

**INTENTIONAL SPIRITUALITY**  
Teen Challenge Leadership Session Lecture  
*Presented by Jay P. Taylor*

## Introduction to the Course

*Open class session in prayer*

### **1. Introduction of Professor & Course**

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

### **2. Introductory Disclaimer:**

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

### **3. Focused "Spirituality Sharing" Activity**

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

### **4. Complete "The Christian Life Profile"**

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

## I. Spiritual Transformation: What is it?

### A. Introduction/Background: The Cultural Milieu of Spirituality

- Unprecedented spiritual hunger: contemporary society is searching for spirituality
- Caution: "spirituality" can mean many things
- Beneath the cultural and personal factors lies a deeper reason for the spiritual hunger of our day: Humans are innately spiritual--God created us for relationship with Him.
- Centuries ago St. Augustine confessed to God, "You have made us for yourself, and our heart is restless until it rests in you." (Confessions, p. 3)

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

### B. The Definition of Spiritual Transformation

#### Group Discussion

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

#### 1. Working Definition: Spiritual Transformation

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

#### Illustration: Play-Doh

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

#### Personal Reflection

- This creates an opportunity for us to reflect.
- What or whose form are we seeking?
- What, in our personal or corporate life, needs to be re-formed?

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

### C. The Nature of Spiritual Transformation

### 1. **Spiritual transformation is dynamic.**

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

#### Group Discussion

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

### 2. **Spiritual transformation is a work of the Spirit.**

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

### 3. **Spiritual transformation requires our cooperation**

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

#### Illustration: Observe a Sailboat

- It cannot move by its own power but must rely on the force of wind.
- Neither the sailboat nor sailor has any control over the wind.
- Still, a sailor can shift the position of the boat by adjusting tiller and sheets so that the sails catch the wind. Free will is like the sailor.
- Though at times it's hard, we can choose to hold the boat of our life steady into the wind of the Spirit. Then, our efforts are supported and directed by God.

- Caution: Once we have opened our sails to that wind, we need to be prepared to go where the Spirit blows!
- At least we can look forward to exhilaration and joy in the ride!

#### C.S. Lewis Story

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

#### *Personal Reflection*

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

#### **4. Spiritual transformation involves every aspect of our lives.**

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

#### **Illustration: Loaf of Bread**

- Our life is kind of like this loaf of bread.
- We slice it up into many different pieces.
  - Hold up one slice: Here's our spiritual life
  - Hold up one slice: Here's our thought life
  - Hold up one slice: Here's our relationships
  - Hold up one slice: Here's our academic life; job; etc.
- But our "spiritual life" is not just one slice of our life.
- Rather, our spirituality is the leaven (yeast) for the whole loaf of our life!
- It encompasses every dimension of who we are: physical, emotional, social, mental, intellectual, financial, etc.
- Many of us must reshape how we think about our spirituality.
- Nothing that we do or think is without impact on our spiritual lives, and the spiritual life influences every other dimension of our being.

#### Application Discussion

- In light of this, what ramifications does authentic spirituality have on our lives?
  - Authentic spirituality will impact every area of our lives.
  - Authentic spirituality is practical and concrete.
  - There will be consistency between inward growth and outward actions.

- If the Word I read this morning has no bearing on the way I relate to family, friend, and foe, or how I make decisions, then my faith is fantasy.

*A word of caution:*

- While it's true that spirituality involves our whole life, we have to be careful that we don't allow our work for God to substitute our relationship with God.
- Many ministers are caught up in the activity of serving God.
- The story of Mary and Martha reminds us of a choice we must make.
- Will we sit at His feet and learn from him, or will we be preoccupied with the many tasks of serving Him?
- Jesus makes it clear, "only one thing is needed."
- Our work for Him must flow out of our worship of Him.
- This is a very common trap of many well-intentioned leaders.

## **D. The Means of Spiritual Transformation**

*The primary avenue by which most spiritual growth occurs...*

### **1. Spiritual Disciplines**

- \* What is the first thing that comes into your mind when I say the word "discipline"?
  - \* For most of you, it's probably not something very pleasant.
  - \* I think of my mother saying, "Now this hurts me more than it hurts you."
  - \* At best, you might think of disciplining yourself to be good at sport/instrument
  - \* This involves pain and long hard work that may not seem very exciting at the time.
- \* What about the term "Spiritual disciplines"?
  - \* When it comes to discipline in the Christian life, for many it's the same thing.
  - \* Many believers feel that spiritual discipline is a drudgery, a cross we must bear.
  - \* How about you? Ask yourself (be honest): what has my attitude been like toward Spiritual Disciplines such a prayer, fasting, evangelism, and reading the Bible?

### *2. What are Spiritual Disciplines?*

- The Spiritual Disciplines are simply those personal and corporate practices that promote spiritual growth.
- The NT Greek word translated "discipline" in the NASB, is *gumnisa* (*goomnyssa*) from which the English words gymnasium/gymnastics derive.
- This word means "to exercise or discipline." (Similar to physical exercise)
- Just as the physical exercise promotes physical strength, so the spiritual exercise promotes spiritual strength.
- Spiritual disciplines are known as the "means of grace."
- This refers to the means by which we make ourselves open and available to the grace of God working in our lives and ministries.
- John Ortberg makes an important distinction here from training vs. trying.

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

### 3. *Variety of spiritual disciplines*

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

Willard: Spirit of the Disciplines      Foster: Celebration of Discipline      Additional Ideas

#### *Disciplines of Abstinence*

Solitude  
Silence  
Fasting  
Frugality  
Chastity  
Secrecy  
Sacrifice

#### *Inward Disciplines*

Meditation  
Prayer  
Fasting  
Study

#### Journaling

Sabbath Keeping  
Vigil/watch  
Work  
Play/leisure  
Stewardship  
Evangelism  
Compassion  
Mentoring

#### *Disciplines of Engagement*

Study  
Worship  
Celebration  
Service  
Prayer  
Fellowship  
Confession  
Submission

#### *Outward Disciplines*

Simplicity  
Solitude  
Submission  
Service

#### *Corporate Disciplines*

Confession  
Worship  
Guidance  
Celebration

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

### Appreciative Reflection

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

### Personal Reflection

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

### Personal Exposure

- Variety: Has your spiritual life gotten into a rut?
- There are many things that we can do to bring excitement back into our dev. lives.
- Do the Imaginative prayer exercise (from Jn 1:35-39) described on the next page.

## Imaginative Prayer Exercise (John 1:35-39)

### *Introduction*

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

### *First Reading*

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

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

### *Second Reading*

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

### *Reflection Exercise*

- You get to spend the day with Jesus at his house.
  - What will you talk about with Jesus? What are you thinking and feeling?
  - I want you to write your conversation with Jesus.
  - Allow 20-25 minutes to reflect/write conversation.
  - Bring group back together and let the group discuss their experience.
  - What did they think of this exercise? Was it meaningful?
  - Would anyone like to share some of your conversation with Jesus?
- 
- This is what St. Ignatius of Loyola called "imaginative prayer."
  - It is simply another dimension of prayer, as distinguished from discursive prayer.
  - We all respond to God in different ways, and I wanted to expose you to yet another method you can try in your own quiet time.
  - This was just one example of bringing variety into our spiritual lives.
  - What steps can you take to practice a new spiritual discipline this week in order to energize your spiritual transformation?

#### 4. *Motivation behind the spiritual disciplines*

##### **Brainstorm**

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

##### *Personal Reflection*

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

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

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

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

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

- When I asked you to rate your spiritual life on a scale of 1 to 10, why did you give yourself the score that you did?
- What standard did you use? Was is comparing yourself w/others?
- Some people have no frame of reference of where they are spiritually and what they need to do, they simply see that someone else did such and such, and so they must need to do that as well.
- What is the problem with using others as our standard of comparison?
- We can only see a slice of their life (what they want us to see), and just because someone looks like they have it together on the outside does not necessarily say anything about their true spiritual state.
- It is often based on wrong motives such as competition or jealousy.

##### **(3) Some people engage in the disciples for self-serving purposes.**

- Some Christians engage in extreme practice of a given discipline(s), (what some would call asceticism) but in so doing can miss the point.

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

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

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

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

5. *The limits of the disciplines*

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

- Just as there is little value in practicing the scales on a guitar or piano apart from the purpose of playing music, there is little value in practicing spiritual disciplines apart from the purpose for which they are intended-to grow in our relationship with God.
- To simply practice Spiritual disciplines is not the end-all goal.
- There are pious, religious people who don't have a growing relationship w/God (the Pharisees).
- Just because I fast & pray does not mean that I have communed w/God.

- Remember, all the “disciplines” or “works” in the world cannot make us holy, for growth in holiness is a gift from God (Jn. 7:17; 1 Thess. 5:23; Heb. 2:11).
- However, when we practice the disciplines we put ourselves in a place where God can work in us.
- The disciplines serve as channels of God’s transforming power.
- As we practice them, God’s grace flows to us and we are changed.

*Exercise: Left-handed letter to God*

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

**b. Spiritual disciplines are not always "exciting."**

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

*Illustration: Vitamin C*

- Spiritual transformation is kind of like taking vitamins.
- Have a student swallow 2 vitamin c tablets.
- Ask student, do you feel charged? Are you pretty excited about that?
- No, but through a regular daily practice of that, you would build your body's defenses, making it strong.
- It is the same way spiritually. We may not feel a charge, but we will be building our spiritual defenses, making us strong spiritually.
- It's easy to undervalue this most fundamental means of spiritual growth.
- The disciplines appear so commonplace, quiet and unimpressive, but they are the primary means by which we grow.

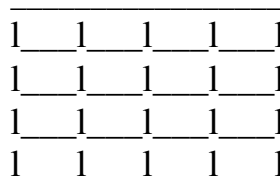
**c. Spiritual disciplines require work for growth.**

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

**d. Spiritual disciplines require time for growth.**

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

- Illustration: It Takes Time and Effort
- How many squares do you see below? (30)



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

### *Introduction*

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

## II. Assessing Your Present Spiritual Formation

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

### **A. Prayerfully Seek the Guidance of the Holy Spirit**

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

### **B. Utilize Various Spirituality Tests**

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

### **C. Utilize Various Temperament/Personality Tests**

- Again, there are many helpful tools that can assist you in identifying potential areas for growth related to your individual temperament and personality.
- Some of these tools include the *T-JTA*, the *Myers-Briggs*, or other personality tests.

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

#### **D. Reflect on “Appreciative Inquiry” Reflection Questions**

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

#### *Sample Appreciative Inquiry Questions*

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

#### **E. Seek Input From Significant Others**

- God did not create us to live as Lone Rangers. We need each other.

- We must intentionally cultivate meaningful spiritual relationships.
- When we participate in peer accountability groups, and other such discipleship groups, we develop the kind of relationships that allow people to speak into our lives.
- As one tool here, the *Christian Life Profile* test provides additional questionnaires to be completed by three significant other people in your life.
- The perceptions of others who have your best spiritual interest at heart can be a valuable tool to assist you in catching any “blind spots” you may have missed in your own personal introspection.
- Use these tests to talk with these significant people about your spiritual growth.
- Talk with your spouse, pastor/staff, accountability partners, etc.
- Reflect upon and pray about the test results in order to target specific areas for growth.

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

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

#### **G. Prayerfully Seek the Guidance of the Holy Spirit**

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

#### **H. Determine Your Target Areas for Desired Spiritual Growth**

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

### **III. Facilitating Your Ongoing Spiritual Transformation**

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

- There are three steps to follow.

### **A. Develop A Personal Spiritual Growth Plan**

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

#### **1. Specific goals for growth**

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

#### **2. Practical and realistic steps to accomplish the goals**

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

#### **3. Tangible means of accountability.**

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

#### **4. Tangible means of evaluation**

- Your plan must include intentional means by which to determine if the desired growth is occurring.
- Example: In 3 months when I retake the CLP, I would like my score to increase by 5 points.
- Example: I would like to hear my spouse (or someone else) given an unsolicited comment on my increased compassion/concern for others.
- Example: I will log my experiences in my spiritual journal. I can look back to see how consistent I have been, how my attitude is, etc.
- **Example**: I would like to have an honest desire to increase from one intentional activity mentioned in my plan, to 2 or 3.

### **B. Carry Out Your Personal Spiritual Growth Plan**

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

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

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

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

**C. Evaluate to Ensure that Desired Growth is Occurring**

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

**1. Utilize Evaluation Tools**

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

**2. Obtain Feedback from Significant Others**

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

**3. Engage in Personal Evaluation and Reflection**

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

**D. Adjust Growth Plan for Ongoing Growth**

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