felt agitated. Connection with God and with the participants stopped. I noticed the wounds that may be related to some deep needs in my life.”

“The “success” mentality is a trap. There is also a tension of the image of an “ideal pastor” “I became extremely frustrated when one of my team members had to leave. I collapsed and felt not understood.” (Hospital setting)

Table 11. Isolation from others

| A | I got support from community. Intimacy with others? |
| B | “It’s about disharmonious interpersonal relationship, which consume so much energy to resolve and it makes no sense at all. I find such personal conflicts and power struggle a waste of energy.” |
| C | “It is stressful and I feel irritated sometimes. I find the duty of coaching young staffs extremely challenging.” Complain? |
| D | “In the past six years, the feeling of loneliness persisted, as I perceived myself walking alone in my chaplain ministry.” |
| E | Enjoy spiritual friendship, relationship with my spiritual director, colleagues and friends. But when I am busy with ministries, I become an isolated person. Tensions? |
| F | “I also expect support, but often fail to find sufficient support.” Deep inside, I need someone, a spiritual companion, who can walk and guide me and give me support.” |

Table 12. Shared practices

| B | On one hand I am busy, but on the other hand church members do not sense the need for deepening their own lives. |
| C | I may experience compassion fatigue. I notice that I am closely related to every single person, my colleagues, my congregation and so on… When I entered too deep into the relationship, I felt the pain… experientially; too much empathy led to…compassion fatigue, and brought me a sense of heaviness. Theologically, I understand separation, death and loss, etc. is not the end, eternal life is awaiting us and we will meet again. But experientially, too much empathy led to…compassion fatigue, and brought me a sense of heaviness. I knew I was burning out. |
| D | …but at this stage, my intimate spiritual friend is my wife… I always expect to have a profound friendship, but it is always disappointing. Desire friendship? |
| E | “I am busy and confused recently. Look at my office and you will understand it’s kind of messy. There are many interruptions.” |
| F | “I think it is mainly busyness and overloaded with work. This has become a pattern and triggered me from time to time…Lack of support, overloaded work…lack of peace” |

Table 13. Developing resiliency strength (irritations and restlessness)

| A | “I tend to magnify the problem, focus mainly on the problem when I feel overloaded with work” |
“At present, I feel lonely. I intend to work more on spiritual formation but it is not the mainstream mission of our church.” It’s a highly action-oriented church. They are not well aware of their being, without nurturing their lives. “Pressure mounted as I started working again. I found myself torn between…I found myself having multifaceted needs apart from the inward desires of drawing near to God.”

“But I also experienced a lot in community formation in the first seminary I went to. We still meet and our bonds are still very strong. ” “I imagine life is just like a person skateboarding. We may slip and our balance offset, and we have to balance ourselves again.”

“What I have said… the renewal is not only about life, but also about knowledge. I consider my educational level is limited. For example, studying this master course about devotion, it is a challenge that I am fearful of.”

“The stress is mainly the interruptions from ministry. It happens day in and day out. I am trying to set the priorities and maintain a rhythm that will give me more space.”

“The obstacles, on one hand, are related to my self-understanding, knowing that I am a perfectionist; I always look for something like perfect harmony, and tend to avoid confrontation.”

Table 14. Deepening life with God

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>“I prefer to have more quiet time. I feel moody, lack of energy, lifeless and bored.” “I want to be renewed.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>“It’s because I have worries and anxieties about my future uncertainties… I have multifaceted needs apart from the inward desire. I think physical wellness, emotional needs, and companions are important.” “Regrets…I have been searching my “home” in vain for a long time… A place in which I may settle down.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>“I was just doing things, but my heart has left God, and my spirit became so dry. Again, I have insufficient spiritual desire to guide me to pursue and yearn for God unceasingly.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>“I find difficulties on this since I am always worried about many things.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E</td>
<td>“There is always a sense of restlessness in me.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>“…feeling of abandonment swelled up, there is fear, tension, I am aware of that and I may not want to go deeper into it.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Stories**

The loneliness and exhaustion are related to hurts and wounds in the past and uncertainties about the future. Their personal stories, including some separation issues, of how they were brought up from original families is still affecting them in some way.

(Participant D and F, for example) Again, their stories are related to their self-perceived
self-image, and how family members and co-workers perceive them. They are also affected by ministry setting, cooperation with leading pastors and co-workers. Among the six participants, five of them have experiences of resigning from previous ministry settings. (Participant C is the only person who is working in the same church since she began her ministry resigned?). The following may be considered as main theme story of the six participants:4

Participant A. Moody, feeling of boredom tends to loom large sometimes.

Participant B. Lonely, introvert, experienced wounds and hurts in past ministerial experiences.

Participant C. Lonely, try to maintain the balance as relationship with the congregation and co-workers becoming tense sometimes.

Participant D. Hollow man, a cancer survivor bordered by sickness from time to time. Emotionally, he observes his inferior feeling sometimes.

Participant E. Superman mentality, always wants to do more and achieve the best.

Participant F. She considers herself a perfectionist, and that is due to the feeling of abandonment and other family issues.

**E. Designing the Spiritual Guidebook**

The spiritual directors in Hong Kong are experiencing disconnection and feel tired and lonely. The intention of this project is to create a spiritual guidebook5 that can help spiritual directors assess problems in their spiritual lives and discover solutions that will benefit themselves. The findings and analysis of the above data will confirm whether the tool provided for them is feasible.

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4 The wordings used are exact words used by the participants.

5 See appendix for the complete spiritual guidebook.
The themes of the guidebook begin to unfold as the researcher studies the sharing records in the focus groups, answers from the original questionnaires and the transcribed interviews. Subsequently, the researcher has identified the themes based on the participants’ feedbacks on the above areas. *The Spiritual Leader’s Guide to Self-Care* written by Rochelle Melander and Harold Eppley was published about ten years ago⁶. It is an ideal companion for clergy, who would like guidance about how to make changes in their personal life and ministry but do not want to read a text-heavy book about self-care. The seven themes in the book are: 1. Creating a Life Vision, 2. Caring for Yourself at Work, 3. Nurturing Your Relationships, 4. Caring for Your Spirit and Body, 5. Caring for Your Finances, 6. Caring for Your Intellect, 7. Sustaining a Life Vision. Other than theme 5 and 6, the commonality of the themes confirms that the contents of the spiritual guidebook are addressing the needs of the spiritual directors.

While the meaning of vocation appears to be clear to the participants, lack of recognition and affirmation is actually a major cause of disconnection for clergy especially when they attempt to articulate a sense of vocation. There are doubts and questions on callings, spiritual gifts as the participants look for God’s specific calling and guidance.

Although it is hard to assess or evaluate self-understanding and discernment, and there is difficulty in exploring discrepancy between self-perception and others’ perception, increasing discernment of one’s own irritations and temptation seem to be

important issues to the participants. The participants have experienced isolation from others, loneliness and solitude, and the need of a community seems obvious.

The participants are aware of the indispensability of shared practices like holy listening and Sabbath rest and they enjoy the intimate and personal experience in prayer. They understand that these are practices to deal with their busy schedule and their burden with ministries. They also have to develop resiliency strength, cultivating gentleness in facing one’s vulnerabilities, irritation and restlessness. Finally, spiritual growth is inseparable from the experience of deepening life with God through regular practices, rest and renewal.

In gleaning the data collected from the interviews and the group discussion, the findings are coherent with the questionnaire. Subsequently, the researcher has finally come up with the following themes for the guidebook:

1. Confirmation of calling, discerning spiritual gifts
2. Sabbath rest
3. Self-management, self-intimacy
4. Intimacy with others (co-working), hospitality
5. Spiritual progress and breakthrough
6. Spiritual friendship, spiritual support

F. Questionnaire

In the original questionnaire:7 “How is it with your Soul?” designed by Ruth Haley Barton, she mentioned that if a participant finds himself or herself in the always or

7 The questionnaire has twenty questions, which I am going to put it in the Appendix for reference. The original questionnaire of Ruth Barton has only fifteen questions. I have adopted its format and made
often portion of the continuum for three or more of the questions, then the participant may already become dangerously tired and losing soul in ministry. Although this is an adaptation of the questionnaire, I think the same principle still applies. The participants are asked to reflect on each question quietly before God’s presence and provide answers according to a scale of five: Always-Often-Sometimes-Rarely-Never. For our purpose, the never and rarely answers are not recorded, but the “Sometimes” answers are recorded.

Result of Questionnaires

1.1 Original Questionnaires

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant A</th>
<th>State of Soul</th>
<th>Answer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Question</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Going through Motion of ministry</td>
<td>Sometimes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Spiritual Practices slipped</td>
<td>Sometimes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Isolated</td>
<td>Sometimes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Dissatisfaction with team work and fellowship</td>
<td>Often</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Ministry more important than relationship with God</td>
<td>Sometimes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Sense of Calling challenged</td>
<td>Sometimes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>SD Ministry diminishing</td>
<td>Often</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>My self-perception does not converge</td>
<td>Sometimes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>Sabbath rest disturbed</td>
<td>Often</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant B</th>
<th>State of Soul</th>
<th>Answer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Question</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Going through Motion of ministry</td>
<td>Often</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Confused with what God has called me to do</td>
<td>Sometimes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Tired and don’t know how to get rested</td>
<td>Often</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Underlying irritability and restlessness</td>
<td>Sometimes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Emotionally numbed sometimes</td>
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</tr>
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<td>9</td>
<td>Deviant behavior,</td>
<td>Sometimes</td>
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<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Avoid social interaction</td>
<td>Sometimes</td>
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<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Spiritual Practices slipped</td>
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</tr>
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<td>13</td>
<td>Isolated</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Dissatisfaction with team work and fellowship</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

adjustments to suit my purpose. See Ruth Barton, How is it with your Soul? A questionnaire, in her website, The Transforming Centre, www.thetransformingcenter.org/
| 15 | Ministry more important than relationship with God | Sometimes |
| 16 | Sense of Calling challenged | Often |
| 17 | SD Ministry diminishing | Often |
| 18 | My self-perception does not converge | Sometimes |
| 20 | Sabbath rest disturbed | Sometimes |

### Participant C

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>State of Soul</th>
<th>Answer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
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<td>12</td>
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<td>16</td>
<td>Sense of Calling challenged</td>
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<td>Question</td>
<td>State of Soul</td>
<td>Answer</td>
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<td>----------</td>
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<td>18</td>
<td>My self perception does not converge</td>
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1.2 Second Questionnaire

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<td>13</td>
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Participant B

<table>
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<th>Question</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Going through Motion of ministry</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Confused with what God has called me to do</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Tired and don’t know how to get rested</td>
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8 High incidence only.
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**Participant C**

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<tr>
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<th>State of Soul</th>
<th>Answer</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Tired, don’t know how to get rested</td>
<td>Sometimes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Underlying irritability and restlessness</td>
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<td>10</td>
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<td>Sometimes</td>
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**Participant D**

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<tr>
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<th>State of Soul</th>
<th>Answer</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Going through Motion of ministry</td>
<td>Sometimes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
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**Participant E**

136
### Question State of Soul Answer

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<th>Question</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Going through Motion of ministry</td>
<td>Sometimes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>I am aware of a nagging sense</td>
<td>Often</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Rushing from one thing to the next</td>
<td>Often</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Underlying irritability and restlessness</td>
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<td>Sabbath rest disturbed</td>
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### Participant F

<table>
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<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>Going through Motion of ministry</td>
<td>Sometimes</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>Underlying irritability and restlessness</td>
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<td>20</td>
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<td>Often</td>
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### Question 19

In order to verify the answers to the questionnaire, the design of this questionnaire offers one positive answer to the participants, and the result is shown as followed:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question 19</th>
<th>I befriend myself and am able to manage strong emotion and impulse during high stress situation</th>
<th>Original Questionnaire</th>
<th>Second Questionnaire</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>Often</td>
<td>Often</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>Sometimes</td>
<td>Sometimes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>Often</td>
<td>Often</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>Always</td>
<td>Often</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>E</td>
<td>Often</td>
<td>Often</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
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<td>Rarely</td>
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G. Focus Groups

**First Focus Group Meeting**

The purpose of the first focus group meeting is to find out the needs of the participants by looking at the areas that they often or sometimes feel inadequate. Their needs are reflected in the questionnaire as well as in the interviews, but they did give an answer to their major and specific need in focus groups too. The following questions are discussed and a summary of the answers are recorded:

1. What do spiritual directors value most in situations when they feel energized?
   a. Contentment
   b. Presence of God (mentioned many times by all participants, bringing them peace and great satisfaction)
   c. Forgiveness
   d. Reconciliation
   e. Being encouraged and understood
   f. Rest
   g. Sense of achievement
   h. Sense of security

2. What do spiritual directors need to improve their spiritual wellbeing?
   a. Healing

---

9 See Appendix for complete record of focused group meeting
b Let go and let God: Focusing on the ministry angles as mentioned by Eugene Peterson. 10

c Heart of Integrity: Awareness, Honesty

d Stability: strength coming out of rest and trust in God

e Connection: loving, ministering, but not over- attaching

f Team work: spirit of community

g Maturity: able to persevere and take more pressure

3. Responses made by individual participant when they talk about their areas of constraints and empowerment:

A. Empowerment: I am free when I feel God’s acknowledgment me personally.

Constraint: Not many will consider me as a spiritual director. They would consider me as a pastor, more than a spiritual director... I have not received formal training in spiritual direction.

B. Empowerment: I feel energized when I am having my day off, doing nothing, sleep, and even in doing some chores.

Constraint: I am sleepless sometimes. [Talking about her church ministry-] It’s just like reporting to my boss, I was asked by my boss and held accountable to him the statistics and information about the groups that I am responsible for. I dislike that. I think the constraints are related to church culture…the mega-church mentality which emphasizes numbers, etc.

C. **Empowerment:** Purity of heart. It is the purity of heart that we should value.

**Constraint:** But the setting of ministering in a local church perhaps is still my constraint. Contradiction or tensions still exists…. But how can I be a genuine spiritual director if I fail to face all the day in and day out issues or struggles?

D. **Empowerment:** not mentioned

**Constraint:** In the past six years, the feeling of loneliness persisted, as I perceived myself walking alone in my chaplain ministry.

E. **Empowerment:** not mentioned.

**Constraint:** I am just like a superman, doing unlimited things unlimited time. I need more space, or to be exact, it’s an art of positioning yourself correctly.

A. **Empowerment:** Not mentioned. (At this point, F told us that her mother, who’s been sick for a while, passed away. The discussion stopped as we prayed for her)

**Constraint:** I am a perfectionist, according to the Enneagram; I am number one and I always doubtful and questioning myself. I felt the agitations inside, and the agitation is my constraint.

4. What kind of changes do you anticipate?

A. I want to see change in church and seminaries, one day that they will focus more on spiritual formation and spiritual direction.

B. Rest!

C. I want to have Sabbath rest, more calmness and peace.

D. Rest!

E. I need the space, I need to slow down, but I am inclined to be functional.
F. I think I have to learn to get in touch with myself, but yet, do not be indulged or being driven by what is inside.

1. Second Focus Group Meeting

2.1 The participants were led to share their impression from the following aspects, namely, the impression of the focus group meeting, the content of the guidebook, and the effectiveness of the guidebook. Most of the participants agreed that the meetings were able to bring them together as a group and they were authentic. Yet, the consensus is that the feeling of being connected in such a short duration is almost impossible. Most participants think the content is good and relevant, and some participants shared how the writing's and practices have helped them.

2.2 Specific discussion: Practicing the guidebook

Participant A concentrated on certain exercises but didn’t have sufficient time to go in depth. He particularly mentioned the chapter on shared practice and his longing for deeper fellowship. Participant B read the guidebook and practiced doing most of the exercises. She mentioned the chapter on vocation and self-intimacy was inspiring and relevant. The practice of scriptural meditation especially the passage on the mother of Jesus revived her from low spirit. Participant C went through the guidebook in a very detailed manner and shared with her soul friends and colleagues. Participant D went through the guidebook and practiced some of the exercises on vocation and self-intimacy. Participant E was extremely busy; his schedule was totally upset. He read the guidebook and got a general impression that the content is good, but figured that he had not the time to do the exercises, he didn’t get into it. Participant F went through the parts that she
liked the session on self-intimacy and shared practice and she spent time on doing the exercises.

2.3 To what extent the guidebook is helpful? The participants are requested to answer ranging from extremely helpful to not sure

A. Helpful
B. Very Helpful
C. Extremely helpful
D. Very helpful
E. Not Sure
F. Extremely helpful

2.3 Details

A. The part on Vocation and shared practices is most helpful, I wish I had more time to go into it. But I realize that I need more spiritual friends who are more supportive.

B. We don’t have something like this to help us. Overall, the guidebook is very helpful in terms of the scripture and the guidance.

C. It is extremely helpful. It is a big help to pastors.

D. The guidebook is good. It is relevant. I am a person who needs guideline. I have done deep reflection on the part on vocation and self-intimacy. I have more extra time to enter silence before God, especially the past two months. To some extent, it has helped me to face the recent crisis.

E. I suppose the content is helpful. But honestly speaking, I didn’t have much time spending on it. But my impression is that the material must be experienced personally.
My apartment has a leakage problem recently. My wife faced some problems in her workplace. She is not feeling well. I have to take care of the kids too.

F. The guidebook came at the right time. The part on vocation also attracted me, when I related to Moses. It arouses a lot of emotion but on the other hand, it is comforting, and the contents are speaking to me.
CHAPTER 6
RESULTS AND SOLUTIONS TO MINISTRY PROBLEM

The process of going through the literature review in chapter 3, which includes word studies, and various authors’ proposals is not only fruitful, but also helps us to clarify the different approaches toward supporting spiritual directors. In chapter 4, Biblical and theological reflections also confirm the qualities of a spiritual director, who should take care of himself or herself and understand how he or she can be sustained. It is also clear that the ministry of spiritual direction is closely related to a process of formation of the spiritual director. As spiritual directors practice self-intimacy, intimacy to others and God, the learning experiences will transform them to become more hopeful, restful and hospitable co-workers of God. Finally, in chapter 5, the procedure of conducting the research and all the data collected is presented.  

In evaluating the methodology used and how well it has accomplished the intended results, the researcher is very satisfactory with the invaluable process of learning. It is important to reiterate that the directed intended result is not extensive city transformation although the researcher does reckon that personal transformation of Hong Kong church leaders will gradually bring about city transformation. The researcher must also admit the data and information collected through interviews, groups, and questionnaires is enormous, and some of them subtle. Nevertheless, the researcher considers this process of analyzing and verifying the data a meaningful process.

---

1 The result is put here instead of chapter 5 because the researcher wants the reader see more clearly the analysis on one hand and the solution on the other.
Measuring spiritual growth is a difficult task because spirituality includes various concepts and experiences like religiosity, devoutness, orthodoxy and spiritual wellbeing, etc. Some researcher will choose not to use the term “measurement,” because he or she ascertains the difficulty of doing so. The Scripture talks about maturity as the goal of transformation, and the notion of maturity as “being like Christ until the fullness of Christ” (Ephesians 4:13) is obvious. While it is possible to work on an exegetical study of words like growth or maturity, it is hard to interpret personal understanding and experiences of growth and maturity. Bassinger points out that the inherently private nature of our own religious experiences makes it exceedingly difficult to accurately communicate those experiences to others.

There is still a “serious philosophical tension related to the interpretation and/or application” of any resultant data. Attempts at scientific study in this field sometimes fail to avoid the naturalistic or “ought/is” fallacy. This error can be more than biased interpretations of the data. It can also include failing to clarify which conclusions stem from objective measurement observations, and which stem from the personal beliefs of the person doing the measuring.2

Thus, Bassinger concludes that it is not that the researchers fail to understand this tension, but that “inherently prescriptive nature of religiousness makes it difficult to clearly separate the prescriptive from the descriptive in this context.”3

A. Reflections and Evaluation: Interviews, Focused Groups, Questionnaires

As in all qualitative researches, identifying, coding, and categorizing the main themes, topics, and patterns in the information are fundamental to understanding the findings. These data include codes and phrases that categorize sequences of events,


3 Ibid.
changes that occur over time and behaviors that occur on a regular basis. In doing this, the researcher will be able to verify and confirm the solutions offered to the ministry problem.

Evaluating the data is a difficult and demanding task for every researcher. It is helpful to focus on the data related to the desired outcome and compare with the actual data the researcher compiled. As mentioned in Chapter 1, the desired outcome is mainly 1. To increase the awareness of the spiritual directors in maintaining healthy and sustainable spiritual practices 2. To assess the effectiveness of this project by asking whether the spiritual guidebook has adequately addressed the needs of the spiritual directors. 3. To assess whether the participants’ practices of the spiritual guidebook has been able to bring about some transformative changes in their lives, thus helping to restore their spiritual vitality. As mentioned, changes experienced in the areas of self-knowledge, self-management, and self-motivation are significant indicators.

In terms of method and scale of measurement, the researcher wants to point out that it is not the performance, effectiveness and influence that he is interested in. As we look for behavioral change, we concern more about attitudinal change. Finally, we will study whether there is any perspective change. The project may not align with the Multidimensional Measure of Religiousness/Spirituality (MMRS)\(^4\) despite the fact that MMRS has become the standard measure of religiousness. Consider its comprehensive nature, which covers a wide spectrum, it may be more suitable for quantitative research. Since we want to focus on the depth, the purpose of this project is to explore various

types of triangulation strategies and to discuss when these different types should be used in research. Using more than one theoretical scheme in the interpretation of the phenomenon would help us to come up with multi-perspective view as well as strong internal and external, valid and reliable findings.

In this project, four instruments are used to find out more about the need of the spiritual directors. I will deal with the findings through the three instruments in this session and will look at the spiritual guidebook as a major instrument later. The findings will be presented in multiple ways so that we can clarify and find out the true meaning. To decide how effectively the program has accomplished its intended purpose, specific evaluative instruments will be provided to evaluate the information.

**B. Evaluating the Data**

The researcher understands that it is the task for every D.Min student to glean and decipher the data. The design of this project—using interview, questionnaires and focus group, has successfully gathered information from the participants. As mentioned, there are different coding categories as a method for sorting qualitative data. In the following, I will try to interpret the data by focusing on five specific areas: 1. Compare the interviews and questionnaires with regards to specific answers. In doing this, I am looking for perspectives held by the participants, their ways of thinking and responses to various situations. 2. Differences between the first and second questionnaires. 3. High incidence pattern according to the questionnaires. 4. Transformation and Practice and 5. Aspirations/Attitude.
Comparing the data of Interview and Questionnaire

It is important to focus on specific answers, which give clues as to the actual situation of participants, and whether they feel supported and sustained. Firstly, all the participants are convinced that this ministry is meaningful and helpful to the larger congregation. Yet their vocation and passion in this specific area is not recognized. The reasons behind the lack of attention or recognition are varied. The way in which they feel depleted and in what way they feel sustained is also varied. Secondly, the participants’ relationships with their ministry settings is ambivalent, partly because of the demand of ministries, partly due to self-imposing demands and in some way related to their relationship with co-workers. The participants are trained in spiritual direction and they are experienced church ministers and pastors. Rather, they are looking for more affirmation and support. Thirdly, the participants’ fatigue and stress is due to strong feeling of exhaustion, irritability, and helplessness, resulting from lack of support, and further ensued withdrawal from ministries and practices. Finally, personal struggles, including personal growth issues and spiritual depletion are still affecting the emotions of all the participants.

Exploring in what ways the answers show the different needs of the participants and how they are related to the data we got from the questionnaires will help us to verify whether the spiritual directors find the spiritual guidebook helpful and feel sustained. In the following, six quotations correlating with six areas of spiritual formation and practices will be recorded. These quotations represent the specific and unique needs of

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5 Study in chapter 4 informs us that the spiritual beliefs and attitudes of incarnational and servant leaders should foster the development of certain behaviors associated with the practice of a spiritual director.
the participants, but do not imply that these are their only needs. In fact, needs arise due to different internal or external stimuli.

- In the area of vocation

Participant D

“*I found I was only a hollow person, the emptiness feeling because of lack of recognition, who serves in order to gain more knowledge, in order to prove myself to others.*”

Due to various reasons, participant D is doubtful of his qualification, training, and experiences in serving as church minister and chaplain. His description of himself as a hollow person is poignant. He is also troubled by his illness. The main issue underlying this struggle may be related to his longing for God and spiritual companion. If the longing for friends is more a co-dependent behavior, he just wants to be affirmed and satisfied. In that case, he is not satisfied with himself, nor is he really enjoying a deep and healthy relationship with God.

- In the area of self-understanding and discernment

Participant E

“I couldn’t listen well when I felt agitated. Connection with God and with others stopped. I noticed the wounds that may be related to some deep needs in my life.”

Participant E’s agitation reflects in his efforts to cultivate a spiritual life that contributes to his ministry and his personal growth. The interview shows that he is trying hard to use various spiritual practices to help himself. He loves prayer and silence. However, when life’s balance is offset, he becomes a bit agitated and even compulsive. As a counselor, he understands self-empathy. He has an accurate self-image and is
compassionate. The disconnection ensued is perhaps due to the wounds and deep needs in his life. He needs clear vision of his life so that he can clarify it for others.

- In the area of isolation from others

Participant C

“It is stressful and I feel irritated sometimes. I find the duty of coaching young staffs extremely challenging.”

Participant has succeeded as senior pastor recently. She is still going through a transitional period. She mentioned compassion fatigue in interview and group session. The feeling of isolation becomes stronger as her status has changed. She has to face complications in leading a pastoral team, like assessment of gifts and allocation of tasks, and even use of power. But is she too self-demanding? Does her role as a spiritual director conflict with her role as a senior pastor?

- In the area of shared practice

Participant F

“I think it is mainly busyness and overloaded with work. This has become a pattern that triggers me from time to time...Lack of support, over loaded...lack of peace”

Participant F described her achievement oriented working pattern. Sarcastically, she calls herself a perfectionist. It is hard for a perfectionist to co-work and allow herself to have the space for shared practice with others.
• In the area of developing resilience strength

Participant B

“At present, I feel lonely because my intention to work more on spiritual formation is not the main vision of our church. It’s a highly action-oriented church. They are not well aware of their wellbeing, doing nothing to nurture their lives.” Pressure mounted as I started working again. I found myself torn between…I found myself having multifaceted needs apart from the inward desire of drawing near to God.”

If loneliness is common experience of spiritual directors/clergy, we have to ask how they can serve well and at the same time, maintain good relationship with one self and with God. It will benefit spiritual directors if they can identify the feeling of loneliness and all the underlying factors as opportunity of formation. This unique learning opportunity is related to spiritual practice. In this case, learning how to be a resilient person when facing disagreement, especially disagreement with co-workers or senior leader, is crucial.

• In the area of deepening life with God

Participant A

“I prefer to have more quiet time. I feel moody, lack of energy, lifeless and bored.” “I want to be renewed.”

When asked whether he was going through the motion of ministry in the questionnaire, participant A’s answer for the first time and second time is “sometimes.” This comment in the interview seems to reflect a real life situation in which he is just doing the routine but not re-charting the course. He has overcome certain personality deficiency and experienced transformative changes. He is open to accept any
reorientation and renewal. But the exclamation seems to indicate that the grace moments
of living deeper life in God is not yet a reality.

Feedback in the Questionnaire

In reviewing the answers in the questionnaires, the researcher wanted to confirm
whether they are coherent to the answers in the interview according to the above
sequence. For participant D, his response to the vocational question: “I found myself not
exercising the gift of a spiritual director.” He answered sometimes the first time, but in
the second time he answered always. This can be considered as identical to his
description of himself as a hollow person. For participant E, when he responded to
“underlying irritability and restlessness beneath the surface of his life,” he answered often
the first and the second time. It seems clear that he has to improve his self-understanding
and discernment in this particular area. These often answers indicate that he is indeed
going through the motion of ministries, being driven, and rushing from one ministry to
others.

Participant C’s feeling of isolation as mentioned in the interview is not reflected
in the questionnaire. Her first and second answers to the question “isolated with no one to
confide in or understand her situation” are rare. However, her answers to another
question: “we don’t have a way of seeking God together and sufficient time for
fellowship,” are often. This inconsistent phenomenon invites us to probe further to find
out the underlying meaning. In response to “we don’t have a way of seeking God together
and sufficient time for fellowship”, participant F answered sometimes the first time, and
answered often the second time. Therefore, her responses in the questionnaire match with
what she described in the interview.
For participant B, her responses to the question regarding resilience strength: “driven by other ministries, and spiritual direction ministry is diminishing,” are often. We can consider these responses as identical to the interview. Participant A’s response to the question on “my spiritual practices have slipped…” reflects his distance from God. He answered sometimes in the first questionnaire and answered often in the second. Seeing no contradiction in this area, we can confirm longing for deeper relationship is indeed his concern.

**Difference Between First and Second Questionnaires**

The purpose of comparing the first questionnaire and the second questionnaire is to find out whether participants are making any improvement. The questionnaire follows Ruth Barton’s scale of assessing the spiritual condition of the pastor. Barton mentioned that “If you (the pastors) find yourself in the Always-Often portion of the continuum for three or more of the questions, the chances are you are already becoming dangerously tired, and losing your soul in ministry.” Since Barton’s questionnaire has fifteen questions and mine has twenty, some adjustments have to be made. If three or more answers in the Always-Often portion is sign of dangerously tired and losing soul in ministry, according to Barton’s questionnaire, perhaps, four or five answers or above should be considered unhealthy or depleted according to my questionnaire.

The answers of the participants will be presented as followed:

First time: Y
Second Time: V

1. More and more often I notice that I am “going through the motions” of ministry. I am teaching things I am not currently experiencing in my own life, and providing
pastoral care that is “artificial.”

2. I am aware of a nagging sense that something is not quite right but I don’t seem to be able to take the time or make the effort to look into it.

3. I find myself rushing from one thing to the next without time to really pay attention to what’s going on in and around me.

4. I am keeping up with what pastoral ministry requires but deep down I feel that have lost touch with who I am in God and sometimes feel confused with what he has called me to do.
5. I am tired – not just physically but spiritually and emotionally. I don’t really know how to get rested.

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6. I am aware of an underlying irritability and restlessness just beneath the surface of my life.

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7. I can’t stop working even when I know I need to.

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8. I have become emotionally numb-unable to in touch with my innermost emotion.

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9. I find myself increasingly giving in to escapist behaviors, sometimes dreaming about being somewhere else or having a different life.

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10. I do not have time for attending to my human needs – exercise, eating right, getting enough sleep, etc.

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11. I find myself hoarding energy – avoiding people in the grocery store, holing up at home or in my office – for fear that routine social interactions will rob me of that last bit of energy.

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12. My spiritual practices have slipped. Although I know that practices such as solitude, prayer, personal reflection on Scripture, etc. are life giving, I find I don’t have time or energy for them.

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13. I feel isolated with no one to fully confide in and no one who fully understands my situation.

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14. My staff team / elders and I are very good at strategic planning and “thinking our way” into solutions. Aside from perfunctory prayers to book – end our meetings, we don’t have a way of seeking God together and sufficient time for fellowship.

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15. It has been a long time since I have felt connected with the presence of God in my own life beyond what I am doing for others. Sometimes I suspect that my vision for ministry has become more important to me than my own relationship with God.

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16. Although my sense of calling to be a spiritual director is positive, I found myself not exercising my gift of a spiritual director.

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</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>V</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>V</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>V</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

17. I felt driven by other ministries and the impact of my ministry in spiritual direction or spiritual care is diminishing.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Always</th>
<th>Often</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Rarely</th>
<th>Never</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td></td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>V</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td></td>
<td>Y V</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td></td>
<td>Y V</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>V</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E</td>
<td></td>
<td>Y V</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td></td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>V</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
18. My self-perception and how others look at me does not converge.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Always</th>
<th>Often</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Rarely</th>
<th>Never</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>Y V</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>Y V</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>Y V</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>V Y</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E</td>
<td>Y V</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>V Y</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

19. I befriend myself and am able to manage strong emotion and impulses during high stress situation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Always</th>
<th>Often</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Rarely</th>
<th>Never</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>Y V</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>Y V</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>Y V</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>V Y</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E</td>
<td>Y V</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>Y V</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

20. My schedule of Sabbath rest is being interrupted from time to time.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Always</th>
<th>Often</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Rarely</th>
<th>Never</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>Y V</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>Y V</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>Y V</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>V Y</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E</td>
<td>V Y</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>Y V</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Differences between the answers of the first time and the second time**

The premise of the questionnaire assumes the finding or answers of the participants will inform the researcher whether the participants have nurtured and experienced intimacy. By looking at the changes in the *sometimes, often and always* answers, we can notice the difference.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>First Time</th>
<th></th>
<th>Second time</th>
<th></th>
<th>First Time</th>
<th></th>
<th>Second Time</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Often-Always</td>
<td>Sometimes</td>
<td>Often-Always</td>
<td>Sometimes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>13</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>11</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>12</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

By comparing the answers of the two questionnaires, the researcher notices their obvious differences, which imply changes. As mentioned in chapter 4, changes imply not only personal growth for the participants, but that they are being sustained and transformed. On the other hand, changes that are negative may imply un-formation or the need of transformation. In addition, the changes shown in each individual participant is different, either indicating improvement or lack of improvement.

For participant A, major changes reflect in answers from *sometimes* to *never*, and from *often* to *sometimes* (question 11 and 17), indicating improvement. Yet, there are also answers, which showed lack of improvement (for example question 2, 4, 5, 6 and 12). In particular, his answer to question 4 in the second questionnaire is *often*, showing his increasing confusion. For participant B, the change is also obvious. But the different answers as shown in changes from *rarely* to *often* or from *sometimes* to *always*, indicating lots of improvement. The slight changes for participant C as shown in the answers in the first and the second questionnaires from *sometimes* to *rarely* indicate improvement. If we look at the two sets of answers, participant C seems to be the most stable participant. Participant D seems to be very stable according to the above table. The

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6 We use the wording “negative” only to say it is the opposite of positive. For the spiritual director, any “negative or downward” changes are opportunities of growth.
answers either move from *sometimes* to *rarely*, or from *often* to *sometimes*, which is a good sign. But there are three answers moving from *sometimes* to *always*. Further analysis will inform us whether this improvement is true. For participant E, significant change is noticed, answers moving from *rarely* to *often*, or negatively, from *always* to *rarely*. For participant F, some significant changes showing dramatic difference from the answers between the first and the second questionnaire.

If we just look at the Often-Always portion, it appears that participant A and C is fairly stable. Dramatic changes can be noticed in the answers of participants B, E and F. Participant B’s change is positive and transformative, whereas the situations of E and F are getting worse because of personal reasons. During the second focus group meeting, we were told E has to face crisis including apartment damages, his wife changing job and his daughter going to another school. F had to take care of her mother who had cancer until she passed away. While both of them felt very emotionally upset, we may say their resilience level is challenged.

All participants have become rather agitated and tend to be more functional especially when they are overwhelmed with work. Lack of room for oneself and lack of space for others and for God is common to all. If the positive changes are due to the space allowed for oneself, others and God, these changes are transformational. Apart from behavioral changes, changes in attitude and perception are also transformational. Therefore, self-knowledge, self-appreciation and self-care are hallmarks of self-intimacy, and knowing oneself emotionally and appreciating what one sees are indispensable. The negative changes may reflect a possibility that self-intimacy is at stake, however, it may
also reflect that the participants are ready to disclose their innermost lives and that they are willing to face their vulnerabilities.

**High Incidence patterns**

In qualitative research, identifying high incidence pattern is a usual practice. Using Barton’s scale, I have reviewed the first and the second questionnaire by looking at the answers of all the participants. The general impression of changes has informed us the fluctuation, either declining, or progressing. While this may be too general, checking the high incidence pattern may be helpful. After reading the questionnaires as well as the interviews, seven answers are identified as the high incidence patterns.

1. **First Questionnaire**
   
   a. Dissatisfaction with team work and fellowship, five out of six 5/6 participants answered often
   
   b. SD ministry diminishing, four out of six 4/6 participants answered often
   
   c. Underlying irritability and restlessness, five out of six 5/6 answered often
   
   d. I can’t stop working even when I know I need to. Four out of six 4/6 answered rarely
   
   e. My spiritual practices have slipped. Five out of six 5/6 answered sometimes
   
   f. Two answered sometimes 2/6 and two answered rarely, 2/6, one answered never, 1/6 and one answered often 1/6
   
   g. Sabbath rest interrupted. 2 participants answered often 3/6 participants and three answered sometimes. 3/6

2. **Second Questionnaire**

   a. Dissatisfaction with team work and fellowship, four out of six, 4/6 participants answered often, one answered always
   
   b. SD ministry diminishing, two out of six 2/6 participants answered often, three out of 6 participants answered sometimes.
c. Underlying irritability and restlessness, four out of six, 4/6 participants answered often

d. I can’t stop working even when I know I need to, five out of six 5/6 participants answered sometimes

e. My spiritual practices have slipped, 2/6 participants two answered often and 4/6 Four answered sometimes

f. I feel isolated. Three answered often3/6, one answered sometimes,

g. Sabbath rest interrupted. Three answered often3/6, one answered always 1/6, one answered sometimes 1/6

Comparing the answers of the six participants in the first questionnaire and the second questionnaire in regard to high incidence pattern:

**Table 15. Comparison between first and second questionnaire**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>First Questionnaire</th>
<th>Second time Questionnaire</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dissatisfaction with team work and fellowship</td>
<td>5/6</td>
<td>4/6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(from 5 answer often to 4 answer often)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SD ministry diminishing</td>
<td>4/6</td>
<td>2/6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(from 4 answer often to 2 answer often)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Underlying irritability and restlessness</td>
<td>5/6</td>
<td>4/6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(from 5 answer often to 4 answer often)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I can’t stop working even when I know I need to</td>
<td>4/6</td>
<td>5/6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(from 4 answer sometimes to 5 answers sometimes)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My spiritual practices have slipped</td>
<td>5/6</td>
<td>4/6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(from 5 answer sometimes to 4 answer sometimes)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel isolated</td>
<td>1/6</td>
<td>3/6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(from 1 answer often to 3 answer: often)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sabbath rest interrupted</td>
<td>2/6</td>
<td>3/6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(from 2 answer often to 3 answer often)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Cross analysis 1**

Table 15 shows the high incidence pattern of the participants and their commonalities. Their struggles and spiritual journeys are unique and personal. While there are differences between the participants and some of them are significant, how to measure them is often the hurdle in analysis. It is important for spiritual directors to be connected. Thus, I will try to look at their responses from another angle, namely, their
intimacy level. In designing this questionnaire, I am aware of the fact that three components are utilized to find out the responses of the participants to their spiritual growth. The three components are the aspect of intimacy with God, with oneself and with others. In particular, the three aspects can be referred as prayer life, self-care, and room for others. All three levels of intimacy and experiences are intertwined. They are interrelated and may affect one another, positively or negatively.

This questionnaire focuses more on self-intimacy because self-understanding and self worth are indeed very important to the spiritual wellbeing of the participants. This doesn’t mean that intimacy with God is less important. Hands and Fehr consider self-intimacy as a spiritual quest because “genuine self esteem and self appreciation can only be received as ultimately God-given.”

Since the changes in participant B is more obvious, and changes in participant D requires us to verify, the following table is used to help us notice the individual change as well as their differences. In the following, I will show only the questions or areas that reflects changes.

**Participant B**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>First Time Questionnaire</th>
<th>Second Time Questionnaire</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Going through Motion of ministry</td>
<td>Often</td>
<td>Sometimes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Confused with what God has called me to do</td>
<td>Sometimes</td>
<td>Rarely</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 Tired and don’t know how to get rested</td>
<td><strong>Often</strong></td>
<td>Sometimes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 Emotionally numbed sometimes</td>
<td>Sometimes</td>
<td>Sometimes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 Deviant behavior</td>
<td>Sometimes</td>
<td>Sometimes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 Underlying irritability and restlessness</td>
<td><strong>Often</strong></td>
<td>Often</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 Avoid social interaction</td>
<td>Sometimes</td>
<td>Rarely</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 Spiritual Practices slipped</td>
<td><strong>Often</strong></td>
<td>Sometimes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13 Isolated</td>
<td><strong>Often</strong></td>
<td>Often</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

7 Hands and Fehr, 31.
### Participant D

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>First time</th>
<th>Second Time</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Question First time Questionnaire</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question Second Time Questionnaire</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Going through Motion of ministry</td>
<td>Sometimes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Emotionally numbed sometimes</td>
<td>Sometimes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Underlying irritability and restlessness</td>
<td>Often</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Avoid social interaction</td>
<td>Sometimes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Spiritual Practices slipped</td>
<td>Sometimes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Isolated</td>
<td>Sometimes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Dissatisfaction with team work and fellowship</td>
<td>Often</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Ministry more important than relationship with God</td>
<td>Sometimes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Sense of Calling challenged</td>
<td>Sometimes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>SD Ministry diminishing</td>
<td>Often</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>My self perception does not converge</td>
<td>Sometimes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- First time: 8 questions with often answers
- Second time: 5 questions with often answers, 3 questions answering rarely (from sometimes to rarely). B is becoming healthier according to Barton’s scale.
- The ministerial situation of B has not changed much since then, according to the answers she made and her sharing. She seems to come to term with the situation and gradually making some headway.

- First time: 3 questions with often answers
- Second time: 3 questions answering always, but also 6 questions answering never or rarely according to the above table.
- The six answers in the rarely-never range can be considered as improvement. Yet, the “always” answers to question 14, 16 and 18 seem to contradict that. Can we argue participant D’s self-intimacy level is more or less the same?
- There are some other changes deserving attention. For example: Question 6, answered often the first time, and answered rarely the second time. Question 7, answered rarely the first time, and answered never the second time. Question 8,
answered sometimes the first time, and answered never the second time.

- The three questions that participant answering always is related to his calling, his self-image, and his relationship with colleague. When I relate this observation to the interviews and our group session discussion, I tried to find out the coherence and I noticed expressions such as:

  “The interpersonal relationship in fellowship groups in the church and fellowship group in the hospital did not bring me full satisfaction. I always expect to have a profound friendship, but it is always disappointing.”

- This expression is consistent with participant D who shared in the focus group during which he shared his struggle with the colleague who focused more on routine ministry rather than spiritual direction.

- If the above is what participant D had experienced before, the following is what he experienced later on. In the final group session, he commented:

  “I find the guidebook helpful… I am a person who needs guideline… and guidelines give me a sense of direction…. by means of contemplation and dialogue with God and myself… a quiet time for myself…”

**Cross analysis 2**

Qualitative research like this wanted to be as descriptive as possible. However, value judgments in every measurement strategy are unavoidable. These value judgments influence what is measured and how it is measured. Keith White argues that a measure of spiritual transformation must preserve the sanctity of the personal relationship between God and the believer. This is in accord to what we discuss in chapter 4. Measuring intimacy with God helps us to identify the participants’ willingness to practice the spiritual disciplines to sustain one to follow after God and to be taken care by God. It’s worthwhile to analyze the participant’s changes from this angle. To show the difference, we will involve participant C in this analysis.

---

Participant B

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questions relate to Intimacy with God</th>
<th>First time Answer</th>
<th>Second Time Answer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4. Lost touch with who I am in God and sometimes feel confused with what He has called me to do</td>
<td>Sometimes</td>
<td>Rarely</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Spiritual practices have slipped</td>
<td>Often</td>
<td>Sometimes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. Ministry is more important than relationship with God</td>
<td>Sometimes</td>
<td>Sometimes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. Not exercising my gift as spiritual director</td>
<td>Often</td>
<td>Often</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20 Schedule of Sabbath rest interrupted</td>
<td>Sometimes</td>
<td>Rarely</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Participant D

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questions relate to Intimacy with God</th>
<th>First time Answer</th>
<th>Second time answer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4. Lost touch with who I am in God and sometimes feel confused with what He has called me to do</td>
<td>Rarely</td>
<td>Never</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Spiritual practices have slipped</td>
<td>Sometimes</td>
<td>Sometimes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. Ministry is more important than relationship with God</td>
<td>Sometimes</td>
<td>Rarely</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. Not exercising my gift as spiritual director</td>
<td>Sometimes</td>
<td>Always</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20 Schedule of Sabbath rest interrupted</td>
<td>Rarely</td>
<td>Rarely</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Participant C

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questions relate to Intimacy with God</th>
<th>First time Answer</th>
<th>Second time answer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4. Lost touch with who I am in God and sometimes feel confused with what He has called me to do</td>
<td>Rarely</td>
<td>Sometimes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Spiritual practices have slipped</td>
<td>Sometimes</td>
<td>Sometimes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. Ministry is more important than relationship with God</td>
<td>Sometimes</td>
<td>Sometimes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. Not exercising my gift as spiritual director</td>
<td>Sometimes</td>
<td>Sometimes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20 Schedule of Sabbath rest interrupted</td>
<td>Sometimes</td>
<td>Sometimes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

One significant question in this category is question 12 on spiritual practices. The answers of the above participants tell us they all have some difficulties in this area. When the participants answer question 4-lost touch of who I am in God- the first time, all but
participant B answer “sometimes.” The other participants answer “rarely.” In the second questionnaire, participant B is the only person answers “rarely”. The other participants’ answers are “sometimes,” “often” or “never”. Participant D’s answer is “never.” Although participant B’s answer for question 16-not exercises my gift as spiritual director-has not changed, her answer to question 20-schedule of Sabbath rest interrupted-indicates improvement. While positive change in participant B’s and participant D’s answers are obvious, participant C’s answer shows that her relationship with God is back sliding. But when we review participant C’s answers in the first and second questionnaire, we notice only one minor change. As mentioned above, participant C appears to be rather stable.

In the following questions, the answers of participant B and D fall into either the category of often and sometimes. For example, participant B’s answer to question 15 remains the same, and participant D’s answer to question 16 seems to indicate negative change. Does this reflect the unstable condition of the participants in terms of their relationship with God? How do we verify the data? We can find out whether this data is coherent by looking at the interviews and the sharing in the focus group meetings. Here, the researcher notices the conflicting journey of participant D.

In the first questionnaire, participant D has rarely for 5 questions and never for 2 questions. Participant D said he rarely feels isolated, but during the interviews, he reiterated that he wanted to be affirmed and supported. He also expressed that He needs spiritual friend. Yet, he also experienced some personal difficulty in his workplace. Does this imply participant D needs some changes in the area of intimacy with others? How
does this relate to his relationship with God? The two quotes as follows seem to reflect two contradicting emotions:

- As a Christian caregiver, I realized that serving and praying for a long period of time without a close relationship with God or with an insufficient relationship with God, I would burn out.

- To some extent, I was not doing anything offensive to God, but behind my respectful and sincere appearance, my heart has actually gone from God, just like a wastrel who did not come back to God’s home. I did not understand why I had a contradictory feeling; I did not have sufficient power to pray for help. Gradually understanding God has left me; I could not accept this fact. I thought God would not accept me too. I feel I was very unhealthy at some points.

The first quotation shows us that participant D has a pure heart for God and he is aware of the importance of intimacy with God. In the second quotation, we notice his struggle of finding himself having two faces. It is a fact that he found it hard to accept. Is he actually having some difficulty accepting his own limitation and self-image, or is his longing for God genuinely? Are there hindrances that he is unaware of? Does it reflect lower intimacy level with God? While participant B and C’s data are comparatively coherent, discrepancy is observed in participant D’s data. What does that inform us?

Measuring intimacy level is hard. One may use category like trust, desire and affection, or lack of trust and disappointment, etc. to find out the degree or extent of intimacy. However, intimate relationship is still hard to ascertain. Thus, the intention here is just to show the realities of the spiritual wellbeing of the participants.

**Themes relating to transformation**

Transformation is initially a work of divine grace. Transformation is description applies to an individual believer’s progress in sanctification. It is also a process full of changes and crisis. From the interviews and questionnaire, the researcher is able to
identify positive themes and negative themes.\(^9\) The positives themes are empowering element and the negative themes are discouraging element. Deeper analysis reveals that this may be due to role confusion, unrealistic expectation to others and to one self. However, we have to bear in mind that previous transformative experiences of the participants, their self-understanding and self-awareness will preclude them from making more mistakes.

Table 16. The negative themes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Obstacle of Transformation</th>
<th>Difficulties</th>
<th>Details</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>Distractions, People and business</td>
<td>Being distracted</td>
<td>Feeling of boredom, Taking care of too many things</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>Pressure from work</td>
<td>Weariness</td>
<td>Lack of recognition, practices, and lack of a supporting community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>Busyness, burdened</td>
<td>Dryness</td>
<td>Failed to maintain a balance in ministries, becoming functional,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>Relationship with co-workers</td>
<td>Feel intimidated</td>
<td>Failed to achieve a higher level in theological studies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E</td>
<td>Overloaded with works</td>
<td>Stressful, Feeling of inadequacy,</td>
<td>Experiences and Feelings of being abandoned</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>Busyness, Confusion</td>
<td>Impure or subtle motives in serving</td>
<td>Passions, Pursuing a sense of greatness, wanted to be acknowledged</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 17. Positive themes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Enabler</th>
<th>Empowerment</th>
<th>Details of practice</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>Open totally to God</td>
<td>Companion: time with spouse, time with God and space for oneself</td>
<td>Morning walk with my wife, Regular solitude and prayer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>The wish to draw</td>
<td>Positive image of God</td>
<td>Belief: “It is by faith that we</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^9\) Only major theme is put here to help us focus on the issue facing by the participants.
First of all, we have to bear in mind that maturity does not imply a stagnant state. On the contrary, maturity implies the continuous regression and continuous seeking or longing for better or abundant spiritual life. As mentioned, transformative experiences and beliefs according to the interviews confirm the observation that the participants have experienced transformation. The quotations and other data seem to confirm that they do value transformation and have the passion to grow in Christ.

A. *I used to be feeling negative in my brought up, but I have become more positive now. I now understand wellbeing as the positive attitude towards life’s experiences. A spiritually healthy person should have this kind of attitude.*

B. *Of course there are positive experiences. I was so happy in my early days ministry. I felt so beloved by God that I decided to quit my nursing career to study theology. And I found God’s overwhelming love so wonderful. This feeling of happiness, which lasted for about half a year, had been unprecedented to me.*

C. *I enjoy being directed, particularly the atmosphere of serenity during the session. It has contributed to my spiritual transformation. The encounters with spiritual director are very positive and helpful. In directing others, I also experienced the peace and joy of a very close fellowship.*

D. *After my recovering, I had a wish just likes the two frustrated disciples on Emmaus, I wanted to accompany those people who experience crisis to walk through their lives. Therefore, I felt my heart was moved and urged to build up myself stronger to help others.*

E. *Self-acceptance is very important, how one perceives oneself and having healthy self-image is important. A healthy person is not self-depreciatory or feeling inferior.*
F. My experiences of being spiritually directed are very fruitful. Starting from 1997, I received counseling and spiritual direction. I have experienced a lot of healing in individual session, workshops, and seminars, etc. I think I realized more about what spiritual direction is when I began to apply spiritual direction to my own ministry.

Aspiration and attitude

Regarding the participants’ attitudes toward ministry of spiritual direction and spiritual growth, all of them are very positive and indeed treasure opportunities of being a spiritual director. They understand that the ministry of spiritual direction is mainly a God directed ministry. Perhaps, the favorable experiences with their spiritual directors and directees have reinforced this attitude. Nonetheless, finding out their aspiration and attitude will help us to clarify in what ways their attitudes have strengthened or weaken their aspirations.

Attitude toward spiritual Practices

They are aware of the need to practice self-care and other spiritual disciplines that will enhance their spiritual wellbeing. Finally, all the participants express that they want to improve their spiritual practices.

Table 18. Compare and Contrast: Spiritual Practices

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Spiritual Practices Slipped</th>
<th>Difficulty mentioned in interviews and focus group</th>
<th>Details</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>Sometimes, Often(^{10})</td>
<td>Moody</td>
<td>Busyness, Boredom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>Often, Sometimes</td>
<td>Feeling of loneliness</td>
<td>Busyness, Weariness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>Sometimes, Sometimes</td>
<td>Feeling of heaviness</td>
<td>Busyness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>Sometimes, Sometimes</td>
<td>Sense of dissatisfaction</td>
<td>The desire for God is not strong enough</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E</td>
<td>Sometimes, Sometimes</td>
<td>Guilt feeling, undeserved</td>
<td>Busyness, perfectionist mentality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>Sometimes, Often</td>
<td>Irritations</td>
<td>Busyness</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^{10}\) The italics are answers given in the second questionnaire.
The above table, to some extent, has confirmed the struggles of the participants who experience busyness on one hand and the feelings of loneliness and sense of dissatisfactions on the other. This phenomenon, however, may not be interpreted as cause and effect. The fact that they coexist seems to point to a fact that the participants who are overloaded with work also experienced loneliness and feeling dissatisfied. The factors underlying this phenomenon and the emotions behind it are complicated and unique. To some extent, the research so far seems to verify the real life situations of loneliness and lack of support. By comparison, those inclined to feel lonely preferred regular practices and see its significance. In addition, to what extent these difficulties are related to self-intimacy and relationship with God is important finding that we have to confirm.

Table 19. Attitude toward renewal: Expectation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Self</th>
<th>God</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>Balanced Living</td>
<td>Closer to God</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>Healthy Emotionally</td>
<td>Rest in God</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>Balanced Living</td>
<td>Sabbath, rest in trust</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>Advance Study</td>
<td>Desire for God</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E</td>
<td>Gentleness</td>
<td>Regular Discipline</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>Increasing Awareness</td>
<td>Significant Others</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 20. Practice to sustain oneself

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Practice</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>Devotion(^{11}), Exercise, Soul mate, Bible Reading, Retreat</td>
<td>Regular Bible Reading and Exercise</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>Devotion, Physical Rest, Spiritual Reading, Henri Nouwen</td>
<td>Regular Devotion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>Devotion Retreat</td>
<td>Regular devotion, irregular retreat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>Devotion, Retreat</td>
<td>Regular</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^{11}\) Devotion here refers to silence, solitude, prayer, etc. Some of the participants follow the Spiritual Exercises of Ignatius of Loyola, and practice writing journals, etc.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Devotion, Exercise, journal Retreat</th>
<th>Enjoying going to retreat</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>Devotion Retreat</td>
<td>Meeting up with spiritual directors regularly, spiritual friends and retreat on a fairly regular basis</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Question 19 (D) is the only question that is designed in a positive way while other questions are all designed passively. The design is to use this question to find out the participants abilities to handle emotions regardless of their situations. The answers of all the participants to this question are positive.

_I befriend myself and am able to manage strong emotion and impulses during high stress situation._

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Always</th>
<th>Often</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Rarely</th>
<th>Never</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>Y V</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td></td>
<td>Y V</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td></td>
<td>Y V</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>V</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E</td>
<td></td>
<td>Y V</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>V</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

From the attitude toward renewal, the willingness to practice and the answers to question 19, the researcher feel safe to conclude that the participants’ aspirations towards being a spiritual director of better spiritual health is genuine.

**C. Effectiveness of the Spiritual Guidebook**

The research question of the project is: How might following a set of spiritual practices as set out in a spiritual guidebook serve to sustain the spiritual wellbeing of spiritual directors living and working in Hong Kong? What the researcher is trying to do is too see whether the participants are sustained in the process of practicing a spiritual guidebook. The six topics or themes in the spiritual guidebook are designed after the
interviews. The above findings seem to verify that the practices in the spiritual guidebook are relevant to the needs of the participants. The intention is also to measure to what extent the practices are able to give them strength, energy and hope. Nevertheless, we have yet to confirm the effectiveness of the spiritual guidebook. I will use the following table to show the responses of the six participants and go into the details later.

Table 21. Participants’ response to practices in guidebook

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Practice</th>
<th>Content</th>
<th>Comment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A Certain units</td>
<td>Helpful</td>
<td>“I wish I had more time to go into it”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B Most of the exercises</td>
<td>Very helpful;</td>
<td>“The guidebook is helpful especially the scripture and the guidance”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C All the exercises in</td>
<td>Extremely helpful</td>
<td>“It is indeed a guidebook that can be a help to pastors.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>detailed manner</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D Some exercises</td>
<td>Very helpful</td>
<td>“It has helped me to face the recent crisis.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E Didn’t get much into the</td>
<td>Not sure</td>
<td>“I didn’t have much time spending on it…But the material is relevant, it must be experienced personally.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>exercise</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F Some exercises</td>
<td>Extremely helpful</td>
<td>“It is comforting…the contents are speaking to me.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Does following the practices in the spiritual guidebook sustain the participants? Are they being nourished, and awaken to their own needs? In a word, how effectively has this program has accomplished its intended purpose? In terms of content and its effectiveness in sustaining the participants, participants B, C, D and F found the guidebook very or extremely helpful. The content of the guidebook addressed to their personal needs and echoed with experiences regarding personal needs and ministries. My reflection is that the effectiveness of this program also relates to a time factor. Participant B and C have more time to go through the exercises. Participant A, D and F finished only part of the exercise, and participant E has not gone through the exercise. Time or may be energy are constraints to some of the participants. Regardless of this particular constraint, the overall comment seems to be positive. Some extra comments are recorded here to confirm the findings. For example, participant D says: “But from the meditation on
Moses’ was being called, I asked myself what is the most important in my life… God is the most important after all… this regulation I get in touch with myself more… it is not only echoing Moses’ experience, but I know it is my choice to follow God.” (Refer to Chapter 1 of the guidebook) Participant F says the guidebook has drawn her closer to God and to shared-practice as well. Participant C mentioned to the group that she has used the spiritual guidebook with other co-workers.

**Spiritual Guidebook**

Changes can be observed in the second focus group as the participants shared how the spiritual guidebook has helped them. The following quotations seem to indicate that there is increased self-awareness and clarity about the values of spiritual practices. Perspective changes can be observed as participants shared their views on one’s capability and ways of learning.

A. *Although I am attending a bi-weekly group, I am still looking for more in depth fellowship.* (View on shared practice)

B. *The content of the guidebook is relevant to my ministry. It is touching and helpful. It leads me to deepening relationship with God* (way of learning)

C. *The process of practicing the exercises in the guidebook is comforting. What touches me most is that the guidebook is able to lead me to deeper self-disclosure.* (View on self-intimacy, self-understanding and discernment.)

D. *I think the practices have helped me to re-orientating my direction and position. I am reminded encountering with God and the choice of being with Him is more important.* (View on vocation way on learning intimacy with God changed).

E. *I am too busy. But the topics of the spiritual guidebook are important and relevant.* (Aware of new knowledge and skill)

F. *I realize that compassion is not sufficient in periods of dryness and turbulence. I think the spiritual guidebook comes at the right time.* (View on intimacy with God)
Apart from the transforming experiences mentioned above, the responses and feedback in the second focus group seem to suggest that the participants are revitalized as some of them resolved to make more changes in their lives. On top of that, the project has been able to bring them to the awareness of their own needs, bring them together as fellow spiritual directors as space and opportunity for fellowship and practice, are provided. Earlier in the chapter, I have mentioned the participant’s performances will reflect in their need of self-knowledge, self-motivation and self-management. The above analysis shows that all the participants identify their needs particularly on spiritual practices, although they are also aware of their needs of self-motivation and self-management. In terms of self-knowledge, the participants have to maintain spiritual practices that will enhance their self-awareness and ability of discernment. Certainly, I want to verify the data as accurately as possible, and try my best to confirm the changes of the participants are transformational. Perhaps one important question is: do they become more hopeful as they go through this exercise?

D. Summary

Through analyzing all the data, the researcher has noticed the themes, and in coding them, the researcher is able to confirm the above themes are valid. The hypothesis that the spiritual directors needed to be sustained is justified because the findings from interviews, questionnaires, and discussions reflected that the need is valid. The findings and patterns as reflected above seem to suggest that the central question: “in what ways we can sustain the spiritual wellbeing of spiritual directors in Hong Kong” is relevant.

Interpretations of qualitative research especially research on transformation and spiritual development, however, face the challenge of how to determine changes in terms
of spiritual growth accurately. The researcher has mentioned in chapter 4 the fluidity of spiritual development. While it is recognized that spiritual life is a journey, it must be pointed out that the term is metaphorical. We have seen theories of spiritual development as suggested by Groschel, Mullhoand and others. The same criticism for psycho-spiritual stages can also be applied here. The participants are just like us, complex human beings, who do not necessarily follow a set pattern of development; spiritually, mentally, emotionally, and physically. In “Soulful Spirituality,” Benner reminds us: “Because authentic spirituality participates in life rather than positioning itself either against or outside the flow of life, it is endlessly evolving and changing.”

While transformative learning is useful to a certain extent, it also has certain limitations. Although I have employed triangulation method, the recurring concepts and themes coded from data, especially data from the interviews are complex phenomenon that is relatively hard to decipher. The researcher has tried his best to determine the authentic experiences of the participants. Although transformation does not reflect as clearly in figures or numbers, the above findings verify transformation did take place.

From the perspectives of spiritual development, it’s hard to articulate the results. Because the way each individual nurtures his/her spiritual life, how they implement the incarnating model after Jesus, and how they respond to their ministerial and prayer experiences are unique. It is therefore hard to determine the results, but it does not affect our increasing and deeper knowledge and guidance of the work of the Holy Spirit.

In terms of spiritual formation, the participants have applied and practiced spiritual disciplines, and they have shown stronger desire for transformation and interaction with God. In terms of emotional formation, the participants are open and
honest as they share their struggles and weaknesses. Their need of soul friend, counselor, and spiritual director are confirmed. Finally, in terms of relational formation, the will to moving out of isolation, and desire for authentic friendship are also acknowledged.

In *SoulShift*, Steve DeNeff and David Drury offer an approach to spiritual transformation, which focuses less on measuring how much time we are spending on spiritual inputs—such as Bible study and prayer—and more on measuring who we are becoming in Christ.\(^{12}\) Whether a person is transformed, therefore, depends not only on the effective application of tools, but the desire to grow in Christ. Ultimately, the key to spiritual formation and transformation is the work of the Holy Spirit.

**Limitations**

There are limitations with this project, namely the linguistics and emotion factor, as well as the cultural factor. The words used and expressions reflected that they have understandings of spiritual direction and spiritual formation. For example, “rest” is one of the words, which appeared most, implying their spiritual longing. Busy is another frequently used word to inform us their dilemma. It is a sign of tiredness and helplessness. Lack of energy, frustrations, and irritations, draining, hectic and regret are wordings used to express their struggles. The underlying messages or understatements are hard to code, and deserves more careful investigation. Despite the fact that emotions of the participants are generally calm, as they felt sad or painful when they shared personal and church issues, one cannot ignore the depth and implication of this message.

In addition to the difficult task of gleaning the data, the difficulty of this project is the problem of culture bias and personal variables. The unique aspect of Asian culture demands our attention. The researcher must be very careful in reading the transcribed manuscripts and avoid accepting them at face value. As Asian, my conjecture is that the intensity of the struggles of the participants may be stronger or deeper. Certainly, it would be a generalization to claim that the expression of Chinese Christian tends to be subtle. This cultural factor demands us to pay attention to their personal thoughts and behavior to confirm the most important indicators. Otherwise, we can be misled.

There are also language differences and deviation that we should take note of. One particular issue is discrepancy of the responses of Participants D’s comments made during the interview and focus group. As I compared his responses, the different answers made me wonder whether this is due to suppression or rationalization. Participants’ original intention can be misunderstood and misinterpreted sometimes.

Evaluation in terms of measuring progress or changes is a formidable task. “The analogical nature of religious language and the private nature of our experiences will always make it very difficult for the researcher to specify exactly what is to be (or has been) measured.” In evaluating the effectiveness of our efforts to promote movement towards greater spiritual maturity or wellbeing, Farnsworth makes suggestion of the following validation process:

1. Meaningfulness: experiences compliment ordinary experience, and has it enriched his or her life

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2. Worthwhile: the experience reaffirm the person’s creaturiness, reassured confidence in the value of life

3. Coherence: emotional aspects of experience able to expressed rationally, words that made sense

4. Worthiness: find the experience valuable

5. Conversion: transformed in behavior and attitude

6. Compatibility: the experience as revealed through the summary description is in harmony with the person’s religious reference group

The researcher has tried his best to follow the above guidelines. Although it may be too subjective to assert that the project has fulfilled the above requirement, the researcher is contend to say that the he himself and the participants have found the project very meaningful and worthwhile.
CHAPTER 7
SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

A. Summary

Engaging in analyzing the data has been a beneficial process for the researcher as he comes to more knowledge of whether the practice of a spiritual guidebook is able to bring a group of spiritual directors together, help them to refocus on their needs of self-care, and implement the act of supporting, sustaining and discerning as a whole.

The research has confirmed the participants’ affirming the significance of spiritual formation practices. Spiritual practices in terms of self-care or self-intimacy, intimacy with God and others are relevant and necessary. The assumption of the research is that if spiritual directors are sustained and supported, they will be able to empower other leaders to develop a more effective ministry. Their responses to the use of the spiritual guidebook and the feedback to focus group meetings demonstrate that the practices are welcome and affirmed.

This research has also confirmed: first, the challenges faced by the spiritual directors in the urban setting of Hong Kong; second, the resources for improving their spiritual wellbeing are helpful; and third, the theological basis for the ministry of spiritual direction is inseparable from self-intimacy, intimacy with others and with God.

This study starts off by revealing that spiritual directors who are disconnected demonstrate a lack of wellness and hypothesizes that spiritual directors who are spiritually healthy are more connected. As transformational leaders, spiritual directors are incarnational and shalom leaders also living and working as wounded healers. In
exploring the role of spiritual formation and wellness in the context of the spiritual
directors, we confirm that triadic functions of self-care or self-intimacy, intimacy with
others and intimacy with God as indispensable. Spiritual wellness, thus, implies not only
temporary relief from burnt out and fatigue, but increasing awareness of one’s spiritual
development.

Hong Kong is indeed a very challenging urban city in terms of its crowdedness
and suffocating pressure. It is a city lost in transition. Likewise, Hong Kong churches are
struggling to adjust and adapt to changes with great endeavor, but are not meeting the
spiritual needs of Christians in general. Clergy, especially spiritual directors are feeling
tired and disconnected. On one hand, this is due to lack of self-care and spiritual
practices. On the other hand, this is related to lack of support and connection as church
leaders fail to realize that spiritual practices can bring about transformation that empower
them to face life’s realities.

The survey of the literatures down the ages, from different perspectives help the
researcher to affirm Christian tradition is rich in teachings and practices that are
formational. Recent literatures, in particular, also provide us with helpful and
instructional information. These advices, those varied, are established on solid
understanding of Scripture and theological reflection, as well as the understanding of the
needs of clergy and spiritual directors.

The theological reflection in chapter 4 further verifies that spiritual practices,
especially guidelines and content toward building and supporting compassionate clergy
and spiritual directors are of utmost importance. The delineation and analysis of the
meanings of compassion, intimacy, spiritual development and hospitality indicate the
complex yet inter-related elements of spiritual formation for spiritual directors. I hope I am able to show clearly the relationship between intimacy and transformation with the belief that spiritual directors should model after the desert fathers, Augustine, and Julian of Norwich. Perhaps, the chapter can be summarized by the apostle Paul’s advice: be transformed and becoming like Christ, knowing that our life is restful in Him, having hope in Him and unified in Him.

The data presented in chapter 5, which includes interviews, focus group meetings and different responses of the first questionnaire and the second questionnaire reflect changes that have taken place in the spiritual lives of the spiritual directors. This is helpful to reach a deeper understanding of the meaning and the effectiveness of this particular act of this ministry.

Although the process of assembling, analyzing and gleaning the data is demanding, the value of qualitative research is affirmed. Only through this process of deciphering can the researcher be able to come up with findings in answers to questionnaires, records of interviews and focus group meetings. The discussion on the themes drawn from the data and evaluation done in chapter 6 has confirmed that drastic changes in behavior may not come about after a period of 6-8 weeks. Rather, changes in perspectives and increasing awareness are affirmed. In other words, self-care or self-intimacy in terms of increasing knowledge about oneself, and about how to manage one’s life and having the motivation to keep on their practices is achievable.

Spiritual directors or leaders who desire intimacy with God are more conscious of the need of self-intimacy and intimacy with others. The desire to serve and save also becomes stronger as they maintain spiritual practices, change their perception and
ultimately experience transformation. Although the theological basis sketched is an ideal goal of spiritual growth for spiritual directors, the goal cannot be achieved or lived out within a short period. If behavioral changes do not come about suddenly, and rescheduling one’s timetable seems to be impossible in the demanding setting like Hong Kong, change of attitude, and ultimately, the change of heart towards God is possible. In Soulful spirituality, David Benner reminds us of the necessity of integration in our spiritual journey:

The journey toward integration is never linear, and the destination is always elusive. Integration is nonetheless a worthy goal. Sometime a movement toward a deeper integration requires that we be willing to pass through a period of disintegration. Often this is associated with the collapse of life postures that are based in denial and falsity rather than in the cold, hard truths of reality. But ultimately that disintegration is always in the service of a deeper movement toward wholeness.¹

Benner also advises that the spiritual journey is a journey of becoming fully human as one goes through fragmentation to integration or from alienation to alignment. Spiritual directors have to come to term with realities in a down-to-earth manner as they face fragmentation being brought about by external circumstances, and learn to discern and integrate life’s challenges into their lives. “This journey from egocentricity through ethnocentricity to life centricity is a journey of broadening perspective based on expanding identifications. It is a journey of releasing the exclusiveness of good identifications for better and bigger ones. It is consenting to the wooing of the Spirit calling us toward fullness of being and actualization of our human personhood.”²

¹ David Benner, Soulful spirituality (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2011), 84-5.
² Ibid., 169.
By the grace of God and day-to-day spiritual practice, spiritual director is able to live out sustainable Christian life, as he or she becomes congruent being and compassionate minister.

**B. Conclusion**

The findings and evaluation of this research is considered as a pioneering project, and perhaps unique, as the research ventures out to explore a new area that demands our immediate attention. As mentioned, the evaluation I anticipate is a contribution in an area that has not been explored by Hong Kong churches. While research on spiritual formation and practice for transformational leader is prolific in the Western world, little research has been done in the spiritual development and wellbeing of leaders in Hong Kong. It is significant and worthwhile to study how the unique urban context and the ministerial setting of Hong Kong have challenged the leaders. Hopefully, the findings in this project will encourage further explorations of ways to improving the spiritual wellbeing of spiritual directors and other leaders in Hong Kong.

The research towards understanding the personal and spiritual experiences of the six spiritual directors through interviews for this project and the time spent in interviews as well as the process of finding out messages from these dialogues are indeed valuable. Their commitment to this project is time and energy consuming of which I am grateful for. In addition, the two focus group meetings and the process of exchanging information and sharing are valuable experiences. Not only have I been able to come up with important findings related to this topic, I have also been able to experience intimate relationship with myself, with God and the participants.
In a way, the reason why working on this project is demanding is related to my thought and feeling during my spiritual journey. The struggle to finish the project amid my hectic schedule and the reflection on my heart’s desire has posted extra pressure to myself. Is my heart closely aligned with God? I asked myself. As I went to God with the desire that I wanted to finish this project, I tried to discern whether this is God’s desire for me. In the process of continual openess, I was able to see fragmentation in my life. But it was also in this process that I humbly admitted my inadequacies and prayerfully learnt to accept the fact that the fragmented pieces in my life can be integrated.

In this regard, I am affirmed that faithful practice of spiritual disciplines should be given the highest priority. Opening to God in prayer cannot be taken for granted. The challenges are real and sometimes rather frightening and hurting. Self-knowledge, self-management and self-motivation, however, are something that can be practiced and become habituated. As I wrote the spiritual guidebook, I actually practiced the exercises before I wrote them down.

Likewise, communal gathering of genuine fellowship is irreplaceable. The process of sharing personal stories and the using of a spiritual guidebook with open heart and mind is indeed sacred moments as we sojourn as fellow pilgrims. I came to know the struggles, but also the passions of the participants. Although we live in a world that interconnections seem to be at hand, genuine relationship will not occur in casual contacts or even in settings like offices and schools. Faithful practice in community, as suggested by the adult learning theory of Mezirow is relevant to the spiritual wellbeing of all transformational leaders, but Christian spiritual development is assessed not only by
perception changes, but also by the intensity of desire towards God. I am privileged to witness the desire of all the participants.

I believe the findings of the project are indicative and some of the findings can be applied to similar ministry situations. I hope other caregivers like counselors or therapists may be able to get some pointers in this research.

Several questions appeal to me as future opportunity of research. First, the research on the spiritual depletion of spiritual directors of Hong Kong is a pioneering study. The research has helped us to ask deeper questions. However, theological reflection and formal research in this area is very limited. The subject definitely deserves more attention. Therefore it would be worthwhile to further explore the causes, which may be fundamental to the depletion of spiritual directors in Hong Kong, in order to provide proper preventive measures and other suggestions for their spiritual health.

Second, qualitative research on assessing changes or development in Christian spiritual lives is difficult. In a way, transformation is intangible and hard to delineate. It may be helpful if we conduct quantitative research to find out changes in conduct, behavior and attitude. Since true religious experience is subjective in nature and involves both emotion and reason, evaluation with reference to one’s believing community and in terms of its meaning, or adequacy, and significance, or appropriateness must be considered.

Third, we have to ask whether spiritual formation and practices can help spiritual directors actively engage in integrating with the culture in which they are ministering. On one hand, we affirm personal transformation of spiritual directors has tremendous positive impact on his/her family, working environment, church and community, which ultimately will lead to transformation of the city. Ideally, spiritual directors must live out
a balanced life of contemplation and action. The implication is that spiritual directors must learn actively to survive better in the tension between their own spiritual growth and the pastoral needs of many. On the other hand, if spiritual directors are disciplined and blessed by spiritual formation practices, his or her transformation will become a channel of blessings to individual and community.

Spiritual directors can be model of transformation, and demonstrate the changes they are asking of others. As spiritual directors lead by example by showing the desire to become more like Jesus, the directees and other followers recognize a spiritual depth that is different from preaching from the pulpit. Likewise, demonstrating the searching for intimacy in daily living and in community would be inspiring to the followers.

Indeed, the broadness and depth of this research on the possibility of spiritual sustenance, with its unique spiritual implication and prolific meanings, demands every humble student to give it due attention. Several areas may be added to future research, to help substantiate the findings. For example, the results would be more accurate if the interviews could be extended to other and more varied groups of participants. The participants in this project are middle-aged and their training is mainly in the field of counseling. It would be helpful if a sample of youth pastors who are not equipped with counseling training could be taken to correlate the findings. Helping professionals like nurses and teachers could be included as samples too. Finally, interviewing experienced spiritual directors or pastors to verify the findings can also be helpful.

Spiritual direction is indeed a privileged ministry in terms of its significance in accompanying others in a relationship of encountering the Divine. It seems appropriate to end this project by speaking of the significance of self-care for spiritual directors. My
observation is that although a sense of depletion and loneliness can be weaknesses, they can also be seen as guideposts towards self-care and spiritual discipline. If self-care or intimacy is crucial to the clergy, it is of paramount importance to the spiritual directors. On top of that, spiritual discipline should not be limited to personal care, but must direct spiritual directors to accept life’s challenges as an invitation to love God and become more like Jesus.

In concluding, I hope I have communicated the passion of prayer and the possibility of being transformed to fellow spiritual directors and caregivers. This research began with the passion of praying for and giving encouragement to spiritual directors. This passion is concretized into a research in which spiritual directors may find pointers toward deeper life of vitality. My prayer is that the readers (spiritual directors, caregivers and leaders) may come away with more awareness, more hope and more Christ like. I understand resilience is always a concern, but it would be better if we keep on experience the rest that Christ has promised to give us as we abide in Him.

Finally, the spiritual directors will continue to experience genuine spiritual blessings as they learn to love others through caring of their souls. As a spiritual director myself, I was blessed in this process of sharing with fellow spiritual directors. I also realized that we need to be sensitive to the reality that, like all Christian leaders, spiritual directors are in an in-between (liminal) stage, and need humility in seeking guidance through spiritual discipline and fellowship.

The art of sustaining, supporting and discerning as fellow spiritual directors is not one of the options. It is an alternative that we must opt for. When compassion becomes the motivation to help others growing into the full measure of Christ, we would not
choose otherwise. Indeed, the participants’ willingness and courage to open up their lives, and the support of family and friends have taught me that realizing the goal of sustaining the spiritual wellbeing is possible.

Last but not least, my conviction is that self-intimacy, becoming a hospitable leader and desire God’s intimacy are not purely theological reflection. The spiritual quest of intimacy must become the life goal and orientation, or the compass of all transformational leaders. To make that happen, the spiritual practices towards becoming more intimate being in Christ have to be embodied in community living. After all, I understand that I am not the only one who struggles with loneliness and disconnection. I will treasure God’s graceful guidance and provision as I carry on my practice in spiritual direction.
APPENDICES

Appendix 1

Statistics Regarding Churches

Figure 2. Number of churches 1980-2004

Figure 3. Size and attendance of churches
Appendix 2

Interviews Questions and Answers

Participant A

Interview Questions

Can you briefly outline your overall ministry and your spiritual experiences?

As you know, I worked in a local church for almost fifteen years before I came here to work with the seminary students. I always enjoy the church ministries, particularly my passion in counseling and spiritual formation. I am a counselor to the seminary students, but I also help out in my denomination, which requires me to attend to both administrative and pastoral matters. My spiritual experiences are positive although there was a time that I have to breakthrough from my personal struggles. But that was good to me.

How do you become a spiritual director? Can you tell me your training, and your preparation in becoming a spiritual director?

After I finished my Master of Divinity and Counseling degrees, I began my ministry in the Church. I had taken a few courses on spirituality and spiritual formation afterward. I have been interesting in being a caregiver and have read books on spirituality. I led a lot of retreats; I conducted workshops and classes when I worked in the local Church. I even wrote a manual on silence and retreat but it never got published. A few years ago, I resigned from the Church and started to work as a Chaplin and counselor in this seminary. But I also have to take up some administration works here. At this moment, I am studying part time, and working for my Th.M on spirituality.
I have not received any formal training in spiritual direction, but in my practice, I have begun to integrate more elements of prayer and spiritual formation since many years ago. By practicing silence, attending retreats, reading books and taking courses related to spiritual formation, I have become more and more in tune with spiritual direction.

How would you describe your experience in being spiritually directed and in directing others?

My experience of being directed is significant because it has brought me to some major breakthrough, particularly in self-perception or self-understanding. I had gone to several retreats led by Hans Burki, and talked to him personally. My spiritual director had observed my quietness during a retreat. However, he referred it not to the state of silence, nor to the personality trait, but he directly pointed out the reality that I have been feeling inferior in my whole life. He told me that I could open totally to God and God accepted me as who I am. As we waited in silence, I experienced a kind of total acceptance and acknowledgement in both his words and gestures. I felt so moved and touched. I have not experienced that kind of breakthrough since many years ago.

In terms of my own experience, it is mainly counseling experiences. But, perhaps, about ten years ago, I began to use prayer in my counseling session when I felt more and more that pure counseling was not always helpful. I also practice silence and allow more free time of silence during the sessions. I consider myself practicing spiritual direction now, although some would always consider me as a counselor. I also experienced the works of God in the process of directing others.

Are you having solitude, retreat and meeting up with a spiritual director on a regular basis? Do you prefer more quiet time and solitude?
Yes, I am having regular time of solitude and silence. But I have not met with spiritual director for quite sometimes now. Yes, I prefer to have more quiet time. I do think I need to see someone regularly. Personally, I prefer more quiet time and solitude.

Describe for me your recent prayer experience, and your relationship with God

Basically, my relationship with God is fine. I do feel very tired sometimes, or feeling moody and even depleted or lack of energy sometimes. I also feel slow, and a bit depressed, may be. The reason is mainly because of the hectic schedule and I just can’t stop working sometimes. But definitely, I don’t think there is any symptom of burnout.

Alan: Tell me more about the moody feeling?

A: It is a sense of boredom and feeling of lifeless. I think it is due mainly to tiredness. I feel pressurized and often feel worry. The symptom was more serious when I was working in a local church. Even though I am on a holiday, I felt like that I was not having a holiday at all. When I was working in the Church, I even felt more pressurized because I have to do ministries that I did not prefer, or I was not good at. For example, I found it hard to prepare a sermon and delivered it well. But right now, I actually feel better compare to the period when I worked in the local Church. In the Church I worked at, the number of congregation is about six hundred, but in the seminary, there are only about one hundred students. Besides, the student body is always changing, whereas in the Church, it is long term, and I failed to rest sometimes.

How would you define spiritual well being? Can you describe for me your understandings and experiences of your own spiritual wellbeing?

From the perspective of emotion, I think a person who is spiritually healthy should be positive, having sufficient energy. On the other hand, a healthy person is less affected by
external circumstances, or in a way, stress-free. In particular, a spiritually healthy person is more sensitive to God; that means one is easily in touch with God in all kinds of situation. Although their problems are not fixed or resolved, their awareness of God is high.

Alan: So, a spiritual healthy person has a positive approach towards problem and aware of the presence of God. Any example?

A: Whenever I don’t feel good, I tend to magnify the problems or focus mainly on the problem, I may tend to think more and more and always loom large the problem. To me, well-being is the capability to respond to God, and won’t put all the focus on the problems itself.

Alan: So spiritual well being is the ability of not being affected by external circumstances, and more sensitive to God.

A: Yes

A: Finally, I used to be feeling negative in my brought up, but I have become more positive, knowing that wellbeing is the positive attitude towards thing. So a spiritually healthy person should have this kind of attitude.

In what ways do you think you have experienced spiritual crisis? How do you feel?

Well, as mentioned, I experienced lack of energy and feeling a bit depressed. I don’t think there is any major spiritual crisis as such. But the things and people that I worked with are kind of tedious. There are times that I am distracted, failed to relax, and less sensitive to my own needs.

What is most disturbing me is the feeling of loneliness sometimes. Its like walking on the plateau. God’s presence is not very real. I look forward for a breakthrough in my spiritual
life. The incentive and the desire is not that strong. It’s been a while that I feel that way. Although my relationship with God is okay, I wanted to be renewed in a way that I keep a closer walk with God, and eventually, experience some breakthrough.

Alan: You want to experience more of His presence, and in a more intimate way, am I correct?

A: Yes.

In what ways a spiritual director can sustain his or her spiritual wellbeing? In what ways do you think your spiritual being can be nourished? What are some of your specific needs?

I think I have to stop and let go. I have to practice let God take charge. I need to spend more time relaxing. For example, I needed to attend to the needs of the students and at the same time, the many needs of the Church. I knew I was easily distracted by many things.

Sometimes, I will not go back to the office directly in the morning. I am grateful that I have the freedom to do so. Instead I will spend times walking in the morning with my wife. We will walk for one to two hours. The intention is to get away from the office and leave things to God, and have a chance to talk to my wife.

Alan: Can you talk more about the walking?

A: We will walk from the seminary to a nearby town (Ma On Shan), sometimes for one or even two hours; I will share with my wife about what has been going on recently and what’s in my heart. I knew I must let go and stay away from all the works for the time being.
In order to attain serenity, I also have an inner calling recently that I have to go back to
the Bible. I don’t want to do more exegesis, but reading it devotionally every morning is
helpful. As a result, my heart will have more peace of mind. My practice is I will read the
Scripture out and let God speak to me.

Finally, I think physical exercise also help me to sustain my spiritual wellbeing.
Therefore, I will jog a few days in a week.

Alan: So physical exercise did help you in nourishing your spiritual well being.
A: Yes.

What kind of material you are using in your spiritual practices? Have you ever used a
spiritual guidebook that you found helpful? Can you describe what do you think of it?
I don’t use any material in particular. The Bible is the basic material, but perhaps, works
on personal growth, prayer and spiritual formation are helpful. I think those books mainly
help me to refocus and come to terms with the reality of myself.

Alan: Any title or books in particular? So you are not using any spiritual manual as such?
A: I think the books on spiritual growth and prayer are helpful. But I am not using any
manual or books on spiritual exercises.

What are some of your major struggles that prevent you from experience spiritual
transformation now?

As mentioned, I was easily distracted and I was struggling with that. I think it is still the
distractions or interruptions in ministries. It’s a feeling that I don’t want to do anything.
Again, it’s related to people and ministries. If I am sensitive to my own needs and myself
awareness is maintained, I should have no problem. Otherwise, I will experience some problem,

**Participant B**

Can you briefly outline your overall ministry and your spiritual experiences?

I’m now a full-time minister of a cell church, serving the working population and young couples. I have been a local church pastor for over twenty years. As a church minister, I am responsible for teaching, preaching, counseling, helping in some occasions such as wedding and funerals, paying visits and so on.

Alan: That is the general scope of ministry, right?

B: As far as I’m concerned, I started to feel fed up with this kind of pastoral life and experienced a sense of “dryness” within myself a few years ago…

Alan: Pardon me. I would like to interrupt you here for clarification. What do you mean by “dryness”?

B: I think it is a lack of energy. I lacked the energy for ministry. And I lost the heart to care for my sheep. And I knew there’s something wrong because I lost the capacity and compassion for people. This was due to the accumulation of too much unresolved negative emotions. It was then I went to the Tao Fung Shan spiritual formation centre.

Alan: Would you elaborate a bit on the accumulation of negative emotions you mentioned? Can you identify them?

B: Well, they came in all sorts, including anger, jealousy…

Alan: What do you think was the dominant emotion then?

B: Anger.
Alan: Ok, then you went “up the hill” to the Tao Fung Shan Centre. (Tao Fung Shan is on the top of a small hill)

B: Yes…and I went up the hill for retreat.

How do you become a spiritual director? Can you tell me your training, and your preparation in becoming a spiritual director?

Against this background, I signed up a course about “Spirituality and Negative Emotions” organized by the Tao Fung Shan Christian Centre. The course met my need immediately as it focused on four main emotions including anger, fear…and loneliness and…I wonder if jealousy was included.

Alan: Which instructor had the Tao Fung Shan Centre engaged for the course? What was your experience gained in this course?

B: Whitehead. I found the course very nice…It was good.

Alan: Could you elaborate on it?

B: It was good because it helped me in locating a way out. That it helped me to recognize that such emotions had their own meanings. For example, you feel angry when you encounter unfairness. And I thought that was quite true. The course also explained some “taboos” in church in which ministers are expected to be good and nice, and should not be angry, etc. As such, ministers tend to “suppress” their emotions. I succeeded in venting out my emotions since it there was ample time (four to five days) for me to do so.

Alan: Perhaps we should trace back a little bit. Given your ministry experience over a rather long period of time, how do you perceive your spiritual experience in your Christian development? Despite the rather negative experience in your ministry, are there
any positive experiences in your growth? And how does that lead you to the ministry of spiritual direction?

B: Of course there are positive experiences. I was so happy in my early days ministry. I felt so beloved by God that I decided to quit my nursing career to study theology. And I found God’s overwhelming love so wonderful. This feeling of happiness, which lasted for about half a year, had been unprecedented to me and it seems to me that, it would not repeat itself in future. At that time, it seemed to me that a hopeful future was unfolding. I felt so beloved and felt God calling me in my heart. I went on to study in seminary, and then I finished my study in theology and remained rather positive in attitude.

Alan: Were you positive in your early days of ministry?

B: Yeah…it’s ok.

Alan: As you have mentioned, after serving for a long time coupled with changes in ministry environment, for some time you felt stressful and lacking in capacity. Do you think you encountered negative feelings?

B: Yes, I did. My husband and I have served in that Church for twenty years.

Alan: You would not consider yourself “burnt out”, would you?

B: Actually I was burning out at that time. That’s why I needed to quit ministry work, and I felt so sad in those years. You know, it’s really very very hard to leave a church in which you have served for twenty years.

Alan: Yes, I understand. So that was the background for your signing up the course, which showed you a way out. However, you had not yet engaged in spiritual direction at that time, had you?
B: I began my study on spiritual formation right after I took the course, and I began to learn what was silence and spiritual disciplines, etc.

Alan: It seems to me that you started with serenity. In other words, initially you were motivated to solve your own problems and it so happened that you came to know a place in which you learnt the practice of serenity. How did you move on to spiritual direction subsequently? Can you tell me the process involved?

B: At that time, I really don’t know. Anyway, during the three years I gradually got to know more about spiritual formation and finally decided to take the diploma course. It’s just natural because it was related to my ministry and I should take the course.

Alan: It might well equip you for that purpose.

B: Yeah, I think ministers should take this course in particular, yet they were too busy to “engage in the proper matters”. (Church business) In retrospect, despite the practice as a counselor for some time upon completion of my study at the China Graduate School of Theology, (A: Yup, I remember this.)… I remained somehow unsatisfied. It seemed that something unknown and even the purpose were missing, that’s why I resumed church ministry. Actually for seven years I had been a full-time housewife, bringing up and attending to my two children all day long without much stimulation. This partly accounted for the spiritual dryness I experienced. Given that my husband was extremely busy, I was bound to stay at home for caring duties. Against this background, I studied counseling. As I concluded that counseling was so good that it was helpful to others upon the completion of the studies, I worked as a practicing counselor, only to find that my calling was in fact related directly to people. So I resumed church ministry. Yet after some time, I relapsed in the busy cycle of ministry and lost my working purpose.
Alan: It’s the needs of people who keep you busy, isn’t it? What are the major causes? Did they stem from a mismatch of ministries, administration or difficulties encountered by the church?

B: Yup, the needs are ever-increasing. Its about disharmonious interpersonal relationship, which consumed so much energy to resolve and made no sense at all. I found such personal conflicts and power struggles a waste of energy.

Alan: So, you approached the Tao Fung Shan Centre and started to engage gradually in spiritual direction. Am I right?

B: Yes

Alan: So you should have practiced silence, meditation and joined retreats, right?

B: I practiced spiritual discipline and joined their annual silent retreat, which I found was good. Yes, I picked them up there.

How would you describe your experience in being spiritually directed and in directing others?

There were chances of receiving spiritual direction and it was very helpful.

Alan: Were there plenty of practicum opportunities in the diploma course of Tao Fung Shan? Were you required to perform practicum at that time?

B: Yes. I invited people on my own for practicum. The Lutheran Theological Seminary even sent me some students for practicum.

Alan: Oh really? Good. Did you acquire the skills of spiritual reading and meditation through the course?
B: Yes, I picked them up there. But I found that it laid less emphasis on biblical teachings.

4. Are you having solitude, retreat and meeting up with a spiritual director on a regular basis? Do you prefer more quiet time and solitude?

B: Huh, I’m afraid not. I don’t know where I can find one…Not enough.

A: Not enough?...

B: We have day-off on only Mondays. On Mondays I am often exhausted and required to take rest and do housework at home. Unless I make special effort in identifying quality retreat or courses…Previously, I met a nun for spiritual direction, but suddenly she was nowhere to be found and I didn’t know her whereabouts. Anyway, I was largely responsible for it because I didn’t make the effort to locate her and we have lost contact…it’s of course not really good for me.

Alan: If I got it correctly, you prefer more quiet time, retreat and preferably meetings with spiritual director. Am I correct?

B: Yes, it is the natural course for me if I am to pursue ministry, otherwise I will find myself somewhat hypocritical.

5. Describe for me your recent prayer experience, and your relationship with God

At present, I feel lonely because what I intend to work more on spiritual formation which is not the mainstream mission of our church. It’s me who voiced out and initiated the
work on spiritual formation enthusiastically, and it is me again in asking others to join.

That’s why this time I made a bold suggestion to organize a retreat.

Alan: So it’s mainly a sense of fighting in isolation. Suppose you have not been driven to feel worn out because of this, am I correct?

B: No, I haven’t. It’s only some two years since I re-engaged in this church. It’s really poor for me if I got worn out so early.

Alan: Previously you had certain dialogue with God, and afterwards, you took the course instructed by Whitehead, which was helpful for you to walk out of the shadow and find some meaning in it. In some sense, I believe God had a part to play.

B: Certainly. I consider myself less enthusiastic in pursuing God now than when I studied in the Tao Fung Shan Centre. It’s common for we human that after we have walked through difficulties and got over the terrible period, we tend not to keep close to God.

Alan: I sensed a dilemma and tension here: you have mentioned that you prefer a quiet places like outlying islands more silence…

B: …(Smile) most preferably, Switzerland… Canada is fine for me.

Alan: Oh, really? You said you have been “less enthusiastic”. It appears to me that while you prefer tranquility and know its importance, you have fallen short of this.

B: But I am not happy with this. It has been my wish to draw closer to God, but don’t know why I failed to do it.

Alan: How do you usually describe your relationship with God? In the New Testament, we believers are called friends of Jesus who is also our shepherds, our Master, Lord and Savior. Which image symbolizes your relationship with God?
B: I regard myself a good friend of the Triune God. The Lord is of course my Heavenly Father, but this relationship remains an unresolved contradiction because I am distantly related with my natural father. It is only through Jesus that I may work it out. I always wish to pursue the presence of the Holy Spirit with me, because I believe it is only the Spirit who dwells in me. I always want to be filled by the Holy Spirit, but I have been discouraged to go for it after I heard much unpleasant sharing about the Charismatic activities. For some time I had the urge to attend some charismatic church meetings. And it turned out that I didn’t try. God is good to me. Basically I do have a positive image about God, believing God is good to me. But I cannot come too close to Him. I think it is human nature that they do not desire God. Is that right? Somehow they always have a feeling of deficiency. As I see it, the greater the urge of man to draw close to God, the more prominent the feeling of deficiency he will have. Apostle Paul also mentioned that he was the foremost of sinners. For this reason, I think saints were those who always knew that they were sinners. I find it struggling on how we can approach God? How would you define spiritual well being? Can you describe for me your understandings and experiences of your own spiritual wellbeing?

I always consider it important to perceive myself in a holistic manner. Spirituality points to the fact that I am a human and that’s why I practice “praise dance” to enhance my physical wellbeing, emotional and spiritual wellbeing. Wellbeing also involves good mental health. A pastor once told me that, “You can master the art of ministry provided you can maintain these three kinds of well-beings.” I have always remembered his advice.
Alan: As a spiritual director, do you think spiritual well-being includes something else, apart from the well-being in physical, mental, spiritual and emotional aspects?
B: As I see it, a person who enjoys spiritual wellbeing has the quality of love and a loving heart. He is hopeful and aware of the direction in which he is heading. Also, he has not much regret about the past. He leads a burden-free life and lives for the day, knowing how to enjoy life. He looks forward to the second coming of Christ.
Alan: Yeah, in a hopeful manner. Are they the conclusions of your prayer experience? or do you derive them from your soul-mate, mentor or the books you read? Can you tell me how these ideas take form?
B: I don’t know. I just conceived them. I got these understandings incrementally. Nobody tells me so.
Alan: Are you saying that even a person stays healthy with high EQ, have a stable devotional practice, prayer life and ministry, and yet if he or she is not hopeful and loving, it is not a sign of good health at all.
B: Yeah, faith, hope and love are all essential.
In what ways do you think you have experienced spiritual crisis? How do you feel?
B: On one hand I am busy, but on the other hand church members did not sense the need for deepening their own lives. They worked on and on, believing that this might please God. But I saw a crisis in them where people might encounter spiritual dry spells when they only worked on and on.
Alan: According to your description, it seems that the problem lies in leaders, not the congregation in general. Do you think so?
B: Take churches in western countries for example, they might allocate resources for a retreat centre, needless to say spiritual directors, and some might even manage to allocate resources for a musical director, etc. for better specialization.

Alan: It seems that the leaders themselves do not consider the role of spiritual director necessary. They regard evangelism as an on-going initiative while taking deeper growth lightly. May I call it a lack of “awareness” among them?

B: Maybe so. I wonder if it has anything to do with personality. I always tend to think that it is personality, which may influence a person’s preference to act, to think, remain silent or touching his/her feelings.

Alan: Is it also related to theological belief among individuals and denominations?

B: I think so.

Alan: What feelings do you have? I heard you said it’s difficult to make it for retreat and you have day-offs only on Mondays.

B: For sure our workload is heavy.

Alan: So you think workload is the main reason for this.

B: Also, as a housewife, I need to take care of my family.

B: Yup, since we adopt the model of Saddle Ridge Church and implement many “40-Days-Plans” each year. That’s why I invited you to organize retreat for us because I knew they were exhausted—an annually, the plans would be followed by a year-end evangelistic event. It’s a highly action-oriented church. And I found that they are not well aware of their beings, without nurturing their lives.
In what ways a spiritual director can sustain his or her spiritual wellbeing? In what ways do you think your spiritual being can be nourished? What are some of your specific needs?

I was just reflecting on the trio of faith, hope and love and faith is what I need most. In the face of some new situation without any previous experiences, it is always by faith that we walk. For example, I am now entering another stage of life when I, having reached a certain age, need to plan for my retirement. I will conceive my future life for which I have no experience. So, I have to walk by faith. Therefore, I consider faith, i.e. the trust on God, the most needed quality. It is a life-long lesson for me.

Alan: What are the feelings, emotions and thinking in you then?

B: I will be more anxious if I do not have faith. It’s because we are limited, no matter how much we achieve. And we had no control over ageing and illness. So I am now leading a healthy lifestyle as far as possible. Poor health condition may adversely affect your service and ministry for God. I think it is relevant to my professional training. I was a nurse.

Alan: So at this stage physical wellness is one concern of you, right? What kind of practice will you engage in to achieve better health?

B: In order to nurture my spiritual wellbeing, I think I should develop more confidence and avoid relying on my own efforts. As for boosting confidence, the only way is to back to the Bible and trust on God’s words and His promises… Keep on drawing near to God and trust on His promises… Through prayers, … take more rest in the natural setting and approach a spiritual director. Friends are important as well. After all, we need someone to pray together and companions to walk with. For sure I will seek quietness. I am an
introvert. Undoubtedly it works well for me to be energized through quietness. I will do so by listening to Christian hymns, visiting the natural environment, etc. On the other hand, it is also true that I feel lacking confidence with increasing worries. As for spiritual companions, practical problems do arise.

What kind of material you are using in your spiritual practices? Have you ever used a spiritual guidebook that you found helpful? Can you describe what do you think of it?

Yeah, some of your writings, like Meeting Christ again (《重遇基督》in Chinese).

Alan: Oh, they did help you? Any classic Christian literature then?

B: I don’t think so… are the writings of Henri Nouwen included?

A: Of course. It’s kind of a classic too.

B: I read his writings in the past.

Alan: Are they helpful to you? In what sense?

B: Yes. I came to realize that God loves us so. I heard others’ comments that his writings were all about love and contain nothing new. Yet in my view, as far as I can be nourished, it’s all right. And he’s sincere.

Alan: Have you had the impression that he had been walking with you? Do you think he understands you through his experiences of loneliness or disconnection mentioned earlier? I suppose Nouwen went through many such feelings.

B: Yup, that’s how I felt. And he was frank in sharing… I came to realize that God loves us so. Although I heard others’ comments that his writings were all but love and contain nothing new. Yet in my view, as far as I can be nourished, it’s all right.

Alan: Yeah.
What are some of your major struggles that prevent you from experience spiritual transformation now?

(silence) That is a good question. I had been getting nowhere after the completion of the Tao Fung Shan course. It’s because I had worries and anxieties about my future uncertainties. Specifically, I was worried about the fact that I had left church ministry and a supportive congregation; and I lost my job and income. For this reason I had the impression that I had no control over so many things ahead. But God is good. He led me to serve in this church, in which I regained a congregation, a job and a place to develop my talents. It was a good experience for me. However, pressure mounted at I started working again. I found myself torn between. In the past though I had much free time for drawing near to God, I felt somehow inadequate. I found myself having multi-faceted needs apart from the inward desire. Physical wellness, emotional needs, and companions. We need to live, to work and so on.

Alan: I wonder if there are any struggles or obstacles that prevent us from experiencing God? Suppose God certainly desires to transform us, right? So why can’t we experience it? Which obstacles are in effect which may possibly come in the shape of some on-going struggles in you?

B: Regrets perhaps!

Alan: What are these regrets related to? It seems to me you are looking for “a kind of settlement.”

B: That’s right. I have been searching my “home” in vain for a long time.

Alan: What do you mean by “home”? Does it represent a community or a place where you belong?
B: A place in which I may settle down…empty nest. I wonder if this feeling arouse when I found that my children have grown up. I also thought that one day my husband would die, possibly earlier than me. Then I started to ponder on, “where is for my permanent home?”

Alan: If we look at the issue from an eternal perspective, and with a simple heart, and with the understanding that God’s taking care and is in control of it, we may rest assured and let go.

**Participant C**

Can you briefly outline your overall ministry and your spiritual experiences?

As you know, I graduated from Bible College when I was very young and started to plant a church. I have since then serve in this church. Afterward, I got a master degree in pastoral ministry and later, in counseling. I did not practice counseling, but rather, I stayed with the church although my focus has shifted more to pastoral counseling. I became interested in spiritual direction over the last decade. I have added elements of spiritual formation and spiritual direction in my church ministry.

This is the twenty-fifth year I am with this church. I came from an evangelical background. Therefore, my spiritual experience is mainly related to my Biblical understanding. Anyway, my spiritual experience with God is stable throughout these years. I always experience God as a loving father.

How do you become a spiritual director? Can you tell me your training, and your preparation in becoming a spiritual director?
After I got my Bachelor degree of Divinity, I worked in a small Church. It’s a new church plant that I started with my husband. Later on, I went on to study Counseling and got a master degree. My interested in spiritual direction began about ten years ago. I studied for a Diploma in spiritual direction in Tao Fung Shan Spiritual Formation Centre. Right now, I am enrolling in a D.Min program at the Lutheran Seminary, majoring in spiritual formation, but I am very busy, and do not have time to work on the dissertation. I have not worked on anything for some time now. However, I am practicing spiritual direction and supervising some seminary students.

How would you describe your experience in being spiritually directed and in directing others?

I enjoy being directed, particularly the atmosphere of serenity during the session. It has contributed to my spiritual transformation. The encounters with spiritual director are very positive and helpful. In directing others, I also experienced the peace and joy of a very close fellowship. Overall, I treasure the experiences of being together with my directees.

Are you having solitude, retreat and meeting up with a spiritual director on a regular basis? Do you prefer more quiet time and solitude?

Yes, I am having regular solitude and retreat. But I am not meeting up with any spiritual director now. Certainly, I would prefer more quiet time and solitude. But I am attending a supervision group.

Alan: Can you tell me more about that?

It is group supervision from my former spiritual direction class. I got helps from both the supervisor and other group members, but it is not a personal spiritual direction as such, you know.
Alan: And you want to have spiritual direction and prefer more quiet time?

C: Definitely

Describe for me your recent prayer experience, and your relationship with God

I am a bit troubled after I took up the pastor-in-charge for our church, a period of adjustment as I have to take charge to oversee the Church. Therefore, I found myself doing less counseling and spiritual direction recently. But I still have to make more visitations. It is stressful and I felt irritated sometimes. I find the duty of coaching young staffs extremely challenging. My relationship with God is stable, but my recent prayer experience was a bit ambivalent.

How would you define spiritual well being? Can you describe for me your understandings and experiences of your own spiritual wellbeing?

Spiritual wellbeing is holistic. It includes holistic formation, personality formation, spiritual formation, community formation and mission formation. I first got this concept from Dr. Wong Chi Hok.

Alan: I think Dr. Wong Chi Hok also borrowed that from some one. Is it Urban Holmes?

C: Hmm, I don’t remember. Anyway, spiritual formation is a basic step, and an important one, but the various aspects of formation has to be developed on this foundation. For different persons, their starting points and their development may be different. In terms of personality formation, I think it’s mainly related to how God really worked in me. I am rather different from my husband in terms of personality and my counseling knowledge will inform me that we are very different. But God has changed my personality throughout these years.
I remember taking a psychological test when I enrolled in the counseling program and at that time the assessor told me the areas that I had experienced changes and in which areas I should pay attention to. Regardless of how true is the test, and how I tried to change myself; I was so amazed of the effect of solitude and prayers. I realized that God had really changed me, regardless of the test.

Alan: How do you apply your understanding of holistic formation to yourself?
C: For me, it starts with spiritual formation like solitude, prayer and silence. But I also experienced a lot in community formation in the first seminary I went to. We still meet and our bonds are still very strong. Then, it is personality formation and mission formation. Sometimes they just go together, overlapping.

In what ways do you think you have experienced spiritual crisis? How do you feel?
Recently, my colleague was just diagnosed cancer, but I just take it as normal. I understand that balanced life is not that life has no crisis. Sometimes, I imagine life is just like a person skateboarding. We may slip and our balance offset, and we have to balance ourselves again.

Alan: Can you tell me more about that image of off-balance?
C: The reality of life is that there will be accidents or unexpected incidents, either we encountered that as an individual or a congregation. When my mother passed away about ten years ago, I grieved for a long time. When my father passed away a few years ago, I also felt sad, and actually, experienced minor depression, but I am learning to take it as a normal cycle of life.

I encountered this kind of situation when my mother in law diagnosed Alzheimer, and when I faced problems with leading other pastoral workers.
I also experienced situation when I am too busy and lack of sufficient time to rest before I have a session with my directee and counselee. I felt burdened, but lack of energy. There is also feeling of loneliness too.

In what ways a spiritual director can sustain his or her spiritual wellbeing? In what ways do you think your spiritual being can be nourished? What are some of your specific needs?

Hong Kong Churches, on the whole, as you know, are inclined toward ministry, and the workload is heavy. Especially when our church is working closely with an elementary school, the ministry is demanding.

We may dry out if we have not practiced silence and quietness and if we don’t have sufficient awareness.

Alan: Tell me more about the awareness.

C: Well, I actually went to a retreat last week to give more thought to that. I know I need to set aside a time to silent and pray. As a church, we have just started a new policy for our pastoral workers. There will be an extra day off for those who is preaching on the coming Sunday. There will be also a quarterly silence retreat for all the pastoral workers. The purpose of this policy is to heighten our awareness.

On the other hand, I think what I had studied during the last few years, particularly in the area of spirituality and what I had practiced; it helped to sustain my spiritual wellbeing. In practicing, head knowledge has become actual experiences and it’s helpful too.

In terms of my need, I do know that I have to take more rest, and as mentioned before, going to retreat, and especially to the nature is very refreshing experience for me.
What kind of material you are using in your spiritual practices? Have you ever used a spiritual guidebook that you found helpful? Can you describe what do you think of it? I have used several guidebooks before, and I am receptive to all kinds of materials. I will use whatever that is spiritually helpful. But I always rely on or use the Bible. For me, the Bible is God’s love letter to me, and God is speaking to me through His Word all the time.

Alan: I think the usefulness of a spiritual guidebook is that it can guide us step by step to God, what do you think?

C: Yes, I agree. In particular, I think David Benner’s books are helpful to me perhaps because he is trained as a clinical psychologist, and I am also trained as counselor. But my personal encounter with him is warm and friendly. He is just like an ordinary brother. One particular event is in a retreat he led; he was able to bring out the theme so well and it impacted me deeply. The theme of the retreat is “Rest and Trust.” And he brought the theme out so well in terms of sharing his life in a very integral manner.

What are some of your major struggles that prevent you from experience spiritual transformation now?

I involved a lot in ministry. I give my all. As a result, I may experience compassion fatigue. I noticed that I am closely related to every single person, my colleagues, my congregation and so on. My personality and my career experience as a nurse have contributed to my character of too much burdened. To some extent, I think it may be related to my mother who is very loving and supporting. When I entered too deep into the relationship, I felt the pain. Theologically, I understand separation, death and loss, etc. is
not the end, eternal life is awaiting us and we will meet again. But experientially, too much empathy led to…compassion fatigue, and brought me a sense of heaviness.

Alan: Would you say it is over engaging or over attaching?

C: No, but I think it’s a sense of heaviness, it is more a burden or passion. Apart from life and death, the congregation, which is so close to me, is experiencing many struggles, ranging from courtship and marriage, career, and interpersonal relationship. etc. I need the hope from God that can help me to let go especially felt dried out. The encounters with them helped me to understand their struggles. I understand more about holistic growth. I think the approach of spiritual growth should be toward that direction.

Alan: It is formative…

C: Exactly, this is formative experience…

But I think busyness has also prevented me from experiencing transformation.

Participant D

1. Can you briefly outline your overall ministry and your spiritual experiences?

First of all, I want to introduce my family background. I have two elder brothers, two elder sisters, and I am the last child. My parents are Buddhist. My family is very poor although he is an engineer. He starts at early morning and takes off very late at night. My brothers and sisters each have their own lifestyles, studies, works and social lives. Therefore, I felt very lonely growing up and was lack of love. I sought love as I
desired friendship and love affairs with girls, but I still could not find something that fulfilled my needs and I still felt lost. Until a year, I saw a movie named “Christ” in a Catholic Church centre.

My life has undergone a change afterwards, especially in the way I understood more and accepted my parents, and learned to forgive and let go of those unnecessary expectations to my family. I learned to take care of my parents and family. I was also passionate in participate church activities. My attendant of the first church was that I asked my friends to invite me to attend his church. When I started to experience as a Christian in the church life, such as in service and fellowship, I was comforted by the love of brothers and sisters in the church. I felt I needed to do something in return to God’s love, so I learned to share God’s love that He is willingly to die for us and save our lives.

Later I received training as a chaplain. I finished the highest levels of clinical pastoral education and started working as a chaplain in hospital. I also join Mission training and worked briefly in a local church. Right now I am working for a master degree in spiritual direction.

2. How do you become a spiritual director? Can you tell me your training, and your preparation in becoming a spiritual director?

Meanwhile, I also learned to read bible and to pray so that I could get closer to God. In these days, I had to agree that I learned lots about God in my knowledge, but in the church life, I still felt a distance from God. I just thought that Christian’s life was only about reading bible, praying to God, being a servant of God, and demonstrating a good
testimony. So, I also joined the training in short term mission and learned to spread God’s message. The training of evangelism was helpful but it was also about knowledge and exercises in reading bible and praying. I felt those training could not help my getting closer to God, and not satisfy my desire to God.

Choi: What kinds of courses are in the training?

D: The course is about evangelism, teaching in Sunday school, it is also about some very practical subjects and Christian equipment or training.

Alan: What you did learn in the Sunday school? Can you describe how you are not satisfied?

D: Learning to read the bible, I understand intellectually a lot, but in experience, I feel a distance from God, and I am not satisfied. At that time, Christianity is just like a religion; its about listening to some exegetical messages in a church, but spiritually, I still feel a desire of God, and this desire is similar to the desire and seek of love before I believed in God. In the church I know God loves me. I learned some knowledge from Sunday school and some Christian how to do devotion or read bible, but practically learned how to experience the present with God is lacking. This is what I have said about the satisfaction.

After the mission training, I felt God called me to work full-time in church. In the past few years, I mostly work on the spreading of God’s good news, and hope to lead more people to Christ. I hope to help people through equipping myself.
The breakthrough came only after I got married. After I got married, I was diagnosed with liver cancer, and that was terrifying. I understood there were many crises in the world, but I was very afraid of death and of losing the family. Deeply, intellectually I knew God was with me, and I should not be afraid and had faith to believe His present with me. But the truth was I was terribly afraid and lack of faith to face the sickness and future. At the bottom of my heart were conflicting emotions. I knew God loves me, but I still felt the fear of death. I asked God: “Where are You?” I was wondering if God was with me throughout my sickness. This experience brought different emotions, which include my suspicion and complaint to God.

Nonetheless, I still believed in God, so I felt those days of sufferings were actually so real that in my prayer, I directly told God every piece of my negative emotion including my fear, worry, suspicion and anxiety etc. When I confessed to God, I felt very tranquil that the feeling was the desire of what I have wanted to seek before believing in God. God has not left me, and has not let me facing my crisis alone. As mentioned before, I was lack of love from my original family. When I was sick, I felt very lonely and was fear of been abandoned alone to face my sickness. Through my prayers, I told God my true emotions and God’s answer became my strength -- God is always with me. In that periods, I was moved by some of the verses from the Bible to remind myself that God is always with me, such as in Psalms: “I put Jesus Christ in front of me, and I won’t sway.” Another verse from Psalms 23: “Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me, your rod and your staff, they comfort me.” Through reading Bible, praying, and telling God all my deep-down emotions, the distance between God and me was eliminated. God’s love was more real in crisis. After recovering from
the cancer, God called me to focus on concentrate in the hospital ministry. I had many opportunities to walk through the difficult times with those non-Christian and Christian patients. I could teach them how to transform these crises into spiritual experiences, and we search together if God was always with us.

Alan: Your brought up and your experience of near death led you finally to the decision of advanced studies in spiritual practice, and in fact to put it into actual practice. How do you see the relationship between them?

D: I just mentioned when I got the liver cancer, I saw myself in fact needing God very much during my spiritual experience in this crisis because God is the only one to accompany me ahead. This is a very necessary and important process in a Christian’s life. After my recovering, I had a wish just likes the two frustrated disciples on Emmaus, I wanted to accompany those people who experience crisis to walk through their lives. Therefore, I felt my heart was moved and urged to build up myself stronger to help others. I noticed that the past me did not have sufficient experience in spiritual formation, so I started to read some books and to join some workshops, retreats and use some practical methods of prayer. I even started to take the initiative to seek helps from a spiritual director.

Alan: You did join the courses and retreats in Spiritual Formation International, but at the initial stage did you have some profound experience; for example, a book, retreat, workshop or a spiritual director in which you hoped to use them to help yourself?
D: I remembered the first time joining a spiritual gathering held by your ministry that had a huge impact in my life. It was a two-day event “Let our hearts Fly”. In the morning, you shared something about spiritual growth and the spiritual process, which could be symbolized by five doors, and this widened and enriched my spiritual horizon, but the most important touch was the evening service. Mrs. Choi led the worship. The touch was real because the songs spoke to me as I was just recovered from cancer and I still felt very uncertain about my life. I was reminded by the message too, that God really understands my mental state and heavy feelings in my heart. I believed that my spirit could lean on God and fly upward. I felt that God leaded me to fly upward again; therefore, I was touched and cried very much. I still remembered after that service, you Rev. Choi talked to me, and I simply told you my experience, and thanked God for touching and regenerating me through this gathering. My faith in God became much stronger.

3. How would you describe your experience in being spiritually directed and in directing others?

During the past few years, I had learned some advanced meditation practice and spiritual direction courses through SFI. You/Pastor Choi also met me regularly for spiritual directions. Although we met for only half a year; I remembered we met four to five times, but those gatherings helped me lots. And my present spiritual life is so steady that I do alone retreat regularly, and just finished a devotion training course held by a Catholic spiritual formation centre. I also join a two-day-one-night quiet practice and see a spiritual director in the Ignatius Retreat Centre every month. I like to use a quiet-read
method to meditate, especially in this commemorated period of Jesus’ suffer and resurrection. I also use a method of 40-days-spiritual reading for devotion.

Alan: As a caregiver, what do you think how the spiritual practice and retreat can support you? Or do you feel tired?

D: As a servant of God, I have to work very hard try to, and I previously described the spiritual practice becomes my spiritual life’s nourishment, and I can have a close talk with God. But I find when I am alone, I am lack of discipline, so I need someone to guide and help me in doing better.

Alan: You just mentioned the word “very hard”. Can you talk more about that? For example, how do you work hard in Church to help people, leading a gathering or spiritual direction, etc.

D: My responsibility as a chaplain and spiritual director in hospital is demanding. I have to face life and death’s situations every day, and actually this is very exhausted. I remembered in a period of one or two years, because of lack of time, I have totally neglected the time I should spend with God alone, and this affected the relationship between God and me.

4. Are you having solitude, retreat and meeting up with a spiritual director on a regular basis? Do you prefer more quiet time and solitude?

I started to engage in contemplative prayer so that the spiritual practice would help me to notice my spiritual condition. I set up a every-day period for a quiet, alone and a simple
but short prayer time in the garden of my hospital. This short period of time helps me greatly in serving and praying for people, leading retreats or taking care of people. As a Christian caregiver, I realized that serving and praying for a long period of time without a close relationship with God or with an insufficient relationship with God, I would burn out. I am not meeting any spiritual director now, but I do want to set up a schedule that I can see my spiritual director and have more rest.

5. Describe for me your recent prayer experience, and your relationship with God

I had came to a point that I discovered that I could not stand alone, and I saw myself very exhausted, not only my body, but my feeling. My spirit also felt very exhausted. I knew I was burning out. Before I started this new job as a chaplain, I was actually very tired…

Alan: You feel this kind of ministry very exhausted, as you just described as “burn out.” Had you actually experienced that? If so, other than because you touch on death, limitation and spiritual exhaust, do you think there is some other reasons to make you feel so exhausted?

D: The more I rely on myself, and the less I rely on God, relationship between God and me becoming frozen. I became so functional, I was just doing things, but my heart has left God, and that led my spirit became so dry. I was being transformed and I was called to be His slaved servant, I was not aware of the fact that I was just seeking spiritual knowledge, and because of that, I thought I was doing good.

I was still searching and became very enthusiastic sometimes. While I examine myself critically, I found I was only a hollow person who serves in order to gain more
knowledge, to provide myself with security and certainty, and did not really desire God. I even used God to be my excuse to serve. To some extent, I was not doing anything offensive to God, but behind the respectful and sincere appearance, my heart has gone from God, just like a wastrel who did not come back to God’s home being with Him. While I did not understand why I had a contradictory feeling and knew that I was at this stage, I did not have sufficient power to pray for help. Gradually understanding God has left me; I could not accept this fact. I thought God would not accept me too. I feel I was very unhealthy at some points.

Alan: Do you feel whether you are extremely busy or feeling unhealthy within the last half to one year.

D: The present stage is very fine. I think I am able to find a better balance now. In terms of relationship with God, it is more stable.

6. How would you define spiritual well being? Can you describe for me your understandings and experiences of your own spiritual wellbeing?

I think a spiritual director needs a soul friend or a spiritual director because he needs to see his spiritual director regularly to share his problems and experiences, so they can talk, listen and seek directions from God together. The second aspect is that a spiritual director should establish a regular habit of spiritual practice, comprising a personal retreat. Communal support and mutual edification from small group of spiritual friends is also helpful.
Taking care of one’s physical health and emotions is closely related to our wellbeing. Without doubt, church life and life in this world should be balanced. There is a need to focus on serving, working and enjoyment of fellowship. He should also have a worshiping life in a group because he is not only to give but also to receive. He surely needs to pursue further in terms of spiritual practices like reading taking courses related to spiritual formation, etc.

7. In what ways do you think you have experienced spiritual crisis? How do you feel?

D: It does occur from time to time because I am a person who desires love and to be loved very much.

Alan: You just said your present stage is better balanced, but do you think from moment to moment, lack of intimate interpersonal relationship has resulted in some kind of crisis?

D: When I examine myself, I became more aware of the desire of love and beloved is deep rooted, and originated from my original family. I think I have grown up and learned better at this aspect. On the contrary, I actually want to build up an intimate interpersonal relationship, but at this stage, my intimate spiritual friend is my wife. The interpersonal relationship in fellowship groups in the church and fellowship group in the hospital did not being me full satisfaction. I always expect to have a profound friendship, but it is always disappointed.

Alan: What made you desire love and to beloved very much originated from your family? Are there moments you still feel the rooted desires within?
D: Yes

Alan: Spiritual health is looking at whether you and your spiritual friend have a profound friendship and understanding. It is not a bad sign to came to terms with those moments that you feel you wanted to be loved.

8. In what ways a spiritual director can sustain his or her spiritual wellbeing? In what ways do you think your spiritual being can be nourished? What are some of your specific needs?

To me, I expect to have many spiritual friendships, and I think I need to get help from a spiritual director to assist me with building up the profound relationship with God. Sometimes, I am struggling between the desire to seek spiritual friends; but simultaneously, I don’t want to be hurt and feel disappointed again. I also think, can Jesus be my true friend and satisfy my need? The answer is obvious. Jesus can fulfill my need, yet I need spiritual companion. These two aspects -- the companions of Jesus and friends -- are not contradictory. God helps me through the assistance of my spiritual friend, just like the unforgettable image of the two disciples of Emmaus who were accompanied to walk through a difficult crisis with Jesus.

Alan: Okay, your experience informs you that your desire to be loved. Do you think you are satisfied as the process of your seeking or does Jesus fulfill your desire? Do you truly desire God? Are they contradictory? If spiritual health is not only about the experiences of fulfilling our needs in areas like knowledge or friendship, what else do you need?
D: Beside spiritual friends and directors, personal discipline in spiritual practice…I think I need

9. What kind of material you are using in your spiritual practices? Have you ever used a spiritual guidebook that you found helpful? Can you describe what do you think of it?

Alan: Did you use any materials? I am preparing to write a book about materials that is to provide a exercise to someone like you. Are you using any materials?

D: Bible is definitely the spiritual reader. Last year, through the morning exercise, I have used Ignatius Spiritual Exercises

Alan: Did you use a manual or is it just a brief introduction? Does that include verses?

D: Yes. It has verses.

Alan: Does it include ay exercises for you to practice and follow?

D: There is a book by the name of “He Calls Me. “ It was published in Taiwan.

Alan: This book not only has verses, but it also has an exercise for you to practice. Excellent book.

10. What are some of your major struggles that prevent you from experience spiritual transformation now?
I feel secure and be accepted, and have my family to love. God has called me to do clear serving no matter my position is a spiritual director in hospital or a group leader. Again, I have an insufficiently spiritual desire to guide me to unceasingly pursue and yearn God.

Alan: This is very exceptional because you just brought up the several elements of spiritual health not only comprising of spiritual level, spiritual health, body and mind, family, servant and security. I would like to clear up a point -- “yearn”. It seems to be a reversely teaching material: I yearn and I cannot have it”. This yearning is actually unhealthy. Is that what you mean?

D: I just said I have not enough spiritual satisfaction. But I think this does not at the health stage

Alan: This un-satisfaction -- “I need God” is healthy.

D: It is like I am hungry, so I want to eat…

Alan: If you always feel full, you are actually having certain problems. The Biblical image of a healthy person is that he is always a sinner who is weak, heart-broken, insufficient and wounded. On the other hand, the Bible uses renewal and “be renewed by God” which is transforming and changed. I believe you have many this kind of experience. If you need to be renewed by God during your spiritual journey, what do you think the “obstruction” is? Or Is there anything prevent you from experience the renewal in spirit?
D: I think it may be the question of my educational background, which always triggers my sense of inferiority. I know I should yearn for God. Before I enrolled in the master program, I asked myself whether I must obtain a very high education such a degree in order to know God more? The reality in our society and even in a church setting, you need certain credential to confirm that you can serve well.

Alan: What then is the obstruction? You speak briefly about the sense of inferiority. Educational background is relative. To some extent, it does mean if you have a degree, but it does not imply academic background. A degree is not equal to knowledge. You are a spiritual director in hospital and a servant at church. You have training in CPE, Mission and Evangelism, NLP and other trainings, etc, plus you have finished the spiritual direction program of SFI.

D: Not yet finished.

Alan: Not yet finished? Oh you are referring to the master degree in spiritual direction. Your education background is exceptionally good, and unique, agree? Do you always compare yourself with others?

D: I agree. I did think about this question. I am very fond of studying spiritual direction, but it is difficult during the course of studying. One of the reason is actually, languages and foreign language gave me so much stress.

Alan: How does this prevent you from being renewed? This is a mindset of feeling insufficient; therefore, you compare with other people. Why does this prevent you from being renewed through experiencing the presence of God?
D: What I have said in this part about the renewal is not only about life, but also about knowledge. I consider my educational level is limited. For example, studying this master course about devotion, I have a challenge that I am fear of. A spiritual director has indicated that if you cannot read English, you will not understand many valuable and useful books about raising spirit, and this is a true fact. This fear forces me to think that “I am the inferior”. Even though there are many books about raising spirit in Chinese, their information never guide completely.

Alan: Understood. Thank you for your information provided.

Participant E

1. Can you briefly outline your overall ministry and your spiritual experiences?

Since I graduated from seminary, I began to work in a local church. My focus in the church is people oriented. Perhaps that is due to the fact that I am a counselor. I served in that church for about ten years. There was a sense of discontent, as I also felt a bit tired. I took a year off to reflect my ministry several years ago. Then I began to pick up spiritual formation and spiritual direction. I am a church minister right now, but my passion is on spiritual formation and spiritual direction.

The overall spiritual experience with God is good. There were times when I felt I was more distant from God. Although I found myself always talking and arguing with Him, I desire to be drawn closer to Him.
2. How do you become a spiritual director? Can you tell me your training, and your preparation in becoming a spiritual director?

I got my degree in Master of Divinity, major in counseling. I went on to minister in a local church for ten years. The ministry is developing but without much progress in terms of spiritual growth. I decided to take a break, and did some reflection. Under that circumstance, I enrolled in the spiritual direction program in the Tao Fung Shan spiritual formation Centre. After I got a diploma in spiritual direction, I began to study in the Lutheran Theological Seminary for a D.Min, majoring in spirituality. There were many opportunities to practice silence and prayer when I took a year off just to study, to receive spiritual direction, and began to direct others.

3. How would you describe your experience in being spiritually directed and in directing others?

The experience is very positive and helpful. I noticed my tendency of expecting others for affirmation. I was affirmed and encouraged during the spiritual directing sessions. On the other hand, the experiences of directing others are very good too. I enjoy the fellowship and understanding in the practice of spiritual direction. I experience the comfort, healing and encouragement in practicing prayer and silent in Him. But in directing others, I have found most of the congregation lack of spiritual practice or they just want to solve the existing problem.

4. Are you having solitude, retreat and meeting up with a spiritual director on a regular basis? Do you prefer more quiet time and solitude?
All depends on the availability of the spiritual director, a Sister because sometimes she needs to teach outside. If she does not need to go outside for lecture, I think it will be once per month or once per two month.

I think I still have space for improvement of my prayer life. Every day I back to office, the first thing I will do is to pray. This will help me to be silent and focus on God before starting my service. But I have not made a specific timetable for prayer time.

I used to spend more time for solitude and retreat. Now, I am going to retreat once between 2-3 months.

5. Describe for me your recent prayer experience, and your relationship with God

I think I still have space for improvement of my prayer life. Every day I back to office, the first thing I will do is to pray. This will help me to be silent and focus on God before starting my service. But I have not made a specific timetable for prayer time.

Prayer does lead me to focus on God especially when the tasks or people always distract your attention from God. Sometimes I will pray in silence and learn to leave all things to God. Sometimes I even cannot concentrate in prayer when I feel confused; but I will stop to pray and ask God to have mercy on me and saturated in front of Him. I find difficulties on this since I am always worried about many things. Overall, I still feel close with God in this type of prayer life and seldom feel far away from Him.

6. How would you define spiritual well being? Can you describe for me your understandings and experiences of your own spiritual wellbeing?
I have not thought of how to define spiritual well-being. But I think of Spiritual well-being is health in terms of physical, emotional and spiritual care. It is also healthy relationship with oneself, with others and with God.

Alan: Can you talk more about healthy relationship?

First of all, a holistic concept of spirituality is fundamental. But it is always related to relationships. It is holistic. That means our physical well-being is related to our psychological well being as well as to our spiritual health.

Self-acceptance is very important, how one perceives oneself and having healthy self-image is important. A healthy person is not self-depreciatory or feeling inferior. The opposite of that is lack of self acceptance, projection, self defense mechanism, and may be self deception, out of focus, whenever they do something, they do it to please others, or out of reactions only. In addition, I believe physical tiredness or psychosomatic reasons for unhealthiness.

On the other hand, we can consider God as the significant other. As such, God is not an authoritarian, but Someone Who enters into loving relationship with us. A healthy person loves and desires God not out of fear, but out of love. This may be related to our original family.

A healthy person is independent, having sufficient energy, felt beloved, he or she is taking good care of oneself. They are not fearful of God.
7. In what ways do you think you have experienced spiritual crisis? How do you feel?

I did experience spiritual crisis before. I felt frustrated and lack of energy at that time. I am busy and confused recently. Look at my office and you will understand its kind of messy. There are many interruptions. Almost ten persons in our congregation who experienced separation or death of their closed ones within just a few months. I felt rather confused and sad sometimes. I think it is related to the rhythm of life, which has been disoriented. There are administrative works and urgent needs from the congregation.

8. In what ways a spiritual director can sustain his or her spiritual wellbeing? In what ways do you think your spiritual being can be nourished? What are some of your specific needs?

Well, recently I think my spiritual health is not as good and as I expected.

Alan: go on please

E: I think regular silence is important for my own spiritual health. I want to get in touch with myself as frequently as possible. Scriptural reading is also important and I think it should be a regular discipline. Certainly, I find some spiritual reading stimulating and useful.

As a pastor in charge, I have to take care many things. Recently, there is a concern in my congregation regarding to a color-blind brother. So we have to sort out a way for him. This is just an example of how we have to take care of small things.
I am learning to pastor and take care of the needs of many even though it may not be considered as urgent.

When I studied spiritual formation and spiritual direction a few years ago, that was the time I went to retreat on a very regular basis. I am going to retreat bi-monthly. Being directed is also very important to me.

On the other hand, I think support from seminary classmates and co-workers who are familiar with me can walk with me. Their support, and together with the support of my spiritual director, is very important to me.

I also practice Scriptural reading over a long period of time. It is a regular habit. Some books are helpful and stimulating too.

9. What kind of material you are using in your spiritual practices? Have you ever used a spiritual guidebook that you found helpful? Can you describe what do you think of it?

Basically, I followed the Ignatius exercise for a while and I found it helpful. Other than that, I will read certain books related to spirituality and emotional development. I also practice the Jesus Prayer, the labyrinth, but I have not used a specific manual.

I am a contemplative person, so I am learning to observe in whatever circumstances, for example, the nature, but even in the city, what God is trying to communicate to me.

Images, icons, or anything that is symbolic or that can be visualized can help me to draw closer to God. For example, I am wearing this bracelet which has the word; “a complain
free world “ on it to remind me that I have to practice not to complain. There is an eagle, a stone, pebbles, some glassware and pictures etc. in my office to remind me of the sacred presence of God.

10. What are some of your major struggles that prevent you from experience spiritual transformation now?

As mentioned, the workload is heavy. In the past, before the study of spiritual direction, I have also counseled somebody. Now I have three to four directees and have one of them come nearly 2 years under my spiritual direction which is regularly one session per week at the first time, and then changed to one session per month. In fact, I feel the tension of carrying on the practice of spiritual direction, but I will try to set the priority.

Alan: Is it the stress on practicing as a spiritual director?

E: It is mainly the interruptions from ministry. It happens day in and day out. I am trying to set the priorities and maintain a rhythm that will give me more space. Actually I know my constraint but I will not stop the practice.

I also experienced a period of frustrations and discouragement when I struggled with certain issues in the Church. I am compulsive sometimes, as I tried to do more and resolve the matter. Underlying, I believe is the thought that I want to be in control or being known as famous is tempting. The temptation to be success is real. I am aware of the fact that I wanted to be acknowledged although I know this is problematic. As a result, I forget God is actually in control.
Participant F

1. Can you briefly outline your overall ministry and your spiritual experiences?

I was trained as a nurse, but gradually I became interested in the ministry of a chaplain. I did a lot of visitations at that time.

Can you be more specific?

F: Yes, I got a nursing degree from the Hong Kong University. Later, I received counseling training at the same time, and thought more specific in what area of nursing I wanted to focus into.

There, I got to know more about holistic care, or holistic nursing, which has opened a totally new perspective of caring to me. But at about the same time, there was an opening in hospice nursing, so I applied and I was further trained in hospice nursing. The aspect on spiritual care especially touched me. One particular aspect is the learning about pain control and how to relieve the pains of patients. I discovered then spiritual care is closely related to the psychological and spiritual responses of patients.

At that time, the concept of total pain really stroked me, especially the area of spiritual pain. Spiritual care can be beneficial to those patients who felt deep pain and in great emotional needs.

Alan: I understand you have turning more to spiritual care after you received nursing training. Can you elaborate on that?
F: First, how the patient’s response to pain depends on their psychological state; and in turn, psychological wellbeing is related to spiritual care. I also realized that pain and suffering are similar in the sense that when a patient was suffered physically, he or she suffered emotionally and ultimately, spiritually. Spiritual care is meaningful to them when they began to query and reflect on the meaning of life.

But the most important learning is the relationship of the patient with himself or herself, with others and with a higher being or God. The patient has no one to turn to, but they can help themselves by relating to themselves and relating to God.

2. How do you become a spiritual director? Can you tell me your training, and your preparation in becoming a spiritual director?

As mentioned, I started working as a nurse, finishing nursing school, and got a degree in nursing. Later on I got a certificate in hospice nursing. At about the same time, I took many courses on Bible and spirituality. I also received the Virginia Satir training and the NLP training.

Later on, I also received the CPE trainings in a seminary. I work part time as a chaplain for a period of time. I came across a lot of practical experiences, for example, writing a lot of verbatim, and making a lot of data analysis.

Feeling that my experiences and learning is limited to the Christian circle, I went on to study and got a master degree in counseling.
In the meantime, I began to pick up silence and solitude, walking closely with a spiritual mentor. I often went to retreat and there were much time connecting with spiritual traditions, particular the Catholic tradition, like the Ignatius’ Spiritual exercises.

It was a period during which I had found out more about myself. Self-discovery was rich and expressed themselves in many way in the process of learning how to silence, pray and meditate as well as practices of counseling, etc.

Finally, I think you are aware of the fact that I have been attending courses offered by the Spiritual Formation International; taught by you and Susan. They were very helpful and inspiring too.

3. How would you describe your experience in being spiritually directed and in directing others?

My experiences of being spiritually directed are very fruitful. Starting from 1997, I received counseling and spiritual direction. I have experienced a lot of healing in individual session, workshops, and seminars, etc.

I think I realized more about what spiritual direction is when I began to apply spiritual direction to my own ministry. There was much desire in helping others through spiritual direction. Although I am not practicing spiritual direction in a formal manner because I found myself always using other tools and tried to integrate them. In the last two years, I finally decided to learn more about spiritual direction. I finished the advance level here and I practiced more spiritual direction nowadays.
Alan: Good.

4. Are you having solitude, retreat and meeting up with a spiritual director on a regular basis? Do you prefer more quiet time and solitude?

I used to meet up with a Catholic sister a few years ago on a very regular basis. I went to retreat for 3-5 days quarterly. So it is frequent.

I focus more on Bible reading now. I prefer more quiet time, but it seems to me I am trying to escape from God sometimes. In addition, I think I am not as disciplined as before.

I became more spontaneous and stick not to a regular pattern of prayer.

Alan: Can you say a bit more on “spontaneous”

F: Before, there were much struggles in life orientations, relationship with people, therefore there is a great urge to go into solitude and pray, I was very disciplined At that time, and the desire was strong. God had transformed me through those precious moments. Right now, I am not as disciplined, but prefer to listen and talk to God spontaneously. But I wanted to be more discipline.

Describe for me your recent prayer experience, and your relationship with God

The desire is always there. God is good and God’s loving image is always real to me. There is always a sense of restlessness in me. I want to have more peace. Deep inside, I knew my restlessness has to be related to my being a perfectionist.

How would you define spiritual well being? Can you describe for me your understandings and experiences of your own spiritual wellbeing?
My experience in spiritual well being is that I have the peace and feel restful even when I am busy. I would describe it as a sense of flexibility.

I will also define spiritual well being as physically refresh. Sometimes, I will start with morning exercises before the devotion. In that way, I found physical and spiritual closely related. On the other hand, rest, calm, and gentleness are some of the characteristics of a spiritually healthy person. There is a strong sense of freedom.

The closeness of God is at hand.

Alan: Can you say more about that? Is it intimacy? Closeness?

F: For me, closeness is freedom in God, talk to Him and listen to Him freely and happily. It’s not that I wanted to hear something new or marvelous from God. In fact, sometimes it is wordless, calm and peaceful.

In what ways do you think you have experienced spiritual crisis? How do you feel?

Lack of support, overloaded work…lack of peace…

Alan: Is it lack of trust?

F: I experienced Lack of strength, “I am not good enough”, I feel lonely. I expected or wanted to be understood and acknowledged. When I was a nurse, I found organizational support very important. I had experienced burn out and there was a lot of negative self-evaluation at that time. At that time, I had to lead a team of nurse when my boss passed away. When my boss passed away suddenly; I had to take charge and did not have time to grieve. I felt so tired, physically exhausted and feeling depressed. I felt not understood and acknowledged.

When I practice spiritual direction, I look for supervision. When I serve in the Church, I also expect support, but often failed to find sufficient support.
My struggle is the tiredness and depressing situation sometimes I had to go through. I became extremely frustrated when one of my team members had to leave. I collapsed and felt not understood.

In what ways a spiritual director can sustain his or her spiritual wellbeing? In what ways do you think your spiritual being can be nourished? What are some of your specific needs?

What I need is more discipline, good teamwork and spiritual companion. Furthermore, there should be a sense of closeness in regular devotion or prayer. For me, it is just like free-flowing dialogue with God.

Alan: can you say more about that?

F: I enjoy being in a contemplative silence, experiencing the rest and peace from God. In order to nourish my spiritual wellbeing, I will maintain physical exercises. I will discipline to pray and meditate. I think regular retreat will help, and exercise like Examen or daily conversing with God is always good. Journal writing is very important to me too. I do have some spiritual companion. But I do have to adjust to a role that I am the leader or the spiritual director. What is most helpful is a long period of time of retreat, so that I can just relax and experience the presence of God, practicing lectio divina, or examen, etc.

Sometimes, I am encouraged and recovered more quickly when I witnessed God’s work. I think I need to learn to trust and rely on God more. I have to let go and let God.

What kind of material you are using in your spiritual practices? Have you ever used a spiritual guidebook that you found helpful? Can you describe what do you think of it?
The Bible, especially the Psalms. I used to read the Bible as I practice Lectio Divina, meditate and talk to God.

When I received spiritual direction from the Catholic sister, she didn’t give me any specific knowledge on spiritual formation. I found one of your books very helpful, especially it had helped me to sort out many things about what is spirituality and spiritual formation.

In terms of books, Henri Nouwen, Wong Chi Hok (graduate with a PhD from Fordham, major in Spirituality, wrote two books on spiritual formation) and your book on “Return and Rest”

What are some of your major struggles that prevent you from experience spiritual transformation now?

I think it is mainly busyness and overloaded with works. This has become a pattern and triggered me from time to time. The pattern of life is kind of disorganized sometimes. More and more I feel lonely as I am busy and playing the role of a helper or leader. I don’t mind administration, but it does cause confusion when I am doing a lot of things. Deep inside, I need someone, a spiritual companion, who can walk and guide me and give me support.

The obstacles, on one hand, are related to my self-understanding, knowing that I am a perfectionist, I always look for something like perfect harmony, and tend to avoid confrontation. Perhaps the root is my family origin and I identify the strong feeling of abandonment.

Alan: what is it? The abandonment
F: in silence, feeling of abandonment swelled up, there is fear, tension, I am aware of that and I may not want to go deeper into it. It is paradoxical because the feeling of abandonment does bring me back to God. It is paradoxical because the discovery has also brought me closer to God, reminding me that I needed Him.
Appendix 3
The Spiritual Direction Guide Book

The transforming leader is appropriately humbled by this realization and also relieved not to have to bear the heavy weight of changing himself, or others. The transforming leader is faithful to do the one thing he or she can do by entering into the spiritual practices that create the conditions in which spiritual transformation can take place.

~~ Ruth Barton

Objective: To reach a horizon of new discovery, new vocation, new life, new vision, new discipline, new friends and new strength. It is my utmost wish to see you experiencing new strength as well as healthy spiritual well being in God, to serve and to walk with your spiritual friends. Toward the end of this guidebook, you will be able to experience more on:

• knowing your identity in Christ, self intimacy
• knowing God, discernment
• Intimacy with God
• Reaching out: understand my corporate identity, my spiritual gift, the meaning of communion and intimacy with others
• In a way the experiences may be something resemble the traditional “three ways” which describe the spiritual journey into stages of purgation, illumination and union.

Goal: To orient you toward a healthy spiritual life, with restored strength, and to enable you to continue your ministry with new strength.
Spiritual practices: you are invited to practice solitude, silence, meditation, prayer, reading, retreat, spiritual journal and sharing with spiritual friends.

Introduction

We are now faced with a society filled with all sorts of confusion and disorientation. It is no exaggeration to say that human hearts are characterized with thirst and hunger, tortured with pain and suffering, bound by pressure and anxiety, and burnt with helplessness and fatigue. Likewise, spiritual directors, situated in this very society, encounter the same difficulties. In Henri Nouwen’s words, it is a “dislocated world” and “rootless generation” we are now facing. To spiritual directors, this is the very battlefield we are now fighting in. Yes, very challenging indeed.

Very soon, you will realize the theology books in your backpack are not as useful as you used to think. Besides, you will also come to understand your own limitation and incapability in a very real sense. However, with your passion to care and to nurture, you still pluck up your courage and march forward.

One very pressing need today is about the necessity to nurture our spiritual life, to retreat to the contemplative life mode rooted in the spiritual tradition, and deepen the lives of our contemporary spiritual directors with spiritual direction. We need spiritual directors and mentors to be our guide and friends. Additionally we have to explore the possibility of building a spiritual body so as to enhance mutual encouragement as a whole.
My hope is that you can use this little book as an aid to strengthen your walk with God. In this period of six weeks, with the spiritual exercises provided, be renewed once again in the Lord. Be prepared for new discoveries at the same time. Last but not least, I wish this guidebook could also become a podium for fellow spiritual directors to dialogue and interact in a way we ourselves may not have imagined.
Week 1 Be firm with your Vocation

Introduction

The importance of re-inventing our vocation is to affirm our vision. Vision is what we receive from God on one hand and reveals a portrait of preferred future on the other. A re-invention of vocation deepens our motivation to serve with compassion and humility. This is a solid foundation for our service, which will enable us to make good use of our spiritual gifts, to return to the role of a prophet and a priest, and thus transcend a mere professional service on earth.

Vision, in one way or another, can be challenged. It can also fall into undesirable discrepancy. In our very busy daily life, we tend to work to see results of our ministry, even though it may originate from the many voices of spiritual needs we hear day in and day out. For ourselves, we aspire for spiritual support, hoping to hear God’s voice as well as experience His presence and power. However, always remember that to live well is as important as listening to God. Listening to God, after all, weighs more than results of our ministry.

There is a direct connection between vision and our value system. If we want to listen to God as well as to assure His guidance in our lives, we have to put Him before anything else. It is important to articulate a sense of vocation as spiritual director, but if we are only after people’s acknowledgment, we will fall into the pit of either pleasing them or ignoring them. To grow in maturity requires our determination to set aside time for our heart. In silence, we discern and understand our heart’s desire as we also confess it. It is this very desire which reflects our real interpretation and value system of ministry. At this point, let us have a moment of reflection of myself right here and now:
a. I am called to offer myself: to use my spiritual gifts, my service before God and people;
b. I am called to discover and understand myself;
c. I am called to actualize myself;
d. I am called to create and make good use of my spiritual gifts;
e. I am called to be God’s children.

Journal

Meditation

Silence: be quiet for a few minutes

Meditation: Exodus 3:1-14; lectio divina this passage in silence; refer to Exodus chapter 15-34 with particular attention to how Moses’ calling was being challenged.

Exodus 3: 1-14

1. Now Moses was tending the flock of Jethro his father-in-law, the priest of Midian, and he led the flock to the far side of the desert and came to Horeb, the mountain of God.
2. There the angel of the LORD appeared to him in flames of fire from within a bush. Moses saw that though the bush was on fire it did not burn up.
3. So Moses thought, “I will go over and see this strange sight—why the bush does not burn up.”
4. When the LORD saw that he had gone over to look, God called to him from within the bush, “Moses! Moses!” And Moses said, “Here I am.”
5. “Do not come any closer,” God said. “Take off your sandals, for the place where you are standing is holy ground.”
6. Then he said, “I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob.” At this, Moses hid his face, because he was afraid to look at God.
7. The LORD said, “I have indeed seen the misery of my people in Egypt. I have heard them crying out because of their slave drivers, and I am concerned about their suffering.
8. So I have come down to rescue them from the hand of the Egyptians and to bring them up out of that land into a good and spacious land, a land flowing with milk and honey--the home of the Canaanites, Hittites, Amorites, Perizzites, Hivites and Jebusites.

9. And now the cry of the Israelites has reached me, and I have seen the way the Egyptians are oppressing them.

10. So now, go. I am sending you to Pharaoh to bring my people the Israelites out of Egypt.”

11. But Moses said to God, “Who am I, that I should go to Pharaoh and bring the Israelites out of Egypt?”

12. And God said, “I will be with you. And this will be the sign to you that it is I who have sent you: When you have brought the people out of Egypt, you will worship God on this mountain.”

13. Moses said to God, “Suppose I go to the Israelites and say to them, ‘The God of your fathers has sent me to you,’ and they ask me, ‘What is his name?’ Then what shall I tell them?”

14. God said to Moses, “I am who I am. This is what you are to say to the Israelites: ‘I AM has sent me to you.’ “

Dialogue with God

Listen to God

Pray to God

Journal

Meditation this week:

• In what way can I see and listen more clearly? Have I got any hints from my meditation on this passage? How did Moses see and listen?

• What kind of spiritual discipline or aids do I need so that I can have a better understanding of my vocation?

• In the process of actualizing my vocation, in what way can I make good use of my spiritual gifts without putting too much emphasis on results

• In what way can I maintain perseverance of my vocation in times of people’s rejection and conflicts arisen in serving?
Follow up

In my early days of pastoral ministry, I clearly saw myself being called to utilize my spiritual gifts to serve, to the extent of falling into a “saving” mode. After a few years’ extreme fatigue, paradoxically, I fell in love with silent retreat, followed by pursuits of spiritual theology. For a period of years, I practiced silence and reading, and thereafter, I began to lead other people to come close to God.

When I first sought to become a spiritual director, I was both worried and excited. I was grateful to see many hearts being touched and healed. However, with more and more work, I was once again trapped in a deadline-meeting and task-oriented life mode. I was deeply aware of the reason why I was so far away from the vocation in my life. It was because I did not fully understand I was called to be loved by God. He did not really want me to serve with the spiritual gifts He gave me. Neither did He want me to offer my life to Him. Rather He wanted to walk with me, meet me and renew my life. This is all He wanted.

When my spiritual life stranded in a wilderness again, I thought of how Jeremiah was rejected on the one hand, and at the same time, I thought of how many contemporary so-called spiritual directors tried to “attract” Christians with all kinds of means. I could help being disappointed and angry. Those days of serving in “wilderness” made my life dry.

However, I began to see the real self: my darkness, negative emotions, worries and the like. In prayer, I started to understand more and more that getting hold of a clear vocation is the most important. After all, belonging to God is he most precious.
Now I am learning to be steadfast with my vocation. I try not to take great workload or counting too much on myself to be the strength of my service. I know well I have to rely on God solely. My hope is to stay close to God, step by step, in the midst of my very busy life and service, just like Moses, talking to God as a close friend.

In this week:

Pray with Henri Nouwen’s prayer. Pay close attention to the words which touch your heart as well as your feelings. Allow this prayer to deepen your vocation like a blessing.

We pray: “God give me the courage to be revolutionary as your Son Jesus Christ was. Give me the courage to loosen myself from this world. Teach me to stand up free and to shun no criticism. God, it is for your kingdom. Make me free, make me poor in this world, then I will be rich in the real world, which this life is all about. God, thank you for the vision of the future, but make it fact and not just theory.”¹

¹ Henri Nouwen, With Open Hands, p. 148

Journal: As you reflect on the above questions:
Week Two Self-Intimacy

Introduction

How intimate am I with myself? How do I really see myself? In the recent decade, one of the popular topics in our society is “What is my personality type?” Seemingly we are doing better with self-knowledge. Unfortunately we are not completely sure of it at all. As a spiritual director, we must explore a space to develop self-intimacy in our heart. In her work, Margaret Silf explains the reality of our lives by means of three questions: “Where am I?”, “How do I feel?” and “Who am I?” (see Note 1) According to Silf, the first circle refers to our past, like our biological family, disability or regrets, something, which can never be changed. The second one is what I have experienced and the choices I have made in my life. Of course, they are related to my feelings too, as our choices will gradually become our habits, rooted in my heart. The third circle is my real self before God and I soon realize the differences between my real self and the two circles listed earlier. As a result, I have a feeling of both shame and honor. While we are moving toward the center of life, we will experience a brand new creation, which Silf calls “Godseed”.

Apart from the connection between self-knowledge and self-intimacy, Silf also stresses that self-intimacy is related to self-assurance, self-appreciation and a reasonable self-depreciation. Any individual who can get in touch with his / her feelings but without self-intimacy is prone to falling into deep pondering. He/ She is yet to grow to reach breakthroughs in his / her life. No matter what, the salvation of Jesus Christ is our only foundation in this process.
As soon as I take Jesus as the center of my life and self-identity, I am able to open up myself and love myself. Jesus is formed in my heart. He is my holiness and righteousness. I am His. This is of utmost significance, which has to be upheld and deepened. On the other hand, this belief has to be my own experience too. The fact that God never changes is not abstract at all. Without spiritual discipline, my relationship with God will never become concrete and substantial.

The practice of silence and prayer will help us to enter into the core of “Who am I?” However, when our self-knowledge increases, we begin to worry about how people think of me. We might even be very mindful of how they feel about us, to the extent that we might neglect the importance of self-intimacy. One way of attaining self-knowledge is through re-connecting with others and myself, during which we will reach a better understanding of ourselves. We will, at the same time, discern the reality of life itself. In this process, we will even realize the discrepancy between my new self-knowledge and old self-understanding. If this is the case, we have to face it with humility. In the following, let us reflect on how we used to get in touch with ourselves. Try to find out what I really want to know in the spiritual discipline I have been engaging in so far:

Devotional scripture reading
Bible study
Reading
Prayer
Retreat
Revision on my vocation
Soul searching with my spiritual director or spiritual friends

Journal

Meditation

Silence: hand over your thoughts and emotions to God

Meditation: John 21. Try to meditate this passage with “Gospel Meditation”, i.e. use your 5 senses to engage with the passage, in a contemplative manner. Imagine how Peter thought and felt of himself and others. Tell God what you think and feel.

Dialogue with God

Listen to God

Pray to God

Journal

John 21:15-23

When they had finished eating, Jesus said to Simon Peter, “Simon son of John, do you truly love me more than these?” “Yes, Lord,” he said, “you know that I love you.” Jesus said, “Feed my lambs.”

Again Jesus said, “Simon son of John, do you truly love me?” He answered, “Yes, Lord, you know that I love you.” Jesus said, “Take care of my sheep.”

The third time he said to him, “Simon son of John, do you love me?” Peter was hurt because Jesus asked him the third time, “Do you love me?” He said, “Lord, you know all things; you know that I love you.”
Jesus said, “Feed my sheep. I tell you the truth, when you were younger you dressed yourself and went where you wanted; but when you are old you will stretch out your hands, and someone else will dress you and lead you where you do not want to go.”

Jesus said this to indicate the kind of death by which Peter would glorify God. Then he said to him, “Follow me!”

Peter turned and saw that the disciple whom Jesus loved was following them. (This was the one who had leaned back against Jesus at the supper and had said, “Lord, who is going to betray you?”)

When Peter saw him, he asked, “Lord, what about him?”

Jesus answered, “If I want him to remain alive until I return, what is that to you? You must follow me.”

Because of this, the rumor spread among the brothers that this disciple would not die. But Jesus did not say that he would not die; he only said, “If I want him to remain alive until I return, what is that to you?”

Meditation this week:

While we can attain self-intimacy through meditation and reading, the practice of *examen* is also beneficial to our growth. The meditation this week focuses on what I feel grateful for and what I can’t be grateful for. The following “Emotion Check List” is designed to help you identify whether you incline to any particular emotion/s. In case there are plenty of things I don’t feel grateful for, am I able to label the incidents or people which cause emotional upheaval or even make me stumble? Am I still able to accept such a self? At the same time, can I discover anything which is positive or which I appreciate about myself?
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Journal

Come to our Lord at the Cross with all the emotions you have just recorded. Share with Him the feelings deep down in your heart. Be patient to listen to His response and feel His acceptance of your true self.

Follow up:

Jesus got re-connected with Peter once again, not only did He want to give him another opportunity, but rather He wanted Peter to understand the space in his heart as well as moments of significance in his life. This is a time of life transformation. In the passage above, the questions, which Jesus asked, Peter allow him to reflect on his life once again. How did he exactly feel about himself, and how he makes choices etc? Do you have similar experiences? How do you feel in the process?
You may say that you don’t have time to talk with God in silence in recent days. If this is the case, I advise you to quiet down before our Lord and listen to these few questions now. You can follow Ignatius’s teaching and reflect on these few day’s life. What do you feel about the incidents and people which come into your life these few days? Pay close attention to “desolation” and “consolation”. Has the Holy Spirit alerted you to count on Him and wait upon Him? Is there anything you want to give thanks for or is there anything you want to change? Have you ever thought of the possible discrepancy between what people think of you and what you think of yourself?

As for myself, when I search myself in silence, I feel ashamed and sad. But at the same time, I understand myself more, and most important of all, I have a better understanding of the particular aspect I need to be transformed by God’s grace. Whenever I am not aware of how Jesus has been always searching for me and how He accepts me with His unconditional grace, I feel fearful. I am unable to love myself, and will even fall into the trap of making comparisons and come to a conclusion that I am always less fortunate than people around me. It’s all because I fail to be intimate with myself. No wonder I have self-rejection in my heart. This is a new awareness of myself, which motivates me to set off again. With gradual practices, I will be able to identify what are real challenges and what are only temptations.

In this week:

Refer to the “Emotion Check List”, continue to identify your emotions and feelings in your daily life. Do you accept yourself?
Attempt to stay outdoors more. You can stroll in the nature, and talk to God freely. Tell Him how you think of yourself and how people think of you. You can also ask God what He thinks of you.

Note 1

2 Silf Margaret, Inner Compass, Chicago, Loyola Press, 1999
Week 3 From Loneliness to Solitude, from Solitude to return to peace

Introduction

“Technical civilization is man’s conquest of space…. To gain control of the world of space is certainly one of our tasks. The danger begins when in gaining power in the realm of space we forfeit all aspirations in the realm of time. There is a realm of time where the goal is not to have but to be, not to own but to give, not to control but to share, not to subdue but to be in accord.” — Abraham Heschel, The Sabbath, p.3

When Elijah fled to Beersheba in Judah, he was overtaken with extreme fatigue, both physically and spiritually. Shaken with inertia, he felt totally helpless. While looking back on those days of long wait at Kerith Ravine, the miracle he did in Zarephath and the battle on Mount Carmel, his heart was filled with deep sorrow. A thought might have kept on surfacing: “I have not done anything wrong. Do I deserve such an ending?” However, with his strong trust in Jehovah, he decided to venture into the wilderness. There he fell on his knees before the Lord, with sighs and groans. Elijah went solo all his life, didn’t he? He must be lonely and weary all along.

This very scenario reminds me of a feeling of homelessness. I recall my early days in pastoral services. I was very tired too. I was there, with my calendar open before me, filled with work to be finished and appointments with the needy, I felt unspeakably helpless. Later on, in sessions of spiritual direction, I still felt weak, guilty and helpless. I put blame on myself, resulting in even more emotions. I knew perfectly well “In repentance and rest is your salvation”, but frankly speaking, I’d rather couch at the corner, doing nothing. Just like Elijah! I said to myself, “No one understands me”, though I knew I had to “rest” in the Lord. Not only at a specific time or date, but retreat to
resting in Him day in and day out, so that I could share my feelings with my congregation in a very natural manner.

Silence

Meditation: 1 Kings 19:1-18

Lectio Divina: Read the passage a few times; pay close attention to the words which catch your attention, and your feelings as well.

1King 19:1-18

Now Ahab told Jezebel everything Elijah had done and how he had killed all the prophets with the sword.

So Jezebel sent a messenger to Elijah to say, “May the gods deal with me, be it ever so severely, if by this time tomorrow I do not make your life like that of one of them.”

Elijah was afraid and ran for his life. When he came to Beersheba in Judah, he left his servant there, while he himself went a day’s journey into the desert. He came to a broom tree, sat down under it and prayed that he might die. “I have had enough, LORD,” he said. “Take my life; I am no better than my ancestors.”

Then he lay down under the tree and fell asleep. All at once an angel touched him and said, “Get up and eat.”

He looked around, and there by his head was a cake of bread baked over hot coals, and a jar of water. He ate and drank and then lay down again.

The angel of the LORD came back a second time and touched him and said, “Get up and eat, for the journey is too much for you.”

So he got up and ate and drank. Strengthened by that food, he traveled forty days and forty nights until he reached Horeb, the mountain of God.

There he went into a cave and spent the night. And the word of the LORD came to him: “What are you doing here, Elijah?”

He replied, “I have been very zealous for the LORD God Almighty. The Israelites have rejected your covenant, broken down your altars, and put your prophets to death with the sword. I am the only one left, and now they are trying to kill me too.”
The LORD said, “Go out and stand on the mountain in the presence of the LORD, for the LORD is about to pass by.” Then a great and powerful wind tore the mountains apart and shattered the rocks before the LORD, but the LORD was not in the wind. After the wind there was an earthquake, but the LORD was not in the earthquake.

After the earthquake came a fire, but the LORD was not in the fire. And after the fire came a gentle whisper.

When Elijah heard it, he pulled his cloak over his face and went out and stood at the mouth of the cave. Then a voice said to him, “What are you doing here, Elijah?”

He replied, “I have been very zealous for the LORD God Almighty. The Israelites have rejected your covenant, broken down your altars, and put your prophets to death with the sword. I am the only one left, and now they are trying to kill me too.”

The LORD said to him, “Go back the way you came, and go to the Desert of Damascus. When you get there, anoint Hazael king over Aram.

Also, anoint Jehu son of Nimshi king over Israel, and anoint Elisha son of Shaphat from Abel Meholah to succeed you as prophet.

Jehu will put to death any who escape the sword of Hazael, and Elisha will put to death any who escape the sword of Jehu.

Yet I reserve seven thousand in Israel--all whose knees have not bowed down to Baal and all whose mouths have not kissed him.”

Dialogue with God

Listen to God

Journal

Meditation this week:

Recall a particular incident in which you felt deeply disturbed and exhausted.

Describe the process and your feelings. How did you survive it?

Prophet Elijah was at the verge of killing himself, but he breathed his last breath to go into the wilderness. His intimacy with Jehovah is believed to be his drive. Of course, we don’t rule out the possibility that he was too frustrated and there was no other
way but to cry out to Jehovah. No wonder when Jehovah asked him: “What are you doing here, Elijah?” (18:9), he gave a straight answer. Now, record your thoughts and feelings of Elijah’s response. Do you think what Jehovah said is appropriate? Or what would you have said to Elijah at this point?

Would you diagnose that Elijah’s symptom as loneliness, burnt-out, or fatigue? Is there any similarity between your story and Elijah’s?

Follow up:

“Rest” (Shabbat, Sabbath and Shalom etc) means “cease fighting.” Exodus 31:16-17 goes like this: “The Israelites are to observe the Sabbath, celebrating it for the generations to come as a lasting covenant, “ because “it will be a sign between me and the Israelites forever, for in six days the Lord made the heavens and earth, and on the seventh day he abstained from work and rested. “ Hebrew scholars translated the last clause as “He ceased but restored His strength.” In a nutshell, entering into rest means cease all our effort and control over things. That is to open our heart and allow God to take good care of us, until His vitality fills us.

This very acknowledgment that God is God and we are no more than vulnerable human beings is what Abraham Joshua Heschel understands to be “Menuha.” Silence is a state of spiritual mind, characterized by joy, tranquility, peace, harmony, absence of conflicts and fighting. In Hebrews 4:1-10, the author of Hebrews also suggests that “rest” actually means “katapausis,” which is “entering God’s peace.” There is literally nothing as important as entering God’s peace on earth. As a matter of fact, this remains true until

3 Marva Dawn, in her Keeping the Sabbath Wholly, explains that “cease” means cease working, cease to be worried due to high demands of efficiency, and cease to see ourselves as God.
today. It’s really a pity that we fall short of it and we don’t even care. To Israelites long ago, who have wandered in the wilderness for forty years, “entering God’s rest” means “entering the Promised Land” (3:17), where they could enjoy rest in God. Numbers 13 and 14 gives an account of how 12 spies were sent to inspect Canaan land, and only Caleb and Joshua insisted on entering the Promised Land, while the rest were gripped with fear. They ended up continuing wandering in the wilderness and could never enter Canaan. It’s all because of their lack of faith in God and they’d rather choose to give up the rest promised by God.

“God is really here!” is what our predecessors have experienced in their walk of faith. Caleb has Joshua as his partner, whereas Esther has Mordecai and a multitude of Jews behind her. They are stories of salvation, but at the same time, they are stories of celebration, thanksgiving, giving and caring too. It is worth re-thinking them more deeply, isn’t it?

*In this week:*

The focus of practicing restfulness is fixing our eyes on God’s grace, any moment, anywhere. Try to dwell in His grace. Eugene Peterson understands rest this way. He said that Hebrew people counted evening as the start of a fresh day, and actually evening-morning is the order of God’s grace. God begins His work when we go to bed. His covenant with human beings is actually made while we are sleeping. When we wake up, God calls us to take part in His creative work and we respond with our work and faith. No matter what, grace is often primary and preceding. When we wake up, we are not living in a world we create. Neither are we entering a salvation we gain with our
effort. In the evening, without our help at all, God begins His creative work again. In the morning, God calls us to enjoy, to share and to develop the work He has begun.\textsuperscript{4}

Meditate on your life, its goal and priorities etc. Do you want to re-design your life based on “returning to God’s rest” and “returning to people”? Meditate on the following abstract by Richard Peace. Record your feelings and turn it into a piece of prayer to Jesus.

“Holy Conversation involves sharing with one another the complexities and challenges of that journey with the aim of gaining clarity into where we are in the journey and what questions we need to deal with in order to take the next step forward in that journey.”\textsuperscript{5}

Journal

\textsuperscript{4} Eugene Peterson, “The Pastor’s Sabbath,” \textit{Leadership} (Spring, 1985), 53.

\textsuperscript{5} Richard Peace, \textit{Holy Conversation}, 30.
Week 4 Hospitality and Shared Practice

Introduction

“You will be judged according to your ability to love... Love transform me slowly into God... And until I am transformed, sharing the life of God, through love, I shall be of ‘this earth’ and not of ‘that heaven’. ~ Carlo Carretto

It is hard to imagine life without spiritual friends. Travelling without a guide is not possible either. One day, two friends were having a meal together. A asked B: “Do you have any spiritual friends?” B answered: “Yes, I do.” A said: “Let us play a Requiem for him, shall we?” B asked: “Why?” A answered: “Because he has died.” B asked: “How did you know that?” A answered: “While eating, I realize that you head is missing because your spiritual friend has died. Stop eating. Go and look for a spiritual friend first. A person without a spiritual friend is just like a man with no head.”

A spiritual friend’s role is twofold: that of a spiritual director as well as a directee. Therefore the relationship between them can be a mentor-protégé one or at a peer level. The Latin word of spiritual friend or soul friend is *amicus animae*, which means a wise man, counselor or old man (Abba). He / she can also be a person for us to confess (confessor), a midwife, and a companion who helps us to face loneliness in times of difficulties. Likewise, the relationship between our Triune God and ourselves is a covenantal relationship, a relationship which is characterized with mutual commitment. Such a relationship is not a result of practices; nor is it a way of life. Rather it is a vow and pledge.

Spiritual directors today need soul friends, with a common goal of growth by means of life-long encounters of heart and soul. In terms of spiritual discipline, such as worship, meditation, prayer and fellowship, they become each other’s support and help.

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In terms of serving, they express acknowledgment for each other, so that they can grow toward maturity and depth. When spiritual directors engage in shared practices, particularly holy listening, and the outcome can be amazing. The togetherness and mutual support nourished in the process will continue to generate hope, motivation and encouragement. For myself, in my writing ministry, I have been blessed by many spiritual soul friends, who have not only given me their very valuable guidance, but have become a role model of a beautiful life for me.

Meditation:

Silence

Meditation: What kinds of friends do you have? What kinds of spiritual friends are you seeking? Do your spiritual friends understand your loneliness?

Reading: Lectio the stories of Mary and Elisabeth in Luke 1:26-56 carefully. Try to enter the scene and take a role to help you meditate.

Luke 1:25-56

“The Lord has done this for me,” she said. “In these days he has shown his favor and taken away my disgrace among the people.”

In the sixth month, God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a town in Galilee, to a virgin pledged to be married to a man named Joseph, a descendant of David. The virgin’s name was Mary.

The angel went to her and said, “Greetings, you who are highly favored! The Lord is with you.”

Mary was greatly troubled at his words and wondered what kind of greeting this might be.
But the angel said to her, “Do not be afraid, Mary, you have found favor with God.
You will be with child and give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus.
He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the
throne of his father David,
and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever; his kingdom will never end.”
“How will this be,” Mary asked the angel, “since I am a virgin?”
The angel answered, “The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will
overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God.
Even Elizabeth your relative is going to have a child in her old age, and she who was said to be
barren is in her sixth month.
For nothing is impossible with God.”
“I am the Lord’s servant,” Mary answered. “May it be to me as you have said.” Then the angel
left her.
At that time Mary got ready and hurried to a town in the hill country of Judea,
where she entered Zechariah’s home and greeted Elizabeth.
When Elizabeth heard Mary’s greeting, the baby leaped in her womb, and Elizabeth was filled
with the Holy Spirit.
In a loud voice she exclaimed: “Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the child you will
bear!
But why am I so favored, that the mother of my Lord should come to me?
As soon as the sound of your greeting reached my ears, the baby in my womb leaped for joy.
Blessed is she who has believed that what the Lord has said to her will be accomplished!”
And Mary said: “My soul glorifies the Lord
and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior,
for he has been mindful of the humble state of his servant. From now on all generations will call
me blessed,
for the Mighty One has done great things for me-- holy is his name.

His mercy extends to those who fear him, from generation to generation.

He has performed mighty deeds with his arm; he has scattered those who are proud in their inmost thoughts.

He has brought down rulers from their thrones but has lifted up the humble.

He has filled the hungry with good things but has sent the rich away empty.

He has helped his servant Israel, remembering to be merciful to Abraham and his descendants forever, even as he said to our fathers.”

Mary stayed with Elizabeth for about three months and then returned home.

Dialogue with God.

Listen to God.

Pray to God.

Journal

Meditation this week:

Meditate on the conversations between God and Mary. Pay attention to the changes with her attitude. Meditate on the conversations between Mary and Elisabeth, with particular reference to your relationship between you and your spiritual friends:

Mary’s response

Mary’s changes

Mary’s hope

Elisabeth’s response

Meditate on the shared practice between Mary and Elisabeth. Does the way of how they engage in each other’s experiences give you any hints of holy listening? What is the most impressive to you?
Read the following passage about spiritual friendship very carefully. Reflect if Mary and Elisabeth, as well as you and your spiritual friends have the same qualities:

“The whole purpose of spiritual direction is to penetrate beneath the surface of a man’s life…and to bring out his inner spiritual freedom, his inmost truth, which is what we called the likeness of Christ in his soul. This is entirely a supernatural thing, for the work of rescuing the inner man from automatism belongs first of all to the Holy Spirit. The spiritual director cannot do such a work himself. His function is to verify and to encourage what is truly spiritual in the soul.” Thomas Merton

Journal

Follow up:

One illustration of the model of a spiritual friend is what Jesus said in the Bible: I call you my friend from now on. But at the same time, He is also our shepherd, who has substantiated His vow to us with His death. Jesus has a covenant with us, a covenant to live for us (His friends). Jesus’ whole life is for us, and His death on the cross is only part of His covenant for us. He did not only work miracles on earth, but He also ran into temptations, being treated as servants, and set an example for us in everything. Therefore Jesus is the best example of spiritual friend. He walks with us, no matter in times of distress or joy.

Since the third century, with God-loving people like Anthony, Cassian and so on, a spiritual tradition of living a life of prayers and silence has been established. The fourth and fifth centuries, in Syria, see this tradition flourishing. On the one hand, it demonstrates a defending force against secularization of the contemporary world, and on

—-Thomas Merton, Spiritual Direction and Meditation, 16-17.
the other, it sets a platform for the further development of the tradition of desert fathers. Desert fathers emphasize teachings, and spiritual disciplines such as self-control, silence, and solitude. Through specific guidance in particular regards to discerning God’s will, desert fathers mold Christians with love, sympathy and continuous prayers. Their own role model is the best means to direct people to seek God. Additionally, they stress the importance of God’s image in human beings, which makes us lovable and honored. It is this kind of broad mind which makes people feel being accepted as they are. They give people their presence, but not answers.

In the eleventh century, Cistersians continues to develop its tradition of cultivating spiritual friendship in monasteries. Abbots are still figures of authority, but this never undermines the practice of friendship and gentleness among them. Aelred once said: “To live without friends is to live like a beast” and “Friendship is a step toward God.” One main difference between spiritual friends and friends are about its functionalism. Spiritual friends aspire to seek God in His presence together, and to advance in heart-to-heart fellowship and spiritual growth. It is nothing about being self-centered or co-dependent. Henri Nouwen employs five degrees of intimacy as a measuring stick of spiritual friendship: family and friends, colleague, relative acquaintances, and intimate friends. Therefore, spiritual friends are not looking for something from friends; rather they let their heart talk, during which they practice forgiving, accepting and “saving” one another.

Then, are spiritual friends also healers, or people of hospitality? Yes, they are. They must have qualities of willing to establish a space for people to grow in God. While they are opening themselves to their friends, they are building up their lives. So, the trick is not to
ask “How”, as Henri Nouwen said, but rather to focus on broadening our heart to listen to people’s life stories. Spiritual friends or companions are walking on a path of “hearing confessions”. It is a process of mutual seeking and holy listening, where spiritual friends walk with one another with compassion and wisdom from above.

In this week:
Reflection: Am I travelling toward the following goal:
I have to repent with a pure heart and humble myself if I want to help people to discern their heart.
Do I have compunction and compassion, just like the desert fathers?
Do I ask for God’s healing upon my spiritual friends, without putting my control over them?

Practice:
Invite your spiritual friends to show hospitality for one another. Set a primary goal for you and your spiritual friends to practice holy listening. In the coming month, try to use about 2 hours to pray and talk with your covenant spiritual friends. If time permits, pray for your directees, disciples, and team. Also ask God to increase your love in prayers.

Journal
Week 5 Develop resilience strength by trusting Him

Introduction

One important lesson for spiritual directors is to develop a positive attitude to face numerous changes in our lives and ministry. In our very tight daily schedules, unexpected and additional needs of people around us can become a source of frustration in our heart. In times of this, we often hope to have more faith and resilience. Of course we know that irritation and restlessness is unavoidable. If only we have a right attitude, we can take it as a lesson to train ourselves to overcome it in order to go on with our service. However, on the other hand, we have to consider if such irritation and restlessness is related to our feelings deep inside or to a particular incident, such as:

✓ Too demanding with myself, or dissatisfied with my emotions
✓ Unable to adjust to demands from others or work etc, or unhappy with people’s unreasonable demands or unfair treatment
✓ Is it a real hard blow or it is only out of my imagination?
✓ Does it reflect a real worry in my heart or can it be some other emotions?

Journal

Actually we can face such difficulties with a very positive attitude. First of all, we have to understand that we are called to follow Christ and serve Him with perseverance. Therefore, we have to carefully clarify whether they are only matters of triviality in my daily life or whether they are challenges related to my interpersonal relationships. They may not be what God wants me learn in this circumstances. I can be taking care of many different things diligently or am too involved in ministry to the extent that I totally forget what God really wants me is me. He may want me to commit myself in some other even
more important ministry, rather than the work in my hand. Sooner or later, we may even fall into the trap of hypocrisy. Walter Brueggemann has once said something about prophetic ministry: “Prophetic ministry has to do not primarily with addressing specific public crisis but with addressing, in season and out of season, the dominant crisis that is enduring and resilient.”

Therefore we have to differentiate whether the real crisis stems from our heart: is it something to do with my pride, or is it a feeling of inferiority that comes from comparing myself with other people? Very often, I find out something very hidden in my ministry is that I am afraid not being accepted by others. As a result, my service may become acting out of fear and reaction. When I equate my ministry and my ambition to achieve, neglecting that God is the source of my hope, I have to rely on God to remind me that He is my hope. The tension and irritation in my ministry is so real, so real that God may use it to turn my eyes to Him as my only hope. Once I am willing to serve with love, what I do will become acting of love. Slowly, God’s gentleness will blossom in my heart and becomes a real sustaining force in my ministry.

Meditation:

Silence

Meditation: Mark 6:45-54. Lectio Divina : Read this passage. Pay attention to words or phrases, which touch your heart. Pray and meditate on what this word or phrase is speaking to me at this moment. Also pay attention to your feelings.

Mark 6:45-54

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7 The ministry of spiritual directors and prophets is similar because they both have to point out the reality of life and instruct people to return to God once again.
45. Immediately Jesus made his disciples get into the boat and go on ahead of him to Bethsaida, while he dismissed the crowd.

46. After leaving them, he went up on a mountainside to pray.

47. When evening came, the boat was in the middle of the lake, and he was alone on land.

48. He saw the disciples straining at the oars, because the wind was against them. About the fourth watch of the night he went out to them, walking on the lake. He was about to pass by them,

49. but when they saw him walking on the lake, they thought he was a ghost. They cried out,

50. because they all saw him and were terrified. Immediately he spoke to them and said, “Take courage! It is I. Don’t be afraid.”

51. Then he climbed into the boat with them, and the wind died down. They were completely amazed,

52. for they had not understood about the loaves; their hearts were hardened.

53. When they had crossed over, they landed at Gennesaret and anchored there.

54. As soon as they got out of the boat, people recognized Jesus

Dialogue with God

Listen to God

Pray to God

Journal

Meditation this week:

Do you have times of “straining at the oars” in your ministry? How will you train your resilience? What exactly is this resilience?

The disciples were mistaken when they thought that Jesus as a ghost. That’s why they cried out in fear. Do you have similar experiences? What is the “ghost” in your ministry? Why?
Jesus said the disciples: “Don’t be afraid.” Jesus is saying the same thing to you: “Don’t be afraid.” Have you ever heard it? When you heard Jesus’ voice in times of danger and challenges, how did you feel?

4. Do you often recognize Jesus after His appearance? Why?

Journal

Follow up:

There is nothing more real than impurities and temptations of life, I guess. As a spiritual director, we may tend to very self-demanding. It goes without saying that we should learn to stay focused in our ministry, without being deterred and distracted. As what Eugene Peterson said, pastoral service is a life style. As a result, it is not merely service on Sundays, but a day in and day out basis. All sorts of irritation or displeasure we encounter in our daily lives may probably become pastors’ real teaching materials when they preach on pulpit or counsel people in need. This is why a disciplined life style, with proper priorities is beneficial to spiritual directors, because this will raise our awareness and sensitivity as a whole. From time to time, unexpected incidents can upset our timetable. Our hearts can be filled with all sorts of negative feelings. However, no matter what happens, even when we fail again or feel disappointed with ourselves, we still have to make up our mind once again to train ourselves to be resilient with meekness and gentleness, which only come after long term commitment. I remember I finished writing one of my books, by the name of “Return to Peace”, in 1995. It was only two years after

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8 Eugene Peterson uses “between-Sundays work” to describe the service on week-days
my father passed away. When I got my master degree in Theology in 1992, I thought I was pretty strong in faith. But actually I was not at all.

It was a time when even regular discipline did me no good. I was left with only one option that is to return to God, doing nothing and being useless. To my surprise, my heart was filled with the peace of God once more. By faith, let us receive His peace, which is always out of our expectation. His hope alone will become my motivation.

You may never realize that our God is a God of surprises. But He surely is!

In monasteries in ancient times, they had very strict time-tables of work and rest. It is a combination of action and contemplation, in which they experienced wonders and amazement. Perhaps this explains why they could produce great prayers and hymns.

Among many mystics, I like Francis of Assisi most. His perseverance, hopefulness, and joy in times of tribulations are my constant inspiration.

In this week:
Recall how God becomes your hope in your life and ministry.
Make a pledge with yourself again. Write out your rule and mission statement etc. Share with your colleagues about this and listen to his/ her comment.
Consider seeing your spiritual director again.

Journal
Week 6 Intimacy with God and life renewal

Introduction

As a spiritual director, I am always sorry for my own desire for God. On the one hand, I am certain of His intimacy with me and He always shows acceptance of me; however, on the other hand, I feel sorry for not being able to sustain renewal in Him. The reason why I am like this is because I have a hidden agenda when I seek His intimacy, i.e. asking Him to solve my problems. Somehow I am aware of this pattern of mine, and I just feel like drifting away from Him, like the psalmist of Psalm 42, who felt downcast, or the psalmist of Psalm 13, who kept asking God how much longer he had to wait. I am drifting away from God and this becomes great pain in my heart.

As we all know, spiritual directors lead people toward God. They are to help people to identify the real desire deep down in their hearts. Therefore it is never our responsibility to solve or analyze problems. After all, helping people to experience God is much more important than to solve their problems. Pure desire, in whatever circumstances, outweighs any kind of analysis. Unfortunately, very often, I myself am not that sure of my own desire, aspiration or hope. No wonder I get stuck with discerning inner movement, while renewal is so far away.

The starting point of life renewal is the moment when I identify my own situation right here and now and my relationship with God. Look at the following; do they describe your relationship with God right here and now?

1. staying close to God, and take Him as my only contentment;
2. trying to learn to be submissive, but am still lacking in faith;
3. experiencing God’s presence in silence, and work with Him;
4. sustaining my desire in Him even though He might seem to be absent at this moment;

5. desiring to experience God’s presence with the congregation in my current ministry,
   learning to follow His steps, to take up the responsibility I should bear, to the extent
   of suffering.

Journal
Meditation
Silence
Meditation: Psalm 16: contemplation on a cup. Imagine your life as a cup, in which you
find joy and pain. Hand to God the joy and pain, and continue to feel this cup of joy and
cup of pain in silence.

Psalms 16

1. Keep me safe, O God, for in you I take refuge.
2. I said to the LORD, “You are my Lord; apart from you I have no good thing.”
3. As for the saints who are in the land, they are the glorious ones in whom is all my delight.
4. The sorrows of those will increase who run after other gods. I will not pour out their libations
   of blood or take up their names on my lips.
5. LORD, you have assigned me my portion and my cup; you have made my lot secure.
6. The boundary lines have fallen for me in pleasant places; surely I have a delightful
   inheritance.
7. I will praise the LORD, who counsels me; even at night my heart instructs me.
8. I have set the LORD always before me. Because he is at my right hand, I will not be shaken.
9. Therefore my heart is glad and my tongue rejoices; my body also will rest secure,
10. because you will not abandon me to the grave, nor will you let your Holy One see decay.
11. You have made known to me the path of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence, with
    eternal pleasures at your right hand.
Dialogue with God

Listen to God

Pray to God

Journal

Meditation this week:

- Go to the past scenario where you could not be intimate with God and its possible reasons. Present all these before the Lord. Tell Him honestly your displeasure, suspicion, or other feelings and listen to Him.

- Do I really take God as my joy? Can I say seeking intimacy with God is my first priority in life? Is He really my portion and my cup which He assigned for me? If I lose all my fortune and even my life, with God and me myself remaining, can I still be intimate with Him?

- Do you desire God’s guidance? Why? Do you have trust in Him? Why?

- What does God say to you in your brokenness and pain? What does He say to you with emotions and thoughts deep down in your heart?

Journal

Follow up:

God desires to be our intimate friend. He wants to protect our relationship with Him, much more than our success or achievement. My prayer for you is that you may realize His work in you, and He is always taking initiative to work in you. Our Triune
God always wants to bless your ministry, but He is more concerned about transforming your life. In this God-and-people-relationship, God hopes to transform us to be people who are completely liberated, no longer bound or controlled by things or people’s demands on earth. He wants to see us restoring purity of little children, so that we can live with Him, joyfully and freely, with Him as our only good and pleasure. Moreover, He is waiting to see our heart being renewed afresh. This is not exactly a heart for ministry, but rather a heart, which always stays close to, God, until the fruit of the Spirit is born eventually.

As a spiritual director, being poor in the spirit is probably the most important quality. Think of Julian of Norwich. She did not give up seeking compassion and pure love in her very sickness. Amid all sorts of possible adversities, like extreme decay in human heart, religious belief and moral issues, she knew perfectly well that this is the road which our Lord Jesus once took on earth. Throughout ages, the soil of pastoral caring is filled with challenges, tribulation, grief and pain. This is perhaps why we have to march onward to the Cross of Christ, without hesitation and regret.

On the other hand, spiritual renewal is another kind of pilgrimage, in which we find all kinds of unknown and unpredictable elements. As a matter of fact, life experiences together with struggles, and spiritual renewal are inseparable. What is critical is whether we are willing to go for the road Jesus Christ has taken before. Under whatever circumstances, imitating Christ to look more and more like Him is a never-changing road in our spiritual journey.

In this week:

- Rest in *Intentio*. Try to take these steps: in the coming week, set aside 15-to-20-
minute periods throughout the day in silence. Go into silence with a *mantra* and feel the presence of God. Praying “May your Kingdom come”, or “Please come, Lord” etc to stay focused in the Lord. In case of any distractions, try to re-concentrate in His presence. Do not stand up, take any walk or read anything. Cease your work. It may seem a waste of time when you first start practicing. However, you will reap the fruit of mediation very soon: God in silence, and He speaks in silence. If only we can learn to be silent, we will know our loving God more and more. We will listen to Him more accurately and understand life renewal always takes place in silence.

- Concentrate on desiring God’s grace by means of the following:

  1. Re-connect God’s new affection for yourself in silence. Be steadfast with experiencing and feeling His acceptance of you.
  2. Experience the power of His Light. Develop deep trust in Him.
  3. Ask God to grant you the courage to re-encounter yourself. Allow Him to bring about complete changes with your character.
  4. Experience God’s unique guidance.
  5. Uphold your dream of being renewed in God.

Journal
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Appendix 4

Focus Group discussion

1. Recall a time when you feel especially effective engaged or energized in your ministry. Describe the situation. What did you value most about yourself in that situation?

F: I remember at least in two retreat occasions when I felt God intervened to help me in strengthening me. I was so weak at that time, but I just felt God’s presence and how He moved the retreatants. I also felt strengthened. It’s amazing and very moving, I felt very contended and overwhelmed.

E: Before, I experienced a lot of hardship in serving. Recently, I had led my congregation towards the orientation of healing, forgiveness and reconciliation. It seems impossible to me. I sensed God’s presence, but God also intervened in a very special way. This is a new direction of ministry that I am pursuing, and Romans 8 reminded me of all things work out for good. I had the passions to do this, knowing that I was not able to make this happened. It brought me great satisfaction, and I am learning to rely more on God.

D: In terms of ministering, I do not have much problem. But I did experience frustration in co-working and interpersonal relationship during the past six years. But when I resigned from the post, and sent mails to some friends and lots of responses came back . It’s a feeling that I was accompanied, the feeling of being understood by friends. It’s moving. And I told Jesus I need this kind of accompaniment. I have walked with so many people, but I did mentioned to Alan that I felt lonely. Not until I resigned from this post did I understand what exactly is the meaning of being accompanied.
Alan: what exactly is that kind of feeling? It seems to me that you are experiencing loneliness in teamwork in the hospital.

D: In the past six years, the feeling of loneliness persisted, as I perceived myself walking alone in my chaplain ministry.

Going back to your question of what exactly is being accompanied, I think it is being empowered, feeling secure, and ultimately, the feeling that Jesus is actually accompanied me.

Alan: empowerment, energizing.

D: But ultimately, Christ is actually with us all the time.

C: The past few months marked a new turn in my ministry. It’s kind of interesting. It’s like the wave in the sea, or should I say, cycles of wave. The challenges came and go, and the feeling of dried out appeared in cycles. In a way, it resembled Nehemiah chapter one to six. The challenges are still there, but the passion or dream for this ministry brought me forth.

B: I consider ministry from an all round perspective. I am a housewife, a mother and a full time Christian worker. I am working in a big church. Seven hundred people, you can imagine. I am sleepless sometimes. I feel energized when I am having my day off, doing nothing, sleep, and even in doing some chores. When you came to our Church to lead a retreat, I think God’s word is always helpful to me.

B: I think the Word of God always energize and empower me. You used Psalm 46 to remind us that “Be still and know that you are God.” I can be very stubborn sometime. I should try my best, but learning to let go and let God. He is in control.
A: At first, I thought of the couples group I ministered to when I began serving in the church. God had blessed that ministry and although we started with one group, it grew from one group to more than 10 groups.

Then I thought of the visitation program in my church. We mainly visit the elderly, and not many were involving in the ministry. I did feel lonely sometimes, and I agreed with some of you that the feeling of tiredness is real, because that is not an ‘effective’ ministry when compared to other ministries, but I had learnt that in that way, I actually prefer doing this kind of “unknown” or “minor” ministry. There are ministries, for example, preaching, that I may not prefer.

One particular incident that brought me significant change is the experience of God’s affirmation. I felt the closeness to God.

I felt so painful because my energy was spent to make myself important, make myself known, my performance. I am no longer bound by the need to perform. I am free when I felt God acknowledged me personally. I became another person. I no longer thinking too much or react to how others look at me.

And freedom is strength. I no longer need to react, I am not afraid of the church leaders, the deacons. I also felt supported by God and others. I also realized the congregation is actually supporting me.

Alan: God’s affirmation brings freedom. But as a spiritual director, what exactly do you value in your experiences?

A: The results of the ministries are no longer important. For example, in visitation, I would appreciate myself, my motive is pure, not my ability to perform.

E: Purity of heart. It is the purity of heart that we should value.
Alan: what else? What are those significant things that support you?

E: For me, it is the simple and pure heart. It is important to feel real contentment. It is the response to God’s great love.

Alan: So it’s nothing to do with spiritual gifts and strength or power? Is it trust?

E: I would not be able to produce something even I am gifted, or even I had planned, but it is actually the mentality to control. I used to plan a lot in leading retreats, etc.

I prefer to let go and let God now. There are so many things that I would not know, not even the readiness of the congregation or retreatants. I agreed with what F said. Sometimes we just don’t know. God surprised me and excited by God sometimes. In that way, I can relax even I don’t know why. I am kind of compulsive sometimes. I am learning to let go.

I have to check my motive: whether I wanted to be acknowledged.

I am anxious and always prepare well, but that would not bring me real joy, I echoed with A that I wanted to be acknowledged. I would not understand what peace and joy is if I am always sin control.

Alan: I think it’s nothing wrong to value my spiritual gifts, which are given by God. So is it the pure heart or dependence on God that we should value? How can we learn to trust and depend on God purely?

E: Co-working with God. It is a feeling of co-working with God.

B: Ministry is 100 percent God’s work, and 100 percent man’s work. I commit the result and consequence to God, no matters it is preaching or leading other meetings, I should try by best and let God work.
C: I was meditating on integrity of heart in the past few weeks. That may be something that I have to learned and valued. I think it is related to what A said about the motive, the purity.

Alan: Can you elaborate on what is integrity of heart?

C: I am thinking along the line of my entire ministry and the journey of serving, but basically, it may be like Psalm 78, to pastor according to God’s heart

When you talked about trusting God, but actually we are lack of trust, but God’s support help us to trust Him.

Alan: Is not that we are capable to “trust”, we are actually talking about relying on God totally, right?

All: yes

F: Honesty. When I am honest before God and tell Him I am weak, I called on Him to work among us. He works.

C: Honest to my inner being, my true self.

Alan: I think we all agree that God has given us certain gifts and we can use them humbly.

All: agreed

What are the major constraints to live out the calling of a spiritual director?

D: I found myself not able to exercising my spiritual gifts in the setting that I am working. The patients concerns are mostly physical healing. The patients are mobile, and follow up is difficult. They may not pay attention to their prayer lives. I can do that better in a church setting.
Alan: the mobility of patients is a factor. But practicing spiritual direction and follow up is easier.

D: yes

A: In terms of the environment, not many will consider me as a spiritual director. They would consider me as a pastor, more than a spiritual director. How they perceive me sometimes will affect my performance although my main purpose is always to bring them to God. I am still asking what should a spiritual look like or act like.

Alan: How do you look at yourself?

E: Are you referring to the role you are playing?

A: Certainly, I consider myself as a spiritual director; I am doing things or practicing something related to spiritual direction.

Alan: Go on.

A: In terms of self constraints, I think I have not received formal training in spiritual direction. Although I have learnt much from Hans Burki, and that I have received counseling training. I have no doubt of my listening skill and basic practices, but I do have doubt sometimes, whether

Alan: I think we are not talking about a degree in spiritual direction

A: Am I doing it right?

C: I think I understand the struggle, sometimes we are using counseling technique, but how do we apply prayer experiences and at what time, this is a discernment or consideration
A: So is the constraint technical? You don’t have enough spiritual direction and I may end up using mainly counseling technique. But for spiritual direction, I understand it as listening together in the presence of God.

A: I wanted to pay attention to spiritual direction, may be a retreat centre will recruit me and I can spend time only on spiritual direction

Alan: you want to see that happen? Right? The external circumstance is not favorable, but you want to improve it? That’s your limitation?

A: Not improving, but I am expecting changes. I may not do anything actively to improve the environment.

F: Environment is not my constraint. For me, it is self-constraint. I am a perfectionist, according to the enneagram, I am number one and I always doubt or ask myself, I am not doing my best.

When I was leading meditation, I wondered I was listening well. In the process of leading or guiding, I may be too self-conscious. It’s a feeling of uneasiness. I was responsible for a retreat last week. I felt the agitations inside, and the agitation is my constraint. I reacted particularly to one of the participant and I reflected on my bias or prejudices. I was not present nor was I pleasant.

Alan: On one hand you know you should trust and rely on Him, but on the other hand, you felt agitated when you seemed to be unable to direct others.

F: Perhaps what is underlying is still the wound inside.

Alan: You sensed the agitation and discover the wounds inside
F: I couldn’t listen well when I felt agitated. Connection with God and with the participants stopped. I noticed the wounds that may be related to some deep needs in my life.

Alan: what need to be changed then? More gentle?

F: I think…rest, and talk to God about that.

C: sometimes I think I can be free of all constraints. I wanted to focus more on spiritual direction. But the setting of pasturing in a local church perhaps is still my constraint. Contradiction or tensions is still exists. Before I thought that my dream was not realized, but I am learning to let go, and more and more I feel the peace.

I was challenged by a mentor who contended that spiritual direction should be Mentor-disciple relationship. Therefore, spiritual direction is not a session and session meeting. Walking with others is more than just sitting in a room and practicing spiritual direction. Sometimes, when I meet my congregation on Sundays, they will just open up and share their needs naturally. And doing that is actually preparing the congregation for further spiritual growth. At this stage, in a word, accompanying is more important.

Feeling of discontentment, I wanted to exercise my spiritual gift of spiritual direction Freedom now.

My spiritual life or spiritual growth is my constraint, just as I mentioned, the integrity of heart, to bear the burden of others, to struggle with him or her and feel passionate for them, sometimes, is not easy. I find myself feeling more or more emphatic towards the congregation than my co-workers. That may be my constraints.

One incident is when I visited couples. I noticed the mother, who used be very gentle, was very harsh towards her maid. I experienced myself as a harsh person sometimes
when I co-work with my co-workers. There are many struggles. This is my weakness and I have to grow as a spiritual director.

Alan: what exactly is the particular constraint?

C: There are so much interruptions, “explosion”. Sometimes I was not aware of that. That is very challenging. It is not so much the external circumstance. Sometimes, it is easier to sit in the room to direct someone. But how can I be a genuine spiritual director if I fail to face all the day in and day out issues or struggles?

E: I always want to do more, and do well. I am lack of inner space. I am just like a superman, doing unlimited things unlimited time. I need more space, or to be exact, It’s an art of position yourself correctly.

Alan: why?

E: It’s related to life issues, I guess. I am idealistic, which is sometimes like a frame, bounding me, perhaps that is related to life issues. Conceptually, I understand, but in practice, I am not able to change, and it became my constraints or limitation. I need the space, slow down, I am inclined to be functional, get things done, and forget my own presence. I am just providing information as I walk with others or in spiritual direction. I always remind myself, slow down.

E: I also remember when I graduated from seminary, I thought since I was in counseling, I want to counsel others. But I was approached by a brother who told me that he wanted a spiritual friend or prayer partner. He doesn’t want to be counseled. He wanted a prayer partner, not a counselor.
Likewise, when I practice spiritual direction now, people may just want to talk about their own issue and intended to resolve them and prefer not to talk about their relationship with God. Expectation is not matched, sometimes. Personally, I need more self discipline.

Alan: That is environmental constraint

A: I echo with what E said. When I first graduated from seminary, a brother came to me and told me he would not seek me for counseling. At that time, people still a bit skeptical and even fearful about counseling. I am changing, not counseling, I want to do more spiritual direction now.

Alan: I think it is a process of discerning who should become our directee, who came for pastoral counseling or who needs spiritual direction.

A: My experience is even though the person who comes to me seek only for counseling, I wanted to share with them the spiritual perspective, and let them see what God can do and say in his situation. As a spiritual director, I always bring them back to God.

Alan: It’s perspective change.

B: I joined a cell-group based church, I don’t have any experience in pasturing in a cell-group based church, but I kind of dislike it in the beginning. The cell group leaders are uneasy about reporting tome. But I have changed my perspective as I focus to work with the spiritual direction with the group leaders.

Alan: Is the church culture a constraint?

D: Achievement? Able to do many thing.

B: People come to me and I don’t want to give them the impression that they are just reporting to me. It’s just like reporting to my boss, I was asked by my boss the statistics and information about the groups that I am responsible. I dislike that.
B: My calling is inner healing and spiritual formation; I am trying hard to seek the balance.

What changes you like to see in your ministry situation? What would you rather see?
Which area demands improvement?

A: I wanted to see change in church and seminaries, one day, that they will focus more on spiritual formation and spiritual direction. It would be good if I can more time and energy spending only in spiritual direction.

Alan: Is it possible in your setting? Will the president of seminary allow that to happen?

A: smile and silence.

F: I need more silence. I have to talk to God about the wounds I just mentioned. I am a human being; I must connect honestly to God and to my true self. But I do not want to be indulged.

Alan: what is that you want to improve?

A: healing? The constraint is therefore

F: Connect and in touch with myself, but not indulge or being driven by what is inside.
That I am bale to connect with God, myself and others, but I would not be disturbed or driven by the thoughts and emotions.

Alan: Are we talking about detachment here?

A: self-awareness is good and we are healthy, we will not be driven by our past.

Alan: Do I allow God to heal me? Is this a process?

B: I think the constraints are related to church culture, but it may change in the long run.

In the mean time, education in this perspective is very important, for example, more talks,
or sermons, on spiritual formation, etc. Perhaps you should come more often to lead us retreats. (Laughings)

B: I think more education in this aspect is needed.

Alan: More attention to arousing awareness and education in spiritual formation.

D: Sometimes the church is too task-oriented and too busy. Perhaps we can transform our culture by just letting our brothers and sisters really experiencing God freely, and begin to enjoy spiritual formation. We should avoid using the concept of obligation or duty, so that they can relate to God properly. The Church culture emphasize too much on accountable to God.

Alan: I think the mentalities of giving yourself totally and quick fix should be changed.

All: Agreed

E: Hopefully, I can be more disciplined and realistic. I have too many ideas. I also want to see changes in my congregation and myself so that we can become fellow pilgrims and be present to one another.

C: Inner life. Like Eugene Peterson mentioned in His work: Contemplative pastors, I wanted to have Sabbath rest, more calmness and peace.

Alan: The quick fix mentality should be changed. Agree?

All: agree.

What do you need for your own spiritual well being?

Alan: For this part, I just want a quick answer telling me your major need.

E: I would say it is self-discipline in spiritual practice. I need more inner space.

F: I think it is also related to spiritual practice. But I will add spiritual companion.

A: Rest.
B: Peace of mind, strength coming out of rest and trust in God for His guidance.

C: Integrity of heart. Purity and perhaps, balance or resilience in maintaining a balance and be considerate for my subordinates.

D: Spiritual mentor, and friends who can walk with me and affirm me from time to time.
Appendix 5

Questionnaires

How is it with Your Soul? (An adaptation)

An Assessment for Leaders

The answers of the participants will be presented as followed:

First time: Y

Second Time: V

1. More and more often I notice that I am “going through the motions” of ministry. I am teaching things I am not currently experiencing in my own life, and providing pastoral care that is “artificial.”

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2. I am aware of a nagging sense that something is not quite right but I don’t seem to be able to take the time or make the effort to look into it.

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3. I find myself rushing from one thing to the next without time to really pay attention to what’s going on in and around me.

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4. I am keeping up with what pastoral ministry requires but deep down I feel that have lost touch with who I am in God and sometimes feel confused with what he has called me to do.

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5. I am tired -- not just physically but spiritually and emotionally. I don’t really know how to get rested.

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6. I am aware of an underlying irritability and restlessness just beneath the surface of my life.

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7. I can’t stop working even when I know I need to.

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8. I have become emotionally numb-unable to in touch with my innermost emotion.

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9. I find myself increasingly giving in to escapist behaviors, sometimes dreaming about being somewhere else or having a different life.

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10. I do not have time for attending to my human needs -- exercise, eating right, getting enough sleep, etc.

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11. I find myself hoarding energy -- avoiding people in the grocery store, holing up at home or in my office -- for fear that routine social interactions will rob me of that last bit of energy.

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12. My spiritual practices have slipped. Although I know that practices such as solitude, prayer, personal reflection on Scripture, etc. are life-giving, I find I don’t have time or energy for them.

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13. I feel isolated with no one to fully confide in and no one who fully understands my situation.

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14. My staff team / elders and I are very good at strategic planning and “thinking our way” into solutions. Aside from perfunctory prayers to book-end our meetings, we don’t have a way of seeking God together and sufficient time for fellowship.

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15. It has been a long time since I have felt connected with the presence of God in my own life beyond what I am doing for others. Sometimes I suspect that my vision for ministry has become more important to me than my own relationship with God.

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16. Although my sense of calling to be a spiritual director is positive, I found myself not exercising my gift of a spiritual director.

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17. I felt driven by other ministries and the impact of my ministry in spiritual direction or spiritual care is diminishing.

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18. My self perception and how others look at me does not converge.

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19. I befriend myself and am able to manage strong emotion and impulses during high stress situation.

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20. My schedule of Sabbath rest is being interrupted from time to time.

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