

ASSEMBLIES OF GOD THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

THE ATTENTIVE LEADER:
LIVING AND LEADING FULLY PRESENT TO GOD, SELF,
AND OTHERS IN A DISTRACTED WORLD

A PROJECT SUBMITTED TO THE
DOCTOR OF MINISTRY COMMITTEE
IN CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE OF
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DOCTOR OF MINISTRY DEPARTMENT

BY

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ABSTRACT

With relentless distraction and preoccupation, the contemporary cultural environment suffers from a kind of collective attention deficit disorder in which one is rarely “all there.” Unfortunately, ministry leaders remain susceptible to this crisis of attention. Leaders often find themselves scattered and pulled in a thousand directions. Without the ability for sustained focus, they struggle to remain fully present to the things that matter most. This loss of attentiveness can result in a devastating loss of connectedness (i.e., being fully present) to what God is doing, to the condition of one’s own self, and to how one’s life is unfolding with others. There remains a need for ministry leaders to live life and minister in a way in which attentiveness plays a key role and percolates to the top of essential components of personal wholeness, life-giving leadership, and effective ministry.

This project consisted of three one-day retreats for ministry leaders themed around the three essential dimensions of attentiveness: attentiveness to God, attentiveness to self, and attentiveness to others. “The Attentive Leader” retreats equipped participants with experiential knowledge and practices to cultivate ongoing attentiveness and responsiveness to all the dimensions of human life (emotional, social, relational, etc.) in which God was at work in their lives, bringing about healing and wholeness that they might offer those they serve something sacred and real.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

As I write this I am now on the other side of doctoral work. What a life-giving journey it has been! I am profoundly aware that a project such as this does not happen alone. I am deeply indebted and grateful to so many who selflessly offered their time, insights, prayers, and encouragement. This project would not have come to fruition without their kind and loving support.

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Of course, none of this would have been possible without the unwavering love, patience, and support of my wonderful husband, Darrel, my biggest cheerleader and advocate. Ours has always been a shared journey. My life is richer, better, full of laughter, and blessed in more ways than I could ever imagine because of you.

Above all, I am thankful for Jesus. My journey into attentiveness began and continues in response to His redemptive initiative in my life and leads me to such places as this. How can I be anything but grateful?

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

The heart of the spiritual journey and faithful leadership relies heavily on the ability to hear, to remain attentive to the God who initiates conversation. Yet in a culture of relentless distraction and preoccupation, there remains a strong resistance to creating the space needed to listen. Consequently, the ability for long-term, creative, and reflective “hearing” is diminished. People in contemporary culture have grown increasingly unable to sustain long-term, creative, reflective, and focused attention.

Present-day statistics suggest ministry leaders are not exempt from this overload of distraction. These leaders often find themselves scattered and pulled in a thousand directions. They struggle to maintain the ability to focus and be intentional about the things that matter most. Thus, they often find themselves ministering from a place of depletion, frustration, and discouragement. A life of distraction can result in a divided life—separated from the present moment and from the ability to reflect, consider, and make sense of the things most essential to experiencing wholeness. Ultimately, leaders can lose life-giving connection with God, themselves, and others.

Remaining fully present in these three human dimensions and relationships—God, self, and others—offers transformation and wholeness in the midst of a scattered culture. Transitioning ministry leaders into a holistic way of leadership will require doing life and ministry in a new way. This project contributes to a more robust and integrated spirituality of which, in a distracted culture, attentiveness plays a major role.

The Context

In order to understand the context of this project, one needs an awareness and background of my own journey. With no religious underpinnings, at age sixteen, I accepted Jesus's invitation into a life with God. The immediate and underlying assumption I received from the Christian community was that becoming a "fully devoted follower of Christ" rested squarely on my shoulders to achieve it. This perception of the devoted life seemed daunting and equally elusive. I loved Jesus, however, so I journeyed into managing and producing my spiritual life on my own. I had a daily quiet time filled with devotional material, journals, prayer lists, and Bible studies. It felt more like "doing" time than devoted time. I served others, lived morally, and attended church regularly. If anyone could become fully devoted, it was I. The spiritual life became more about mastering principles, conforming behavior, creating personal strategies for spiritual "success," and chalking up brownie points. If something was not right in my spiritual life, my only option was to try harder.

Two years later, I attended Northwest University, and four years later I graduated with a degree in Biblical Literature. I married my high school sweetheart, who also graduated from Northwest University at the same time. We immediately entered into full-time ministry as youth pastors and eventually went on to become lead pastors of a thriving church. Yet, for all my striving, after twenty-five years in full-time vocational ministry an unexplainable and unexpected emptiness had settled in the side streets of my soul. It felt more like a longing. I was a little embarrassed by this realness and tried to shake it off, but it would not go away. To experience such longing this far into my Christian journey was baffling. For the first time I had to admit that all my striving had not produced the abundant life I had hoped for. In an unguarded moment I heard myself

say, “There has got to be more! If I do not encounter Jesus in a real, meaningful way I am going to die!” I did not know what life looked like outside of all my striving, but my heart was speaking and I knew I needed to pay attention.

In that moment, everything changed. I understood for the first time that the spiritual life could not be achieved; it was to be gratefully received. I began to let go of the “death grip” I had on “maintaining a vital relationship with God” in which I was in control. I began to cultivate different things. I began to cultivate a life with God in which I could stay attentive and available to a fresh work of grace in my life. I began to embrace practices that kept me in a posture of receiving the abundant life Jesus promised. In incremental and virtually immeasurable ways I began to recover my life. I have never been the same. What I have since discovered is our real task in becoming fully devoted followers of Christ means a moment by moment attentive turning toward and radical surrender to God’s redeeming presence.

This season of renewal and awakening resulted in my entering into a master’s program in spiritual formation and leadership at Spring Arbor University. I graduated in May 2010. Upon graduation, I joined the pastoral staff at Faith Tri-Cities in Pasco, Washington, a position I still hold. Soon I began to lead a small group of women through a weekly twelve-month journey into this new kind of life with God. Many experienced the same freedom and grace I had come to know.

I wondered how many other ministry leaders were living and leading from a similar place of emptiness and longing. In 2011, I invited ten leaders to join me on a nine-month spiritual formation experience I created called, “The Journey.” Using a hybrid approach of retreats, online community, weekly readings, and spiritual practices,

the Journey provided a spiritually enriching environment that equipped participants to remain faithful to their own spiritual journeys, to pay attention and be responsive to the creative and redemptive ways God brings about wholeness, and to establish daily rhythms which create the conditions for this formation to take place.

Our time together proved so impactful I began to lead other groups of women leaders. Eventually I partnered with the Alongside ministry for pastors' wives of the Northwest Ministry Network. These Journey groups have resulted in the development of more than seventy leaders over six years. Based on participants' testimonies, most, if not all, experienced significant spiritual renewal and personal transformation. My experience of leading female ministry leaders grew into a personal passion for leading both male and female ministers into an ongoing care of their souls in the midst of ministry.

In October 2013, I began doctoral work at the Assemblies of God Theological Seminary. Soon into the program, as a result of my coursework, I realized that our formation in Christ includes a more holistic and integrated approach to life and leadership. Our formation as a people includes not only a spiritual dimension but emotional and social dimensions as Jesus described and summoned us to in Mark 12, of which attentiveness plays a major role. This realization formed the genesis of this project.

The Problem

My personal experience with ministry leaders concludes that there is a great discrepancy between a leader's perceived well-being and a leader's actual well-being. Many leaders, often unknowingly and unintentionally, live and lead from a place of ceaseless striving and working hard to achieve the spiritual life. This assumption bore out through my nine-month Journey groups. When asked to define the spiritual life in one

word, the two words most consistently mentioned were “bondage” and “oppressive.” This is alarming. I suggest this reality carries over into ministry life as well. These were all leaders who loved Jesus and yet struggled with trying to make life and ministry work better rather than paying attention to a fresh work of grace and acknowledging that God was already at work in their lives. Two conclusions might account for these staggering realities. First, the powerful thrust of the church growth movement. Often the pounding pursuit for “success” produces exhaustion and discouragement, and it reduces the leader to function as a business professional rather than a spiritual leader. If their ministry was faltering, the message seemed to be “try harder.”

The second reason leaders may find themselves caught up in the struggle to experience life-giving communion with God is the failure to take seriously the impact distraction has on the soul of the leader. Day by day, leaders’ hectic lives erode the soul’s capacity for deep focus and awareness. Yet, cultivating a focused attention and ready-responsiveness to fresh movements choreographed by the Holy Spirit remains foundational to spiritual leaders. The cultivation of an integrated life requires the ability to live attentively to how one’s life is unfolding in relationship to the presence of God, one’s own soul, and others. This essentialness of focused attention includes the concepts of intention, practice, and unhurried awareness. These are difficult tasks in a fast-paced, hyperactive, digitally-addicted culture.

Ultimately, leaders need a way of living and leading through the clutter and chatter of daily life and ministry that calls the soul to attentiveness. Given the depth of human need, compounded by the entanglement of distraction both external and internal, effective ministry requires more than simply years of experience, education, or expertise.

There remains a need for ministry leaders to be fully present in all the dimensions of life. This must include living in such a way that Christ's indwelling presence becomes the shaping influence in their lives; a willingness to pay careful attention to the state of their own hearts and expose their lives to observation, choosing to live as one seen, known, and heard; and living in an incarnational way of relating to people, offering a welcoming and grace-filled presence to others.

The present opportunity invites leaders to turn away from the normal places and patterns of distraction to discern opportunities for attentive engagement in all dimensions of human life. This, in turn, leads to fully engaged, whole leaders—ones who can offer something sacred and real to those they serve.

Purpose

This project will provide the opportunity, through a series of retreats, to walk with ministry leaders through a process of cultivating attentiveness, enabling them to remain fully present to the already, ongoing work of the Holy Spirit in their lives—fully present to the process of being known by others and fully present to the truth about themselves.

Definition of Terms

Knowing God. An experiential, interactive encounter with God, not simply an intellectual belief system adhering to facts about God.

Spiritual Disciplines or Practices. The intentional practices that cultivate attentiveness and awareness to the redemptive activity of the Holy Spirit in the life of the believer.

Spiritual Formation. The process of the Holy Spirit to conform a whole, integrated person into the image of Christ for the sake of others.

Description of the Proposed Project

Scope of the Project

This project will include five important steps in training ministry leaders to live and lead from a place of attentiveness. The first step will include completing the research for the biblical-theological literature review and the general literature review related to the attentive life. I will use the resources discovered in chapters 2 and 3 as the foundation for my project. The insights from my research and my experience leading women leaders over the past six years will provide a baseline for our discussions and strategies.

The second step of this project will involve creating a list of potential participants. Some questions must be answered in order to make decisions concerning the selection of participants. These questions include

- “Is this retreat for all ministry leaders?”
- “Are there certain qualifications that must be met?”
- “Will busy ministry leaders, especially male lead pastors, be willing to give up a full day?”
- “In what location do people live?”
- “Do I want an equal participation between male and female participants?”
- “What if they can not attend all three retreats?”
- “Will I offer to reimburse their travel expenses?”
- “What if they cannot afford to pay?”

These were the questions I started with as I explored what this project might look like. I have a goal of at least twelve participants. I will start the process of selection in October 2016 and extend the invitations, via email and in person, in November and December of 2016.

The third step of this project will include crafting a consent form, an assessment tool, and an evaluation of the retreat itself, to be completed by January 2017. The assessment and evaluation of the retreats will be two-fold. First, an assessment will

evaluate both quantitative and qualitative effectiveness. As the means for quantitative evaluation, I will create a pretest and posttest, comparing the results with the help of Dr. Jeff Fulks, director of Adult and Graduate Studies at Evangel University. Comparing the data from pre- and post-retreat surveys will measure the degree of personal transformation. For the qualitative assessment, I will compile the participants' personal comments, experiences, and self-disclosure during, between, and after the retreats. Second, a post-seminar evaluation administered to participants will provide feedback regarding key strengths and weaknesses of the retreat. This information will help to enhance and develop the seminar for future training opportunities.

Step four will involve writing the retreat materials and developing the retreat schedule to be completed by February 2017. The materials for the first retreat will include (1) teaching on the biblical foundation of listening, (2) biblical examples of those who lived attentively, (3) the need for attentiveness in order to lead from a place of an integrated life, (4) the importance of the inner life, (5) the neuroscience of attentiveness, (6) the problem of distraction, and (7) the role and practices to cultivate attentiveness. The materials for the second retreat will include (1) the importance of self-examination, (2) the true self and the false self, (3) dealing with shame, (4) the neurobiology of shame, (5) the significance of telling their story, (6) participating in community, and (7) the need and practice of forgiveness. The materials for the third retreat will include (1) listening to others as an act of love, (2) Jesus's use of questions and the techniques of coaching, (3) hospitable listening to others outside of faith in Jesus, (4) the rule of life, and (5) the five-step process of how people grow and change.

The retreat schedule will be strategically designed to create an environment different than a seminar. Rather than gathering more information, the goal will be to create a schedule that fosters an experiential environment. I will craft a schedule to include an informal atmosphere, space for leisurely discussion, real-time practices of attentiveness, and non-judgmental interaction. A high value will be placed on creating a safe space for vulnerability, openness, and honesty. This is why I will call them retreats instead of a seminar or class.

Finally, step five will involve hosting the three all-day retreats for ministers, including men and women, of the Northwest Ministry Network (NWMN) of the Assemblies of God. The three all-day retreats will occur in the spring of 2017. The retreat will occur once a month over three consecutive months, in March, April, and May, respectively. The retreats will start at 9 a.m. and conclude at 4 p.m. and will take place at a centrally located region in the NWMN. Each retreat will cover one of three themes of living fully present: fully present to God, fully present to self, and fully present to others. The first retreat will begin with a pretest to reveal the current reality of the leader's overall well-being.

In addition to the training, participants will engage in group discussions, table discussions, actual practices of attentiveness such as reading the Bible transformationally and writing a prayer of lament, exploring and exchanging ideas of Scripture passages, and disclosing their experiences with the spiritual practices. Engaging in such a shared journey means that participants must be willing to be honest with God, grow in self-awareness and self-disclosure, and commit to remaining vulnerable and authentic with one another.

The goal will be to equip participants with practiced knowledge, necessary tools, and specific spiritual practices for continuing the process of spiritual formation to sustain them in ministry long after the project is complete. A key outcome includes the participants' continuing to prioritize spiritual, personal, and relational well-being in the midst and alongside of active ministerial realities.

Phases of the Project

The project will consist of five phases: (1) research, (2) planning, (3) implementation, (4) evaluation, and (5) writing.

Research

The research phase of this project includes establishing the biblical-theological foundation for attentive listening as the essence of a life with God. The second stage of research, the general literature review, will provide key understandings of the attentive life.

Biblical/Theological Literature Review

The biblical-theological literature review will address the following themes: (1) a key Hebraic understanding of God as not perceived by sight but by a Voice who is heard; (2) throughout Scripture listening and hearing compose the central acts of the people of God; (3) listening is inherently relational; (4) the fundamental stance of the person of faith is to listen, i.e., pay attention; (5) proper hearing or listening is formative, and the thing to which is given the most attention (i.e., what one "listens to") shapes the affections, thus, ultimately, what one loves, out of which then flows actions and behavior; (6) biblical hearing is never simply an auditory function but an embodied act of

responsiveness; (7) awareness and devotion is intentionally cultivated; (8) loss of ability to listen or see makes one incapable of true understanding and receiving wholeness; and (9) biblical examples of people who lived attentively toward God and those who did not.

General Literature Review

The general literature review will address a comprehensive approach to the attentive life and include a number of themes: (1) an integrated life produces the characteristics of a healthy soul; (2) a key human capacity crucial to the spiritual life is the ability to pay attention to God's movement and ways; (3) the repeated and compelling call throughout Scripture to "listen" or "pay attention" lays the foundation for spiritual flourishing, transformation, and vitality; (4) the proliferation of cultural distraction; (5) the consequences of disintegration and loss of soul; and (6) the practices of attention, i.e., being fully present to God, to self, and to others, that create wholeness.

Planning

A number of planning steps are required since the project contains many components.

Selection of Participants

After prayerful consideration from the list I have compiled, I will invite an undetermined number of ministry leaders. I will predominately make invitations via email. Therefore, first I need to craft an invitation email letter including the reason and details of the retreats. I will include a response deadline to help me determine if more invitations will need to be sent. I will keep a list of invitations and responses.

Retreat Materials

Materials and resources used at the retreat will need to be created, such as PowerPoint slides, a notebook, copies of the handouts to be included in the notebook, copies of the consent form, the pretest and posttest, and the evaluation form.

Personal Assistance

As the facilitator and teacher of the retreat, I will need someone to help with the practical, on-site logistics of the retreats: sign-in, snacks on tables, distribution of materials, time awareness, troubleshooting, lunch preparation, and set-up and take-down.

Implementation

The implementation phase includes the execution of the retreat at the chosen retreat location. The implementation will include three experiential environments. First, during the retreats participants will be offered opportunities to be exposed to a possibly new understanding of spiritual leadership, receive material to substantiate their learning, be encouraged to deal honestly with themselves and engage in honest and open dialogue with others in a safe environment, experience a shared meal, receive and give grace, and be challenged to rearrange their lives around ongoing practices of formation. Second, they will be given the opportunity to participate and engage in the assigned post-retreat spiritual practices and, third, to engage in weekly conversation via email dialogues where they can network with each other, share their progress or struggles in their spiritual practices, be encouraged in their formation process, solicit prayers, and continue to learn new skills and practices in living and leading from a life of attentiveness.

Evaluation

The evaluation phase will involve both a quantitative and qualitative analysis. The quantitative analysis will include a pretest and posttest, and I will compare the results with the help of Dr. Jeff Fulks. This data will assist me in determining the positive or negative change in the participants' perceptions and practices of formation and wholeness.

The qualitative analysis will be based on (1) a post-retreat evaluation tool that will specifically assess the effectiveness of the retreats and provide suggestions to improve and strengthen the retreats for future implementation, (2) on-site projects, verbal feedback in group discussions, and personal dialogues with me, and (3) online conversations. The evaluation will also include space for personal reflections of growth and change. The analysis will take place between May and June of 2017.

Writing

Once I complete the research phase, I will begin writing chapter 2, "Biblical-Theological Literature Review," in the fall of 2016, with the first draft sent to the editor by December 2016. Writing will then begin on chapter 3, "General Literature Review," to include sources and any appendices. Once the chapter is written, I will send it to the editor. Writing of chapter 4, "Description of Field Project," will begin in July 2017 and a rough draft will be sent to the editor by August 2017. The writing of chapter 5, "Evaluative Summary," will begin in the fall of 2017 and a draft will be sent to the editor by the end of September. I will write chapter 1, "Introduction," and the front matter, as well as any additional appendices, by the end of October 2017.

CHAPTER 2: BIBLICAL-THEOLOGICAL LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

Author Adam McHugh acknowledges, “It is God’s nature to speak.”¹ Spiritual leadership, thus first and foremost, involves leading from a place of hearing what the Spirit has to say. Beyond a primary sensory function, hearing requires a particular kind of listening: it constitutes way of being fully present in the present moment and necessitates a receptive and open posture. This kind of listening inherently includes relationship (i.e., being “all there” with another), humility (putting aside the need to control and valuing another’s voice over one’s own), vulnerability (a willingness to change with an openness to receive what has been said regardless of personal comfort or preconceived assumptions), a fierce inner quietness (which dispels the cacophony of other voices), and creating enough space for a focused, sustained attentiveness (often in the midst of a myriad of distractions). This chapter will explore how this kind of listening includes an intentionality of where one puts one’s attention and then addresses how to order one’s life in ways that foster ongoing attentive presence.

¹ Adam McHugh, *The Listening Life: Embracing Attentiveness in a World of Distraction* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2015), 57.

A Linguistic Study of Hearing as Attentive Presence

Old Testament

Creation

The theological expression of attentive listening finds its roots, literally, in the beginning. The starting place commences in the words, “God said” (Gen. 1:1).² Thus, listening started in creation. The chaotic, unformed space responded to the sound and presence of God. Creation listened to the Voice that pierced its darkness; the cosmos obeyed and light appeared (v. 3). Author Keith Anderson, noting creation’s inaugural response, affirms, “It set into motion a staggering conviction that the universe is, from the beginning, a place of presence and voice.”³ Author and scholar Eugene Peterson reverses a commonly held assumption of God: “The characteristic element of Square One is this: God said ... for Christians, basic spirituality is not only a noun, God, but also a verb, Said (or Says).”⁴ Thus, from the beginning creation responded to the Voice by coming into existence and initiated the enduring rhythm of attentive hearing and subsequent required response for all of the created order.

Throughout Scripture, listening and hearing compose the central acts of the people of God. The first recorded human encounter of hearing God took place in the Garden of Eden with Adam and Eve immediately after they ate of the forbidden fruit (Gen. 3:8-10). Unfortunately, the first account of hearing resulted in listening to the wrong voice. When God inquires where Adam and Eve are, Adam offers a stumbled

² All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise noted, are from the New International Version.

³ Keith R. Anderson, *A Spirituality of Listening* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2016), 32.

⁴ Eugene Peterson, *Subversive Spirituality* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1997), 21.

response: “He answered, ‘I heard you in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid’” (v. 10). Adam must have understood the broader meaning of “hearing”: walking with God, or being present to God, requires a vulnerability, embodied participation, and encounter. As a result, sin and the broken relationship it produced brought an unwillingness to attentively listen to the Divine voice.

Shâma

This awareness of God as Voice penetrated Hebraic life. Lord Jonathan Sacks explains, “The ancient Jewish culture learned Torah (Scripture) by listening to its words read orally, recited and repeated. It was a culture where *reading* mostly meant *listening*.”⁵ As in the creation account, there underlies a Hebraic understanding of God as not perceived by sight but by hearing a Voice. Sacks offers further insight: “He reveals Himself only in speech. Therefore, the supreme religious act in Judaism is to listen. Ancient Greece was a culture of the eye; ancient Israel a culture of the ear. The Greeks worshipped what they saw; Israel worshipped what they heard.”⁶ Authors Christine Valters Paintner and Lucy Wynkoop echo the prominence of speech in ancient Hebrew culture: “Speech, especially the Hebrew Scriptures, is the medium of divine self-disclosure. Therefore the fundamental stance of the person of faith is to listen.”⁷ Thus, the

⁵ Anderson, 31.

⁶ Lord Jonathan Sacks, “Covenant and Conversation: The Meaning of Shema,” *Orthodox Union Blog*, July 24, 2010, accessed September 5, 2016, https://www.ou.org/torah/parsha/rabbi-sacks-on-parsha/the_meanings_of_shema/.

⁷ Christine Valters Paintner and Lucy Wynkoop, *Lectio Divina: Contemplative Awakening and Awareness* (New York: Paulist Press, 2008), 17.

self-revealing personal God initiates relationship and is present to those who are willing to listen.

Understanding God as a Voice who speaks gives meaning to the Old Testament the Hebrew word (שמע) *shâma* ‘, translated as hear, hears, or listen. *Shâma* ‘ notably appears 1,158 times and means the kind of hearing to which *shâma* ‘ refers actually encompasses a much wider, deeper meaning than simply hearing audibly with the ear. The force or intent of *shâma* ‘ (hear) literally means to “Listen!” or “Pay attention!” Rightly understood, *shâma* ‘ conveys an array of ideas that gives depth to its fuller meaning, such as to intelligently hear, understand, give careful (undivided) attention to, rightly perceive, and properly respond with action to what one has heard, i.e., applied understanding or cultivated responsiveness. Old Testament scholar Walter Brueggemann depicts this connection between listening and focused attentiveness: “‘Listening’ is thus not simply an auditory exercise, but it involves singular attentiveness of the covenant partners to each other, to whom each is pledged in solemn oath.”⁸

Placing emphasis and priority on *shâma* ‘, the *Shema* (Deut. 6:4-9), the centerpiece of Hebrew prayer recited twice daily, begins with the words “Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one” (v. 4). Sacks elaborates on this expansiveness of *shâma* ‘ in the twice-daily prayer:

Shema Yisrael does not mean ‘Hear, O Israel.’ It means something like: “Listen. Concentrate. Give the word of G-d your most focused attention. Strive to understand. Engage all your faculties, intellectual and emotional. Make His will your own. For what He commands you to do is not irrational or arbitrary but for

⁸ Walter Brueggemann, *Reverberations of Faith: A Theological Handbook of Old Testament Themes* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2002), 123.

your welfare, the welfare of your people, and ultimately for the benefit of all humanity.⁹

The force of *Shema* challenges careless or halfhearted listening, preoccupied distraction, or lackadaisical focus toward the God who speaks. This call to listen is couched in relationship with an intention toward good for those willing to heed the invitation.

Theologian Bernd Wannewetsch focuses on the totality and embodiment of such attentiveness: “It requires nothing less than a listening that engages body, mind and soul. The whole human being is to become ‘all ear,’ as it were, perceptive and responsive to God’s address and the story of his ways with [hu]mankind.”¹⁰ In this way, true listening, or hearing, mandates enlivened participation and presence and always includes an engaged response of the hearer demonstrated by actions of self-examination, thinking, reflecting, and, ultimately, actionable obedience. In other words, one has not properly heard until one has acted upon or obeyed what he or she heard. Explaining the full implications of *shâma*, theologian J. I. Packer confirms, “Three thoughts are present: attending to the sound, understanding the utterance, and acting on it. Where any of these are lacking, listeners are said not to have ‘heard.’”¹¹ Thus, the commandments (Torah) Moses would soon deliver were not to be lived primarily as a set of principles but as an animated responsiveness shaped and formed by an all-encompassing, attentive hearing.

⁹ Sacks.

¹⁰ Bernd Wannewetsch, “‘Take Heed What Ye Hear’: Listening as a Moral, Transcendental and Sacramental Act,” *Journal of the Royal Musical Association* 135 (February 2010): 91-102, accessed September 12, 2016, <http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/02690400903414863>.

¹¹ J. I. Packer, “Obedience,” in *The New Dictionary of Biblical Theology: Exploring the Unity and Diversity of Scripture*, ed. T. Desmond Alexander et al. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Reference Collection, 2000), 680.

The giving of the *Shema* in Deuteronomy 6 by Moses came just before the Israelites crossed over to take possession of the Promised Land. Knowing the upcoming competition for their hearts and Israel's propensity to follow after other gods, Moses followed up with this charge: be sure to keep your devotion to God. Thus, Moses continued with this admonition: "Love the LORD [*YHWH*] your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength" (Deut. 6:5). Moses understood that faithfulness, fidelity, and their flourishing as a people depended primarily what they gave their heart to, i.e., to what they gave their attention. In this sense, right hearing forms affections, or true devotion. The object given the most attention (what one "hears or listens to") shapes what one loves (devotion). Philosopher James K. A. Smith succinctly captures the connection between attention, formation, and devotion when he writes, "You are what you love. And you worship what you love."¹² The Israelites' identity as a people, their fundamental allegiances, and ultimately their willingness and ability to live as a chosen and covenantal people among the surrounding cultures hinged on their ability to cultivate devotion to God by attentive hearing. Conclusively, attentive hearing forms the basis of being in a covenantal relationship, or being fully present, to the one who speaks.

In Moses's final sequential call to attentive vigilance, Deuteronomy 6:6 counsels, "These commandments that I give you today are to be on your hearts." Without a cultivated attentiveness and focused hearing shaping the affections, such wholeheartedness remains nearly impossible. Deuteronomy chapters 4 and 6 issue stern

¹² James Smith, *You Are What You Love: The Spiritual Power of Habit* (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos, 2016), xii.

warnings that if one's affections (heart) remain calibrated to other values than God himself, that person will learn to love those things regardless of what they claim they believe. Smith explains the pull of the affections: "Rather than being pushed by beliefs, we are pulled by a *telos* that we desire."¹³ In other words, affection, shaped by attentiveness, trumps intellectual prowess and energizes one's life.

Thus, firmly establishing the *Shema* in one's heart through listening, or paying attention, converts into a way of living through daily spiritual practice. Keith Anderson observes, "I wonder if the Israelites knew there is something notable to the daily practice of paying attention as a way of life, a discipline and daily practice. They learned to listen to Torah, to Scripture *every day*."¹⁴ In this way, in the most ordinary of days, in the most ordinary of ways, intentional listening forms one's heart for God.

Dâbâr

The word "commandments" in Deuteronomy 6:6 is the Hebrew word *dâbâr*. *Dâbâr*, most often translated "word," also translates as "matter" or "acts" and means "to bring into order; to lead, to guide, to rule."¹⁵ Significantly, *dâbâr* occurs 1,428 times in the Old Testament. More than a simply spoken word, *dâbâr* reflects the relational, enlivening, and creative nature of God. Old Testament scholar Terence E. Fretheim describes how God uses *dâbâr* to relationally reveal himself:

The content of the Word of God also is to be understood in relational terms. God does not simply speak about more objective realities, as if it were simply a matter

¹³ Ibid., 33-34.

¹⁴ Anderson, 73.

¹⁵ Blue Letter Bible, "H1697–*dâbâr*–Strong's Hebrew Lexicon (NIV)," accessed September 9, 2017, <https://www.blueletterbible.org/lang/lexicon/lexicon.cfm?Strong's=H1697&t=NIV>.

of data or information that constitutes the Word of God. The various texts reveal a divine concern about a considerable range of matters that bear on the relationship (Num. 12:1-8; Zech. 7:9-10; Gen. 35:10). The word also includes the conveyance of divine emotions or feelings (Num. 14:10-11; Jer. 31:20; Hos. 11:9). Indeed, God's Word will include the revelation of inner-divine reflections (Gen. 2:18; 8:21; Ps. 95:10-11; Jer. 3:7, 19-20). God's own self is thus not removed from the Word. The Word is truly revealing of the God who speaks it, and this for the sake of a fullness of relationship.¹⁶

God self-reveals himself in the setting of relationship and for relationship, through His life-giving Word. To be content simply with knowledge about God threatens to bring about a mindset where His Word no longer becomes a means by which God reveals himself. One is then in danger of missing God altogether.

Expounding further on this generative quality of *dâbâr*, Bishop Frank Griswold notes, "Therefore, in the scriptural tradition, word is not only spoken: it happens. It takes place and thereby becomes part of our experience."¹⁷ In other words, when one listens to God's Word it brings proper order to living, offers active guidance, and aligns one with God's intent. Author Susan Phillips summarizes this concept well: "The Word and the Way are one."¹⁸ Listening (giving careful attention to, rightly perceiving) and properly responding with action to what one has heard allows this enlivening word to take root in the heart and brings about God's redemptive purposes. Deuteronomy 4:1 depicts a similar idea: "Now, Israel, hear [*shâma*] the decrees and laws I am about to teach you. Follow

¹⁶ Terence E. Fretheim, "Word of God," in the *Anchor Bible Dictionary*, ed. David Noel Freedman (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 6:961.

¹⁷ Frank T. Griswold, "Listening with the Ear of the Heart," taken from a paper extracted and adapted by Bishop Griswold from a transcript of his presentations given for Trinity Institute, held in May 1998 in New York City, accessed April 19, 2016, <http://www.crosscurrents.org/griswold.htm>.

¹⁸ Susan S. Phillips, *The Cultivated Life: From Ceaseless Striving to Receiving Joy* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2015), 71.

them *so that you may live* and may go in and take possession of the land the LORD, the God of your ancestors, is giving you” [emphasis mine]. The Hebrew word *chayah*, translated “live,” includes the idea of being restored in the fullest sense of the word so that one is nourished, enlivened, and made whole. In a real sense, the Israelites’ continued flourishing, well-being, and restoration as a people remained contingent on their willingness to stay attentively responsive to the commandments of Yahweh.

Similarly, Isaiah 55:3a illuminates this close connection between listening and a flourishing life: “Give ear and come to me; listen, that you may live.” That life would go well is directly related to listening to this God-directed, ever-creative word (*dâbâr*), which brings about God’s purposes. Notice Isaiah 55:11: “So is my word [*dâbâr*] that goes out from my mouth: It will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it.” Griswold explains the fullness of *dâbâr* in one’s life: “When God speaks or enacts word, that event is always creative and life-giving.”¹⁹ Echoing the animated quality of *dâbâr*, Paintner and Wynkoop write, “Deep listening is always a creative and life-giving act. The Word does not offer us just information that we can analyze and categorize. It is a living word that encourages us to extend our boundaries. God’s Word is always larger than we are.”²⁰

¹⁹ Griswold.

²⁰ Paintner and Wynkoop, 18.

New Testament

Logos

The New Testament offers two corresponding words, *Rhema* and *Logos*, for *dâbâr*, notes church historian Geoffrey Bromiley: “The LXX treats *Rhema* and *Logos* as synonymous and uses both for *dâbâr*.”²¹ To illustrate, in John 1:1, “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God,” the Word (*Logos*) is translated as “saying, sound, speech, or voice.” Thus, with resounding familiarity, the *Logos* reverberates, “In the beginning was the Voice, and the Voice was with God, and the Voice was God.” Offering a straightforward conclusion, theologian and author Leonard Sweet declares, “Christianity is not about ‘Do you believe?’ but ‘Do you hear?’”²² This thought of listening and hearing to God’s voice as essential to a life with God, first articulated in the Old Testament, now continues in the New Testament.

Akouō

In the New Testament, the Greek word *akouō*, meaning to hear, listen, understand, or attend to, occurs 437 times. Theologian and author Klyne Snodgrass links the Hebrew *shâma* ‘ and the Greek *akouō*, noting their mutual complex meanings:

A range of at least eight nuances for which these words for hearing are used: literally to hear sound; to understand a language; to understand in the sense of grasping meaning or significance; to recognize; to discern; to pay attention; to agree with, accept, or believe what is said; and to obey. God seeks real and

²¹ Geoffrey W. Bromiley, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament: Abridged in One Volume*, ed. Gerhard Kittel and Gerhard Friedrich, trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1985), 508.

²² Leonard Sweet, *Nudge: Awakening Each Other to the God Who’s Already There* (Colorado Springs, CO: David C. Cook, 2010), 145.

complete hearing of his message, one that hears correctly, discerns, affirms, and responds with obedience to what God speaks.²³

As with the Hebrew *shâma* ‘, the New Testament interconnects *akouō* with obedience. For example, in Matthew 7:24-26, the wise person is the one who not only hears (*akouō*) but puts the words into practice (obeys). This posture of attentive, intentional listening presupposes an actionable response, i.e., obedience, to what one hears. Packer notes, “Etymologically, the *hyp[o]*- prefix suggests the meaning ‘hear *under*,’ that is, listen from a subordinate position in which compliance with that is said is expected and intended.”²⁴ Griswold concurs, “The New Testament word *hypakouo*, translated as ‘obey,’ actually means to ‘hyper-listen,’ to listen intently.”²⁵ For example, parents know well the possibility for audible words to be ignored and either intentionally or inadvertently “not heard.” This parental irritation conjures up the picture of a desperate parent gripping a child’s shoulder, looking them squarely in the eyes, and saying, “Listen to me!” What that parent is really saying is, “Pay attention to me and do what I tell you!” Thus, a child did not listen if he or she does not act. Professor at Dallas Theological

²³ Klyne Snodgrass, “A Hermeneutics of Hearing Informed by the Parables with Special Reference to Mark 4,” *Bulletin for Biblical Research* 14, no. 1 (2004): 59, posted by the Society of Evangelical Arminians, September 26, 2014, accessed June 7, 2017, <http://evangelicalarminians.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/Snodgrass.-A-Hermeneutic-of-Hearing-Informed-by-the-Parables.pdf>. Author’s note: This article was originally presented as part of the Carmichael-Walling Lectures at Abilene Christian University. “Reading to Hear: A Hermeneutics of Hearing,” *HBT* 24 (2002): 1-32.

²⁴ Packer, 680.

²⁵ Griswold.

Seminary Howard Hendricks helpfully concludes, “Biblically speaking, to hear and not to do is not to hear at all.”²⁶

Additionally, obedience rejects adherence to a certain list of rules and duties detached from relationship. Obedience embraces relational connection with the voice of God and corresponds in relational acts of surrender, openness, and trust to what one hears. Hearing, in this sense, is the way one keeps in step with the Spirit (Gal. 5:25) by surrendered obedience to the Living Word (*Logos*). This essential movement of the hearing and obeying in spiritual life applies to the same Old Testament qualities of *shâma* ‘(to responsively hear and attend to) and *dâbâr* (God’s leading, guiding, and enacted word) as portrayed in Deuteronomy: “You have declared this day that the LORD is your God and that you will walk in obedience to him, that you will keep his decrees, commands and laws—that you will listen [*shâma*] to him” (26:17). In a very real sense, hearing is not optional to God’s people. As Old Testament scholar Nathan MacDonald explains, “It is a consistent aspect of the biblical portrayal of the relationship between God and human beings that human response is crucial.”²⁷ Similarly, Dutch priest and theologian Henri Nouwen notes the inextricable link between hearing and obeying: “The obedient life is one in which we listen with great attention to God’s Spirit within and among us.”²⁸ Proper listening and attentive presence, thus, entails an embodied

²⁶ Dale Burke, “Epic Howard Hendricks Quotes,” *The Seacoast Blog*, May 29, 2014, accessed August 27, 2016, <http://seacoast-church.org/howard-hendricks-quotes/>. The quote was recorded by Burke, one of Hendricks’s students.

²⁷ Nathan MacDonald, “Listening to Abraham, Listening to YHWH: Divine Justice and Mercy in Genesis 18:16-33,” *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 66, no. 1 (January 2004): 41.

²⁸ Henri Nouwen, *Spiritual Direction: Wisdom for the Long Walk of Faith* (New York: HarperCollins, 2006), 18.

participation and relational engagement. In this way, the obedient life relies on increasing responsiveness to what the Holy Spirit says.

Transcultural Linguistics

The English word “hear” originated from the Middle English word *heren* and means to perceive by the ear; to listen to; give or pay attention to; or to listen with favor, assent, or compliance. Synonyms include to attend; to listen or give attention to; regard; and heed. Antonyms include disregard, or pay no attention to; ignore; treat without due respect or attentiveness.²⁹ The English word “harken” originated from the Old English word *heorcnian* which means “to give ear, listen; hear with attention; give heed or attention to what is said; listen.”³⁰ Related forms for the word harken include the word “hearken.” Synonyms include attend, get, observe, take notice, accept.

The Romance languages, as with the Latin word for listen, reflect this significant linkage of attentive hearing and obedience. For example, the English word “obedience” contains the Latin word *audire* (from which originate words such as “audio” and “audience”). *Audire* translates into the English word “listen.” Nouwen connects the tightly knit nature of listening and obedience: “If we listen with full attention in which we are totally geared to listen, it’s called *ob-audire*, and that’s where the word obedience comes from.”³¹ This kind of listening may be likened to turning toward someone in order

²⁹ Online Etymology Dictionary, “hear,” Douglas Harper 2010, accessed June 9, 2016, <http://www.etymonline.com/index.php?term=hear>.

³⁰ Online Etymology Dictionary, “harken,” Douglas Harper 2010, accessed June 9, 2017, http://www.etymonline.com/index.php?allowed_in_frame=0&search=harken.

³¹ Henri Nouwen, *A Spirituality of Living*, Henri Nouwen Spirituality Series (Nashville: Upper Room Books, 2012), 72.

to hear him or her better. In this way, listening intently or paying close attention is inextricably linked with obedient living. Similarly, the Old English word *hlysnan* (Northumbrian *lysna*) means “to listen, hear; attend to, obey,” linking the concept of attentive listening as requiring response.³² Spanish also links the word hear (*escuchar*) not only with heeding, attending, and listening carefully but with complying and obedience. Likewise, Macedonian, Turkish Bengali, Chinese (Traditional), Filipino, Macedonian, Yiddish define hearing as a form of obedience.

Other linguistic definitions of hearing include (1) *to pay attention* as used in Arabic, Filipino, Bosnian, Samoan, and Italian; (2) *to attend to* as used in Bulgarian, Italian, Nepali, Portuguese, Romanian, Spanish, Thai, and Ukrainian; and notably (3) *to be present* as in Arabic, Bengali, Chinese (Traditional), Dutch, Filipino, Finnish, Hindi, Indonesian, Italian, and Japanese. Thus, an accurate understanding of “to hear” underlies more than an audio function of the ear but to “be attentive, present, and ultimately responsive to” and stands as a transcultural linguistic phenomenon.

Attentive hearing, postured as being fully present, and ensuing obedience response go hand-in-hand as repeated themes throughout Scripture. The following section comprises many examples of the importance of remaining fully present to God’s dynamic voice and the enacted, obedient response and resulting transformation of the hearer.

³² “Listen,” in Online Etymology Dictionary, accessed July 17, 2017, http://www.etymonline.com/index.php?allowed_in_frame=0&search=listen.

A Theology of Living Fully Present

Old Testament Examples

Moses (Exodus 3)

God appeared to Moses in a burning bush on the backside of the desert. “So Moses thought, ‘I will go over and see this strange sight—why the bush does not burn up.’ 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’” (Exod. 3:3-4). Moses not only noticed the bush and heard the Voice but inquisitively moved in its direction. Keith Anderson explains this receptive posture: “Listening begins with curiosity, a desire to know, to wonder about what is present around us.”³³ Potential for such wonder presents itself only for those who grasp God’s availability and nearness, even when one remains unaware. Susan Phillips notes how this kind of hearing inherently includes the possibility of mystery: “Listening is neither passive nor neutral, and it opens us to the possibility of the unexpected.”³⁴ Moses had to release his own plan and expectations and pay attention to the reality unfolding before him. While listening not only involves embracing the process of discovery revealed in the moment, it also includes an open posture to all the ways one is invited to respond. Moses not only possessed a spiritual attitude that welcomed the unexpected, he instinctively moved in its direction.

³³ Anderson, 52.

³⁴ Phillips, 70.

Samuel (1 Samuel 3)

In the book of 1 Samuel, Scripture records the setting as a time when “the word [*dâbâr*] of the Lord was rare” (3:1). Yet, in the night, the Lord called out to the boy Samuel. Four times Samuel heard a voice calling his name, “Samuel, Samuel,” as he lay sleeping in the house of the LORD. Assuming that Eli called him, Samuel he went to Eli. Twice Eli did not discern that God was speaking to Samuel. Finally, the third time Eli discerned the voice as the Lord himself who wished to speak with Samuel. Eli instructed the young Samuel, “Go and lie down, and if he calls you, say, ‘Speak, LORD, for your servant is listening.’” (v. 9). So Samuel went and lay down. A fourth time the LORD called, “‘Samuel! Samuel!’ Then Samuel said, ‘Speak [*dâbâr*], for your servant is listening [*shâma*’]” (v. 10). In a posture of attentiveness, vulnerability, and surrender, Samuel demonstrated a proper hearing of God’s dynamic and enlivening word and the proper human response of surrender: “Lord, speak your life-giving word to lead and guide me; the word that brings order to my life and restores me, making me whole in everyway (*dâbâr*); I am singularly and devotedly attentive to your Voice that I may wholeheartedly surrender to your purposes (*shâma*’).” Samuel’s response to God’s voice illustrates the robust responsiveness for all who would correctly hear.

Elijah (1 Kings 17:1-19:18)

The first glimpse of the prophet Elijah reveals Elijah courageously confronting the evil King Ahab, who ruled the Northern Kingdom of Israel. King Ahab’s wife, Jezebel, provoked the King and the Israelite people to worshiping the Canaanite idol Baal (1 Kings 16:31). The first scene of Elijah’s life unfolds as nothing less than powerful and miraculous: from prophesying no rain for three years (and no rain fell) (17:1), to the

appearance of a refreshing brook in a season of drought (v. 4), to receiving daily food by ravens (vv. 4, 6), to the promise and ongoing miraculous provision of food by a destitute widow (vv. 9-16), and culminating with Elijah raising the widow's son back to life (v. 22).

The second scene of Elijah's life (1 Kings 18) unfolds as equally dramatic. While King Ahab desperately looks for Elijah, Elijah tells Obadiah, "Go tell your master [Ahab], 'Elijah is here'" (v. 8). The scene concludes in Elijah's sensational fire-consuming face-off with the prophets of the false god Baal on Mount Carmel (vv. 17-40). The scene closes with a climactic, torrential rain and Elijah running ahead of Ahab, who rides on an animal. Elijah, if nothing else, appears impressive.

These stories intricately and repeatedly intertwine the ruling, guiding, aligning, God-infused word (*dâbâr*) of the Lord coming to Elijah and the prophet's subsequent willingness to give careful attention to, rightly perceive, and properly respond with action to what one has heard. Five times the word (*dâbâr*) comes forth in 1 Kings 17 and 18, describing God's creative leading and working in Elijah's life (17:1-2, 8, 24; 18:1). Elijah's rhythms of receptivity and responsiveness to God's creative word (*dâbâr*) form the underpinnings of his ministry.

The final scene in the prophet's life unfolds with Elijah in despair and, without divine prompting, fleeing for his life from the revengeful threats of Jezebel. He journeys for forty days into the wilderness until he reaches Mount Horeb, the mountain of God, also known as Mount Sinai. Mount Horeb held great significance in the Hebrews' history of God's pivotal intervention, notably where God revealed himself to Moses in the burning bush but also in the momentous giving of the Law (Exod. 34). Elijah, in striking

similarity to Moses (Exod. 33), finds himself on this mountain when God tells him that “the LORD is about to pass by” (1 Kings 19:11). Given the dominant and dramatic history of this place and Elijah’s similar patterns of interacting with God, Elijah undoubtedly braces himself for yet another impressive demonstration of God’s power.

Unpredictably, however, God does not show up in a powerful wind, earthquake, or fire. God’s presence comes in a gentle whisper (1 Kings 19:11b-12), literally, “a sound of gentle stillness.” Rather than typical breathtaking fashion, God’s “showing forth” arrives in a voice of gentle silence. God’s presence comes in a way Elijah probably least expected, and yet Elijah hears it (v. 13). Elijah—the zealous one, the thunderous defender of God, the harsh, fire-calling prophet—does not miss the wordless voice of God. Perhaps Elijah’s current state of humility and vulnerability allows him to hear God in the quiet interior of his inner voice. God’s voice comes in many ways. The real discipline of hearing pertains to staying attentive to all the ways God speaks. Elijah, in spite of discouragement and his own preconceived ideas, literally had an ear to hear.

Solomon (1 Kings 3:7-9)

Now, LORD my God, you have made your servant king in place of my father David. But I am only a little child and do not know how to carry out my duties. Your servant is here among the people you have chosen, a great people, too numerous to count or number. So give your servant a discerning heart to govern your people and to distinguish between right and wrong. For who is able to govern this great people of yours? (1 Kings 3:7-9)

Solomon stood set to assume the kingly leadership from his father, David. God asks Solomon what he would like to receive from him (1 Kings 3:5). Solomon, fully aware of the arduous responsibilities that lay before him and his equal inadequacy to fulfill such a huge task (v. 7), answers not by requesting long life or riches or the life of his enemies, but “a listening heart” (v. 9). The Septuagint interprets this construction as a

“wise heart,” and the Latin Vulgate follows with “an understanding heart.” Many modern translations interpret this request by Solomon differently, for example, as “an understanding mind” (NRSV, ESV), “an understanding heart” (KJV), and “a discerning heart” (NIV). Although these interpretations somehow render the thought, these phrases appear inadequate to express the fullness of this request rooted in the nuances of the original Hebrew. As noted earlier, Abrahamic tradition revolves around speech as the means by which God reveals himself. N. Cachia explains that the fully-attentive elements of Solomon’s prayer proves foundational to one’s flourishing and transformation: “Thus, ‘a listening heart,’ which Solomon requests from God, entails a deliberate and conscious openness of the whole person to God from the very core of one’s being as to let God fashion one’s will, reason, feelings and way of life.”³⁵ Additionally, proper listening stands as a pre-requisite for acquiring wisdom.³⁶ As Walter Bruggemann notes, “The prayer for ‘a listening heart’ is not simply that [Solomon] should be made clever or discerning, but that he be attuned to Yahweh’s guidance and purpose for justice.”³⁷ Thus, the prayer for a listening heart bypasses arbitrary posturing but serves as a pathway of abandonment to God’s ways and purposes.

³⁵ N. Cachia, “(1 Kgs. 3:9): Receiving and Forming Towards a Listening Heart,” special issue, *Acta Theologica* 17 (2013): 76, accessed September 7, 2016, <http://www.scielo.org.za/pdf/at/v33s17/05.pdf>.

³⁶ See Proverbs 23:19.

³⁷ Walter Brueggemann, *1 and 2 Kings*, Smyth and Helwys Bible Commentary (Macon, GA: Smyth & Helwys, 2000), 47- 48.

Habakkuk (Habakkuk 1:1-2:1)

Habakkuk articulates the struggles of a human heart with a sovereign God. The Book of Habakkuk starts with Habakkuk perplexed by God's seeming lack of listening and responsiveness to his pleas. Habakkuk, confused (or irritated) that God would use a godless nation like the Chaldeans to punish the southern kingdom of Judah for its sins, laments along with the Psalmist, "How long, O Lord?" (Ps. 6:3). Embracing the human ubiquity of such lament, Peterson sympathizes, "But Habakkuk speaks our word to God. He gives voice to our bewilderment, articulates our puzzled attempts to make sense of things, faces God with our disappointment with God."³⁸ God, however, reveals to Habakkuk that punishment remains immanent. The first chapter ends with the difficult and perplexing question, "Why does God allow the wicked to prosper in their oppression of the righteous?"

When one does not understand what God is doing or not doing, the usual inclination includes taking matters into one's own hands. Habakkuk, alternatively, determines to wait for the answer. He replies, "I will stand at my watch and station myself on the ramparts; I will look to see what he will say [*dâbâr*] to me, and what answer I am to give to this complaint" (Hab. 2:1). Habakkuk captures the appropriate expectation and position of one who waits for God to speak. He defines the proper receptivity needed to receive a word from God. Habakkuk's listening encompasses more than a mere passivity but an active, alert, and watchful listening, full of anticipation, yet

³⁸ Eugene Peterson, *The Message Study Bible* (Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 2012), 1438.

with a willingness to be patient. Habakkuk's position of hearing rests securely on the premise that God does indeed speak.

Habakkuk's repetitive emphasis of standing watch from his tower and stationing himself on the ramparts most likely expresses metaphors of an interior reality. Thus, his determination first to "stand at my watch" (Hab. 2:1) depicts a withdrawal from the outside, chaotic world into the interior part, i.e., his soul. English theologian John Gill illustrates such a posture of the soul: "So the prophet retired from the world, and gave himself up to meditation and prayer, and put himself in a waiting posture; looking up to the Lord, and expecting an answer to his expostulations with him."³⁹ Additionally, the compilation of repetitive phrases, "stand at my watch," "station myself," and "look to see what he will say" (v. 1), indicates a stubborn, inner attentiveness that seems to indicate that all of one's senses ought to be employed. Habakkuk's words also express a sustained focus as described by John Calvin:

But when he says, *I will watch to see*, he refers to perseverance; for it is not enough to open our eyes once, and by one look to observe what happens to us; but it is necessary to continue our attention. This constant attention is, then, what the Prophet means by watching; for we are not so clear-sighted as immediately to comprehend what is useful to be known.⁴⁰

Habakkuk chapter 2 represents waiting from a posture of meditation, observation, and deep listening for God to speak. Calling this contemplative kind of waiting "active waiting," Nouwen explains, "Active waiting means to be present fully to the moment, in the conviction that something is happening where you are and that you want to be present

³⁹ John Gill, "Commentary on Habakkuk 2:1," *The New John Gill Exposition of the Entire Bible*, 1999, accessed September 16, 2016, <http://www.studylight.org/commentaries/geb/habakkuk-2.html>.

⁴⁰ John Calvin, "Commentary on Habakkuk 2:1," *Calvin's Commentary on the Bible*, 1840-57, StudyLight, accessed September 16, 2016, <http://www.studylight.org/commentaries/cal/habakkuk-2.html>.

to it.”⁴¹ The French word *attendre* (which means “to wait”) is derivative of the Latin word *attendo*⁴² which means “to pay attention or listen carefully.”⁴³ Thus, waiting on God to speak includes the willingness to hear and, like that of Habakkuk, to stay fully engaged with a heightened sensitivity to God’s voice. On the other hand, God’s often subtle, revealing will, never occurs automatically and, without expectant perseverance, remains easy to miss.

New Testament Examples

The New Testament equally emphasizes the significance and necessity for proper hearing as a prerequisite for entering into a life with Jesus. Author Leonard Sweet characterizes and clarifies this conclusion: “The primary gateway to the soul is the ear. By definition, the disciples of faith are first and foremost listeners. The very word *disciple* means ‘the one who listens and learns.’ The word *faith* is based on hearing, not seeing: ‘Faith comes from what is heard’ (Romans 10:17 HCSB), ‘the evidence of things not seen’ (Heb. 11:1, KJV).”⁴⁴ Thus, following Jesus into an ever-increasing discipleship must also draw one into an ever-deepening ability to hear.

⁴¹ Henri Nouwen, *Watch for the Light: Readings for Advent and Christmas* (New York: Plough, 2001), 31.

⁴² “*Attendre*,” Word Sense Dictionary Online, accessed August 8, 2017, <http://www.wordsense.eu/attendre/>.

⁴³ “*Attendo*,” Word Sense Dictionary Online, accessed August 8, 2017, <http://www.wordsense.eu/attendo/#Latin>.

⁴⁴ Leonard Sweet and Frank Viola, *Jesus Speaks: Learning to Recognize and Respond to the Lord’s Voice* (Nashville: W Publishing, 2016), xv.

Jesus

Thus, Jesus continually invited people into a new and deeper kind of seeing and hearing. In the Gospels and in Revelation, Jesus repeatedly declares a signature phrase: “If anyone has ears to hear, let him hear” (Matt. 11:15; 13:9, 43; Mark 4:9, 23; 7:16; 8:18; Luke 8:8; 14:35; Rev. 1:3). Jesus used this forceful instruction on various occasions and in diverse contexts, but His purpose for those He addressed meant to evoke hearing (*akouō*), i.e., listening, at a different level with a deeper sense of spiritual perception. Such listening requires a receptive heart and an intent to put the words heard into action. Michael Quicke submits,

“Let anyone with ears to hear, listen” is not an empty ritual refrain but an urgent encouragement that listeners need to listen with more than their ears with spiritual apprehension. It calls for holistic listening. Hearers have a responsibility to be willing to live in new ways. It involves an intensity of response that casual notice may miss to its peril.⁴⁵

Jesus’s appeal implies that not everyone possessed such ears to hear. Additionally, Jesus affirmed that hearing arises out of friendship with God. Relationship entails an ongoing hearing-lifestyle. “He replied, ‘My mother and brothers are those who hear [*akouō*] God’s word and put it into practice’” (Luke 8:21). Relationship inherently includes closeness, trust, and an experiential knowledge of another. Jesus reiterates, “My sheep hear [*akouō*] my voice; I know them, and they follow me” (John 10:27, NASB). A commitment to listen to Jesus proceeds from relationship and culminates in surrender and trust.⁴⁶ In John 5, Jesus, confronted by the religious leaders for healing on the Sabbath,

⁴⁵ Michael J. Quicke, “Let Him Who Has Ears, Listen,” *Preaching.org Blog*, March 4, 2011, accessed January 10, 2017, <http://www.preaching.org/let-him-who-has-ears-listen/>.

⁴⁶ See John 8:47.

responds with a steadfastness of listening obedience to the Father: “In his defense Jesus said to them, ‘By myself I can do nothing; I judge only as I hear, and my judgment is just, for I seek not to please myself but him who sent me’” (v. 30). The Greek word *krinō*, translated “judge,” carries the idea of an intent of the will: “to determine, resolve, choose, esteem.”⁴⁷ Jesus indicated He could not do anything independent of, in conflict with, or with separate interest apart from what He heard the Father speak. Jesus’s resolve to obey resulted from listening to His Father, esteeming the Father’s voice above all things, and submitting to that. In this same vein of thought, Keith Anderson states, “He learned alone and with others but always, it seems, alert to a universe alive to the living presence and speaking voice of Abba, the God he would teach others to know, trust, love and obey.”⁴⁸ Thus, listening remains personal and not formulaic. Jesus demonstrated and affirmed the idea that listening has to do with sensing the movement of the Holy Spirit and yielding one’s self to it.

Parable of the Sower (Matt. 13:1-23; Mark 4:1-20; Luke 8:4-15)

All three of the synoptic writers include the parable of the sower, which suggests all of them considered it a central aspect of Jesus’s teaching. In fact, Snodgrass points out, “As often noted, the Parable of the Sower is the key parable, a parable about parables, and the guide to understanding the others. It is in fact a parable about the right hearing of parables. This whole section of Mark is a primer on hearing.”⁴⁹ For example,

⁴⁷ “G2919—*krinō*—Strong’s Greek Lexicon (NIV),” Blue Letter Bible, accessed August 3, 2017, <https://www.blueletterbible.org/lang/lexicon/lexicon.cfm?Strong=G2919&t=NIV>.

⁴⁸ Anderson, 161.

⁴⁹ Snodgrass, “A Hermeneutics of Hearing,” 66-67.

Mark alone begins with the exhortation, “Listen [*akouō*]! Pay attention!” (Mark 4:3), calling the listener that day to take noticeable and actionable heed of what followed. Snodgrass contends this kind of intentional sway between listening and reciprocate action permeates all of Jesus’s parables: “Jesus’ parables were intended to enable hearing and elicit a response. They assume a hermeneutics of hearing, one that calls for depth listening and includes a hermeneutics of obedience.”⁵⁰ In a similar manner, New Testament scholar Joel Green proposes hearing as the central theme in Luke’s narrative of the parable of the soils: “The parable of the soils (Luke 8:4-8) is set within a larger narrative unit (8:4-21) centrally concerned with good hearing.”⁵¹ Eight times in fourteen verses Jesus admonishes the “hearers” to hear, i.e., to understand, to respond, to pay attention how they hear, and to obey what they hear. Green observes hearing in its greater context: “Luke is not interested in ‘hearing’ in general, but a particular kind of hearing—good hearing, authentic hearing, appropriate hearing, the kind of hearing associated with attentiveness (vv. 8, 18), believing (vv. 12-13), and embracing God’s word, steadfastness with respect to God’s word, and doing God’s word (vv. 15, 12).”⁵²

In the parable of the sower, Jesus explains that the seed is the word (*Logos*) but centers the emphasis and focus on the receptivity of the soil. The soil, characterized by four different qualities—a hard path, rocky ground, among thorns, and good soil—represents the ability to listen (*akouō*) and receive the word. Peterson summarizes, “The

⁵⁰ Ibid., 59.

⁵¹ Joel B. Green, *Conversion in Luke-Acts* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2015), 144.

⁵² Ibid.

different kinds of soil stand for different kinds of listeners.”⁵³ The purpose of the parable exceeds an explanation of the difference between the soils but, more importantly, centers on the quality of the good soil.

In the parable of the sower, Jesus uses the analogy of the soil to describe four common conditions of the human heart: the hard heart, the shallow heart, the distracted heart, and the attentive heart. In each case, all four soils receive (literally, “hear”) the word. The ability to receive the seed and produce fruit directly relates to the condition of the soil (heart), or the ability to hear (*akouō*) the word. Snodgrass notes the heart condition required to properly hear: “Hearing requires openness and receptivity—openness to God and a willingness to hear and obey, the opposite of a hard heart. Without openness and the willingness to obey, the hearing required is impossible. So, one’s stance prior to hearing is crucial.”⁵⁴

Accordingly, the parable lists a variety of obstacles that prevent hearing: Satan, the lure of wealth, trouble, persecution, and worries. The good soil stands in stark contrast: “But the seed on good soil stands for those with a noble and good heart, who hear the word, retain it, and by persevering produce a crop” (Luke 8:15). The heart condition of the person persists as the paramount focus of Jesus’s interest in the parable, for the receptiveness of the heart dictates the response to the Word and, subsequently, the abundant, transformational life it produces.

⁵³ Peterson, *The Message Study Bible*, 1549.

⁵⁴ Klyne Snodgrass, “Between Text and Sermon: Mark 4:1-20,” *Interpretation: A Journal of Bible and Theology* 67, no. 3 (July 2013): 285.

The Greek word Jesus uses for “heal,” *iaomai* (Matt. 13:15), means “to be made whole and complete.”⁵⁵ Willful intent to not listen makes one incapable of true understanding and receiving wholeness. Unfortunately, as Snodgrass points out, “Most people are satisfied with the illusion of hearing.”⁵⁶ As a result, Jesus’s use of parables directly corresponds to the willfully stubborn hearts, deaf ears, and closed eyes of those present. Thus, God decided that understanding the way of the Kingdom and its teachings will remain mysteries to them (vv. 13-15), fulfilling the prophecy of Isaiah 6:9-10.⁵⁷

New Testament scholar William Hendriksen notes the severe consequences for the dull of hearing: “It is because the people have decided not to really see, hear, etc., as if this were a dreadful thing to do, that God has decided to punish them by allowing them to have their way!”⁵⁸ Choosing a posture of inattention results in even greater spiritual indifference and apathetic concerns for the Kingdom and in being less and less restored, enlivened, and made whole by that Kingdom.

Simeon (Luke 2:25-32)

Simeon, most often associated with the Christmas story, stands as an amazing example of the listening life: a life lived in attentive responsiveness to the voice and movement of God. Three times in three verses Luke refers to the Holy Spirit’s activity in Simeon’s life. For Simeon, life in the Spirit involved an ever-increasing responsiveness to

⁵⁵ “G2390–*iaomai*–Strong’s Greek Lexicon (NIV),” Blue Letter Bible, accessed March 3, 2017, <https://www.blueletterbible.org/lang/lexicon/lexicon.cfm?Strong=G2390&t=NIV>.

⁵⁶ Snodgrass, “Between Text and Sermon,” 285.

⁵⁷ See also Mark 4:11-12 and Luke 8:10.

⁵⁸ William Hendriksen, *New Testament Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 1973), 556.

the voice and sway of the Spirit in his life, evidenced in Luke 2:27, “Moved by the Spirit, he went into the temple courts.” Simeon obediently responded to what he heard, and his remained oriented to recognizing and responding to even the smallest movements of the Spirit.

Simeon lived with an unfulfilled promise from the Holy Spirit that he would not die before he saw the Lord’s Christ. Simeon embraced a longtime rhythm of active waiting, seeking, and responding with faithful obedience to that promise. Even when the promised fulfillment was “delayed,” Simeon remained characteristically attentive and never wavered. Not looking for a Christ-child, however, Simeon’s anticipation and expectation of the promised Christ revolved around the sending of a deliverer—the consolation of Israel, a Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Simeon never looked for the showing forth of God’s glory wrapped in a blanket, but because Simeon developed a reliable pattern of listening and obeying, when God revealed himself unexpectedly in an unexpected way, Simeon did not miss that sacred event. Simeon, whose name means “one who hears and obeys” (see Gen. 29:33), offers a portrait of the listening life. For Simeon, identified as a prophet, listening was a prerequisite to his vocation. A true prophet must hear from God before proclaiming His Word.

The Transfiguration (Matt. 16:28; 17:1-6; Mark 9:1-8; Luke 9:27-36)

In the scene of the transfiguration of Christ, Jesus leads three of His disciples—Peter, James, and John—to the top of a mountain to pray. There, the Transfiguration occurs as Jesus is clothed in brilliant white clothes with His face shining like the sun. Elijah and Moses appear with Jesus and talk with Him. Then a bright cloud appears

overhead, and a voice from the cloud proclaims, “This is my Son, the Beloved. Listen [akouō] to him” (Matt. 17:5). Peter suggests building temporary structures by erecting a tent apiece. Noting Peter’s mistaken perspective, New Testament scholar Luke Timothy Johnson points out, “He treated Jesus as the equal of Moses and Elijah. God’s voice from the cloud therefore corrects the misapprehensions: Jesus only is God’s Son and chosen one; and they are not to control the holy, but to respond to it, ‘Listen to him.’”⁵⁹ In this way, responsiveness marks the distinguishing attribute of proper listening.

Revelation

Although written to seven specific congregations, living in a specific time in the Roman province of Asia, the message of the Book of Revelation to the churches gives a similar charge to the generations to come: “Blessed is the one who reads the Words of this prophecy and blessed are those who hear it and take to heart what is written in it” (1:3). Nineteenth-century theologian and church historian Philip Schaff stipulates the necessity and result of taking these words to heart: “But the book must not only be heard, it must be ‘kept’; that is, not simply must it be obeyed, it must be preserved or treasured in the heart, that there it may become the spirit and the rule of life.”⁶⁰ In other words, proper reading paired with proper hearing includes taking Scripture into our lives in such a way that it works itself out, morphed into actions into practices of grace, acts of obedience, and ways of love.

⁵⁹ Luke Timothy Johnson, *The Gospel of Luke*, Sacred Pagina Series (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1991), 156.

⁶⁰ Philip Schaff, “Commentary on Revelation 1:3,” *Schaff’s Popular Commentary on the New Testament*, 1879-90, StudyLight.org, accessed April 18, 2016, <http://www.studylight.org/commentaries/scn/revelation-1.html>.

The Book of Revelation picks up the language of the parable of the sower. In Revelation 13:9, the Apostle John, reminiscing on Jesus's teaching he heard over and over, declares, "Whoever has ears, let him hear." Seven times in Revelation, in the letters to the seven churches of Asia Minor, John uses the exact phrase: "He who has an ear, let him hear [*akouō*] what the Spirit says to the churches" (2:7, 11, 17, 29; 3:6, 13, 22). Revelation 3:20 depicts the relational, initiative-taking God inviting those who would hear to enter into deep-seated friendship. For this, the soul was created: intimate, ongoing, interactive, life-giving relationship with the Voice who redeems, restores, and loves far beyond anyone would think or imagine. The invitation is given, but the invitation must be "heard" in such a way that one responds, "Come!" "The Spirit and the bride say, 'Come!' And let the one who hears say, 'Come!'" (22:17a).

Inattentive Listening: The Dull Heart

Scripture consistently records and charges God's people with spiritual deafness. Adam McHugh points out, "The Scriptures present a God who speaks to humanity regularly in a myriad of different ways, and yet who charges us with not listening."⁶¹ God's concern proves reasonable and justified toward the people He loves; for to not be heard in any relationship results in a degree of severing of that relationship. At risk is a hindered conversation with God and a weakened sense of God's abiding presence.

As well, attentive hearing (being fully present) presupposes an appropriate and personal response, yet the reality of a disconnect between hearing and obeying conspicuously emerges throughout Scripture. To not act on what one hears, in essence,

⁶¹ McHugh, 58.

translates the same as not having actually listened. Examples of how “not listening” renders as a form of disobedience (and the reactionary consequences of that disobedience) dominates much of Scripture.

Old Testament Examples

The Great Discourse on Obedience and Disobedience (Leviticus 26)

In the Old Testament’s great discourse on obedience and disobedience, Leviticus 26 repeatedly describes disobedience portrayed as the Israelites’ unwillingness to listen (*shâma*’) to God’s voice and His commands (vv. 14-27). God lamented the inability or the unwillingness of His people, Israel, to give proper attentiveness and responsiveness to His life-giving word.⁶² This reoccurring theme of the stubbornness to hear reflects an equal stubbornness of heart: “Today, if only you would hear his voice, do not harden your hearts as you did at Meribah, as you did that day at Massah in the wilderness” (Ps. 95:7b-8).⁶³

An Unwillingness to Hear (Isaiah 6:9-10)

Another classic text dealing with the failure to hear because of a hardness of heart, and one of the most cited passages in the New Testament, Isaiah 6:9-10 records, “He said, ‘Go and tell this people: “Be ever hearing, but never understanding; be ever seeing, but never perceiving.” Make the heart of this people calloused; make their ears dull and close their eyes. Otherwise they might see with their eyes, hear with their ears,

⁶² See, for example, Isaiah 42:18-23.

⁶³ See also Hebrews 3:7; 4:7.

understand with their hearts, and turn and be healed.”⁶⁴ The Hebrew word *kabad* translates to “dull,” meaning insensible and hard.⁶⁵ Ezekiel 3:7 records the cause of a hardened heart: “But the people of Israel are not willing to listen to you because they are not willing to listen to me, for all the Israelites are hardened and obstinate.” Thus, deafness results not from an inability to hear, but a willful and deliberate resistance to hear God’s voice, and produces a hardened heart. Similarly, Jeremiah 11:8 concludes, “But they did not listen or pay attention; instead, they followed the stubbornness of their evil hearts. So I brought on them all the curses of the covenant I had commanded them to follow but that they did not keep.”⁶⁶ Those who remain deaf stubbornly choose to do so, cutting themselves off from divine blessing.

Jeremiah 5:21 foretells the extreme result of spiritual deafness: “Hear this, you foolish and senseless people, who have eyes but do not see, who have ears but do not hear.” Thus, with no experiential awareness of God, His leading and guiding voice, or His redemptive activity in one’s life, self-deception sets in, and eventually one becomes completely blind to God’s existence. This ultimately results in uncontrolled evil, utter corruption, and one’s world collapsing.

⁶⁴ See also Matthew 13:14-15; Mark 4:12; Luke 8:10; John 12:39-40; and Acts 28:26-27.

⁶⁵ “H3513—*kabad*—Strong’s Hebrew Lexicon (NIV),” Blue Letter Bible, accessed September 8, 2017, <https://www.blueletterbible.org/lang/lexicon/lexicon.cfm?t=kjv&strongs=h3513>.

⁶⁶ See Jeremiah 7:24.

New Testament Examples

Truth Concealed from the Spiritually Deaf (Mark 4:9-12)

In Mark 4:9-12, at the end of the telling of the parable of the soil, Jesus gives an invitation for anyone who would be willing to hear (*akouō*), indicating they should listen carefully and obediently. Immediately following this discourse, the disciples and others pull Jesus aside and ask Him about the use and/or meaning of the parables (v. 10). Jesus tells those gathered, “The secret of the kingdom of God has been given to you. But to those on the outside everything is said in parables so that, ‘they may be ever seeing but never perceiving, and ever hearing but never understanding; otherwise they might turn and be forgiven!’” (vv. 11-12). Jesus’s reasoning goes back to verse 10, where He explained that the purpose of His parables was both to reveal truth to the spiritually responsive and to conceal truth from the spiritually indifferent, impassive, or deaf. Similarly, in Matthew 13:13 Jesus explains, “This is why I speak to them in parables: “Though seeing, they do not see; though hearing, they do not hear or understand.” Thus, in telling parables, Jesus intended to nudge the people toward receptive and insightful hearing.

Resisting the Holy Spirit (Acts 7)

In Acts 7, Stephen’s response to the Sanhedrin regarding their accusation of him speaking contrary to Moses and the Law and against God and the Temple begins with, “Listen [*akouō*] to me!” (v. 2). The admonition to listen appears intentionally poignant as Stephens confronts his accusers with two charges against them: they are a stiff-necked people, and they are uncircumcised of heart and ears. “You stiff-necked people! Your hearts and ears are still uncircumcised. You are just like your ancestors: You always

resist the Holy Spirit!” (v. 51). Using familiar Jewish language⁶⁷ Stephen employed a metaphor of uncircumcision to those whose heart and ears are covered. As theologian William Kurz indicates, “Although they are circumcised in the flesh as belonging to God, their hearts do not correspond but remain alienated from God’s ways (see Deut. 10:16).”⁶⁸ Similarly, theologian Craig Keener concurs that those gathered that day with “uncircumcised” hearts and ears were like those who were “spiritually pagan or Gentile,” indicating they were no longer living or responding as a covenantal people of God.⁶⁹ The expression “uncircumcised in ears” refers to the people’s obstinate refusal to hear, i.e., listen, to God to whom they are supposed to be dedicated by their circumcision. Thus, as a result of their stubborn refusal to listen and their rejection to “dedicate their whole and whole being” (Deut. 10:16) to God, Stephen portrayed the hearers that day as those whose soul and senses were closed to the divine work of mercy and grace in their lives.

The Journey across the Sea of Galilee (Mark 8:14-21)

Shortly after Jesus miraculously feeds four thousand people with the multiplication of seven loaves (Mark 8:1-9), the apostles anxiously discover that they have forgotten to bring enough food for their journey across the Sea of Galilee (vv. 14-21). After having just witnessed and participated in God’s miraculous provision on an unimaginable scale, Jesus appears amazed at their inability to comprehend the significance of the miraculous provision of bread on a personal level. Failing to fully

⁶⁷ See Exodus 32:9; throughout Exodus 33-34; and Deuteronomy 9-10; 31.

⁶⁸ William S. Kurz, *Acts of the Apostles* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2013), 130.

⁶⁹ Craig S. Keener, *Acts: An Exegetical Commentary*, vol. 2, 3:1-14:28 (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2013), 1423.

grasp the spiritual reality of the nearness and availability of Christ's presence, the disciples are preoccupied and concern themselves with lesser things. In verse 17, Jesus exposes this lack of understanding as having a "hardened" heart. The Greek word for "hardened," *pōroō*, means "to grow hard, callous, become dull, lose the power of understanding."⁷⁰ To lose understanding includes the inability to pay attention and the loss of perception. Jesus laments that the disciples have so grossly misunderstood (lost perspective) His provision so "shortly" after He miraculously provided food for four thousand people.

In a similar passage, Jesus explains the reason for calloused or hardened hearts: "For this people's heart has become calloused; they hardly hear with their ears, and they have closed their eyes. Otherwise they might see with their eyes, hear with their ears, understand with their hearts and turn, and I would heal them" (Matt. 13:15).⁷¹ In this passage, the Greek word *pachynō*, translated as "calloused," means "waxed fat or to make stupid or senseless."⁷² A hardened or "thick" heart results in the willful choice to remain without understanding, increasingly incapable of discerning truth.

The Disciples' Dullness (Mark 7:14)

In Matthew 15:15-16, Jesus expresses astonishment at the disciples' inability to perceive the spiritual reality and attributes their lack of perception to "dullness" of heart.

⁷⁰ "G4456–*pōroō*–Strong's Greek Lexicon (NIV)," Blue Letter Bible, accessed March 1, 2017, <https://www.blueletterbible.org/lang/lexicon/lexicon.cfm?Strongs=G4456&t=NIV>.

⁷¹ See also Isaiah 6:9-10; Acts 28:26-27.

⁷² Blue Letter Bible, "G3975–*pachynō*–Strong's Greek Lexicon (NIV)," accessed September 8, 2017), <https://www.blueletterbible.org/lang/lexicon/lexicon.cfm?Strongs=G3975&t=NIV>.

The Greek word *asynetos*, translated “dullness,” similarly conveys a quality of “unintelligent, lack of understanding, or stupid.”⁷³ Here Jesus equates a hardened, calloused, and dull heart as a willful intent to not listen (deafness) that makes one incapable of true understanding.

Congruent with this vein of thought, Nouwen writes, “Interestingly, the word ‘absurd’ includes the Latin word *sardus*, which means ‘deaf.’ Absurd living is a way of life in which we remain deaf to the voice that speaks to us in our silence.”⁷⁴ Nouwen also notes, “Resistance in the form of preoccupation and distraction often prevents us from seeing the truth of our lives, hearing God’s voice, and living a spiritual life.”⁷⁵ No doubt, in an age of information and technology, distractions incessantly come from all directions and infiltrate every part of daily life. In a generation that struggles to hold its gaze in a flurry of competing stimuli, the ability to remain fully present to the voice of God becomes increasingly difficult.

Conclusion

The biblical narrative portrays the story of the God who forever initiates conversation. Thus, the reoccurring admonition to “Listen! Pay attention!” punctuates the biblical narrative. One’s participation in God’s life-giving story relies heavily on the ability to hear and remain attentive and fully present to the Voice that speaks. However, attuning one’s soul to God’s unfolding story requires a deep listening, often lost in

⁷³ Blue Letter Bible, “G801–*asynetos*–Strong’s Greek Lexicon (NIV),” accessed September 8, 2017, <https://www.blueletterbible.org/lang/lexicon/lexicon.cfm?Strong=G801&t=NIV>.

⁷⁴ Nouwen, *Spiritual Direction*, 17.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 19.

religious conformity and a distracted civilization. Developing “ears to hear” in present-day culture with so many voices vying for attention, will require intentional practices, time, and focused attentiveness.

Unfortunately, ministry leaders themselves remain susceptible to this erosion of awareness. Consumed with the weight and pace of ministry little time, opportunity, or energy remains for the holy work of sustained listening. This kind of personal presence remains critically necessary for those who spiritually lead others, and the implications of distraction emerge as profound.

Ultimately, how and what one pays attention to forms one’s life. The first and second great commandments, recorded in Mark 12:29-31 to love God with all your heart, soul, and mind and to love your neighbor as yourself, indicate the focus of those things that matter most. Rather than a stoic ideal, these verses expand and contribute to a robust perspective of an integrated spiritual life in which attentiveness plays a major role. Remaining fully present in these three human dimensions and relationships—to God, to others, and to self—in practices and disciplined ways, offers transformation and wholeness in the midst of a scattered culture and crowded leadership lives. This dynamically integrated reality of attentiveness will provide the focus for the remainder of this project.

CHAPTER 3: GENERAL LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

A key human capacity crucial to the spiritual life is the ability to pay attention to God's movement and all the ways He brings about wholeness. The repeated and compelling call throughout Scripture to listen or pay attention lays the foundation for spiritual flourishing, transformation, and vitality. Jesus employed this language of attentive devotion. While much of the Old Testament practice of *Shema* had fallen into dutiful compliance and rigid behavior, Jesus sought to bring back the *Shema*'s relational element of heart engagement and response by leading people into a new and deeper kind of seeing and hearing.

During a debate with religious leaders, an intrigued teacher of the Law asks Jesus, "Of all the commandments, which is the most important?" (Mark 12:28).¹ Jesus responds that the inner dimensions of life mark the cornerstone in the greatest commandment: "The most important one," answered Jesus, "is this: 'Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength. The second is this: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no commandment greater than these" (vv. 29-31). Jesus distilled the whole of the Decalogue (the Ten Commandments) into a decree of love. Love requires attentiveness, focus, time, and presence in the midst of distractions. Jesus understood that

¹ All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise noted, are from the New International Version.

what one gives his or her deepest attention, forms his or her devotion. James K. A. Smith agrees, “Discipleship, we might say, is a way to curate your heart, to be attentive to and intentional about what you love.”² In other words, a devoted heart, a heart to love God over other things, is trained. Therefore, intentional practices and habits of attention “engage our senses, grab our hearts, form our identities and reshape our desires.”³ Thus, a life of devotion, the linchpin of Mark 12 no longer lingers as an elusive or fleeting sentimentality, but may be firmly engrained as a integrated reality of daily living.

Henri Nouwen understood Jesus’s mandate in Mark 12 as an integrated and devoted way of living. Summarizing Nouwen’s thoughts, Wil Hernandez concludes that the commandments are “a spirituality of integration rooted in the great commandment with its equally unified and intersecting dimensions: the love of God, the love of others, and the love of self.”⁴ Thus, Jesus established the true and proper sequence for spiritual devotion as “tripolar” with the three poles being God, others, and self. This kind of lived devotion (love God, love others, love self) results in an integrated way of living with the ultimate priority of loving God.

In turn, this integrated life produces the characteristics of a healthy soul. Gary Moon attests, “I have come to believe that ‘soul’ refers to the deepest part of a person and

² James K. A. Smith, *You Are What You Love: The Spiritual Power of Habit* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2016), 2.

³ J. R. Woodward, *Creating a Missional Culture: Equipping the Church for the Sake of the World* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2012), 188.

⁴ Wil Hernandez, *Henri Nouwen and Soul Care: A Ministry of Integration* (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 2008), 71.

can be used synonymously with the whole person.”⁵ Dallas Willard defines the essence of the soul: “The Soul is that aspect of your whole being that correlates, integrates, and enlivens everything going on in the various dimensions of the self. It is the life center of the human being.”⁶ In other words, the soul’s well-being guides and causes everything that matters most. Careful attention to the inner workings of the soul in all of its dimensions creates an integrated quality of wholeheartedness.

The call of God in Deuteronomy 6:5 to give careful and undivided attention to the priority of covenantal relationship is reflected in Jesus’s summons in Mark 12:29-31, which is a call to attentiveness and intentionality about what one loves as the fundamental qualities of a life of wholeheartedness. Jesus’s invitation to love God with all your heart, soul, and mind, and to love your neighbor as yourself, offers one an invitation to pay attention, or be fully present, to what matters most and allow those things to ultimately shape you. The historic and contemporary practices of attentiveness to God, self, and others, as well as, the current crisis of attention, and the practices necessary to cultivate attentive presence, will be the further topic of discussion for this paper.

Voices of Attentive Presence

Ancient

Remarkable consensus persists among Christian writers throughout Church history of the essentialness of attentive presence needed for integrated wholeness. Each

⁵ Gary Moon, “Spiritual Formation and Soul Care: A Response to ‘An Old Call in Need of New Voices,’” *Journal of Spiritual Formation and Soul Care* 7, no. 2 (Fall 2014): 287.

⁶ Dallas Willard, *Renovation of the Heart: Putting on the Character of Christ* (Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 2002), 199.

writer's description acknowledges the concepts of intention, practice, and unhurried, focused awareness, which forms the basis of remaining fully present. These ancient voices give latent affirmation to a tradition that viewed being present as a way of knowing God, self, and others.

Fully Present to God

Cyprian Smith points out that the Rule of Saint Benedict begins with the admonition to listen:

The whole spiritual life of the Christian . . . is a process of listening to God, "inclining the ear of the heart," as the Rule says. This image of the inward ear, the ear of the heart, shows us that our listening is not merely an intellectual or rational activity; it is intuitive, springing from the very core of our being; where we are most open to God, most receptive to the word he speaks.⁷

Hearing with the inner ear of the heart does not come easily, but by deliberately choosing a way of listening to God, one's heart begins to sharpen its perception of God's presence. This kind of attentive listening arises out of a daily habit of turning one's heart toward God and eventually develops the ability to notice God's movement in the ins and outs of normal life. Noting the outcome of one's ability to remain present and responsive to the movement of the Holy Spirit, the eleventh-century French abbot Bernard of Clairvaux assesses, "If we are submissive to the workings of the Holy Spirit in us and attentive to his promptings, he blesses us with fervor and joy."⁸ According to Bernard, fully noticing and submitting the Holy Spirit's activity in one's life throws open the

⁷ Cyprian Smith, *The Path of Life: Benedictine Spirituality for Monks and Lay People* (Leominster, Herefordshire, UK: Gracewing Publishing, 1995), 1.

⁸ Saint Bernard of Clairvaux, *Honey and Salt: Selected Spiritual Writings of Bernard of Clairvaux*, ed. John F. Thornton and Susan B. Varenne (New York: Vintage Books, 2007), 45.

possibility for the birth of joy and marks the condition of a life lived in God. In speaking of cultivating the virtues of Christ, as exemplified in the Beatitudes, Symeon the New Theologian explains, “Speaking generally, it is impossible to gain virtue in any other way except through this kind of attention.”⁹ Thus, transformation into Christlikeness comes by way of attention.

Attentiveness in prayer marked the habits and formation of the Early Church. For the Early Church, prayer, rather than a method or technique to be mastered, embraced an attitude to be cultivated: a habitual kind of “showing up all the way,” fully present to God’s presence and including a surrender to God’s transforming presence. In this way, one may move from praying (in a certain time and place) to ceaseless, in the moment, prayerfulness. So then prayer is seen as not so much an activity for God but more as an increased awareness and way of being with God. For example, the Carmelite friar John of the Cross admonishes that the heart of praying is giving “loving attention to God,” so even “when the spiritual person cannot meditate, let him learn to be still in God, fixing his loving attention upon Him.”¹⁰ Loving attention implies a quality of focused presence, or being all there, to the object of attention. Italian friar Thomas of Aquinas concurs, “It seems that attention is a necessary condition of prayer ... But prayer is not in spirit unless it is attentive.”¹¹

⁹ Symeon, “The Three Ways of Attention and Prayer,” trans. Demetrios S. Skagias, Myriobiblos, November 1996, accessed August 15, 2017, http://www.myriobiblos.gr/texts/english/sytheon_threeways.html.

¹⁰ Saint John of the Cross, *Ascent to Mount Carmel* (New York: Burns & Oates, 1993), 122.

¹¹ Thomas Aquinas, *The Summa Theologica of Thomas Aquinas* (London: Burns Oats and Washbourne, 1922), 9:56.

More than five hundred years ago, Ignatius of Loyola, founder of the Society of Jesus (Jesuits), developed a spiritual exercise for increasing attentiveness to God's presence and activity in one's life as a deepening relationship with God. Attention, i.e., focused presence, reverence, and devotion, establishes this process for finding God in all things. Similarly, Brother Lawrence, a seventeenth-century lay monk at a Carmelite monastery in Paris took on the practice of continually turning his attention and heart to God, which later become known as the "practice of the presence of God." Noting this way of habitual focus on God, he wrote in a letter to Abbe de Beaufort, the Cardinal de Noailles, "I have given up all but my intercessory prayers to focus my attention on remaining in his holy presence. I keep my attention on God in a simple loving way. This is my soul's experience of the actual, unceasing presence of God."¹² Brother Lawrence exemplified the concept of attentiveness as faithful presence to God and the wholeness it creates in the life of a Christian.

Fully Present to Self

Historically, self-examination emerged as bedrock in the spiritual life and practice of the ancient Church. Ancient voices give credence to self-awareness as a means and ways of becoming more aware of God. In other words, being present to self and attending to what is happening beneath the surface of one's life allows one to appropriately respond to the creative movement and knowledge of God.

¹² Brother Lawrence, *The Practice of the Presence of God* (New Kensington, PA: Whitaker House, 1982), 41.

Soon after his conversion Saint Augustine of Hippo prayed, “Lord, let me know myself; let me know you.”¹³ Augustine came to understand the deep connection between self-awareness and God-awareness: to know God one must first know one’s self. The more one knows himself or herself—honestly facing inner compulsions, hidden sins, and disordered desires—the more one recognizes his or her need for God’s grace. In other words, honest self-knowledge (being fully present to self) in turn draws one into deeper knowledge of God. Similarly, Bernard of Clairvaux declares, “Attain, then, to the knowledge of yourself, that you may fear God: and attain to the knowledge of Him, that you may love Him also.”¹⁴ One of Catherine of Siena’s principal teachings is knowledge of oneself and knowledge of God. Thomas McDermott notes, “Catherine adapted the Christian spiritual tradition on the subject and presented it anew using a number of ingenious images such as a well, a cell within a cell, a peaceful sea, a mirror. So important was self-knowledge in her life and teaching that she came to regard it as virtually prayer itself.”¹⁵ John Calvin, in the opening section of “Institutes of the Christian Religion,” introduces the concept of this “double knowledge”: “Without knowledge of self there is no knowledge of God.”¹⁶ Calvin was explicit that these two forms of knowledge are virtually inseparable.

¹³ Augustine, *Soliloquies* 2.1.1.

¹⁴ Saint Bernard of Clairvaux, *The Life and Works of Saint Bernard, Abbot of Clairvaux*, ed. John Mabillon (London: John Hodges, 1896), 4:239.

¹⁵ Thomas McDermott, “Catherine Siena’s Teaching on Self Knowledge,” *New Blackfriars* 88, no. 1018 (November 2007):637, accessed August 29, 2017, <http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/j.1741-2005.2006.00130.x/abstract>.

¹⁶ John Calvin, *Institutes* 1.1.1.

This kind of deep self-awareness to which these ancient voices speak does not come about haphazardly, coincidentally, or naturally. Attentiveness to the condition of one's life requires deliberate intent, practiced focus, and a trained ability of remaining present to the things that are most real about one's self no matter how that unfolds. This posture of presence allows one to recognize one's need of Christ and the richness of God's mercy and to respond to the grace that is offered.

Fully Present to Others

Jesus's mandate in Mark 12 indicates that loving God and loving one's self is inextricably connected to loving others. The interplay of becoming a loving and holistic person happens simultaneously through the enlargement of love of God, one's self-love, and *includes* the neighbor. In other words, one cannot experience wholeness simply by loving God and self. If this love is not lived out, expressed in love, compassion and mercy to others, one's hearts has not been formed as one thinks. The invitation of Jesus to the fuller life comes not only as one gives attention to God but largely as one who increasingly becomes other-centered. Thus, to be spiritually formed means not so much participating in something as it is *a way of living present to others*.

The Early Church was characterized by exuberant caring and generosity. So much so that Tertullian, a North African theologian and apologist, reported that the Romans would confess in astonishment, "See how they love one another!"¹⁷ In this way, participating in the life of Christian community as bearers of God's grace becomes an enacted apologetic to a watching world. Early Christian apologist Justin Martyr stresses

¹⁷ Tertullian, "The Apology of Tertullian," in *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, ed. Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson (Buffalo, NY: The Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1887), 3:46.

Christ's teaching concerning showing love and doing good to all, even one's enemy.¹⁸ It was Augustine's study of the Book of John that brought him to realize the primacy of love and the fulfillment of the Law. Augustine notes that love should be the root of all actions, famously saying, "love, and do what you will."¹⁹ The Early Church led in love and cared freely for others.

Author Mark O'Keefe captures sixteenth-century Saint Teresa of Avila's conviction that love for others rightly proceeds from love of God: "The deeper our encounter with God, the greater our capacity to love others. Ultimately, authentic union with the God of love must necessarily bear fruit in love of others and God loves them."²⁰ In other words, holistic faith is not so much about radical devotion as it is about radical love. This kind of living expresses itself in attentive presence to others and ultimately becomes a source of transformation for both the giver and receiver of love. Teresa notes this reciprocity of love: "And be certain that the more advanced you are in love for your neighbor the more advanced you will be in love for God."²¹ As one reaches out to others in need, the capacity for love expands and, consequently, so does the capacity to receive and live by God's grace. Eighteenth-century theologian John Wesley provides some help in understanding the character of the love of God as that of attentiveness to others: "One of the principal rules of religion is, to lose no occasion of serving God. And since He is

¹⁸ Justin Martyr, "The First Apology," ch. 14-15.

¹⁹ Augustine, "Ten Homilies on the First Epistle of John," Homily 7, sec. 8.

²⁰ Mark O'Keefe, *The Way of Transformation: Saint Teresa of Avila on the Foundation and Fruit* (Washington, DC: ICS Publications, 2016), 64.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 68.

invisible to our eyes, we are to serve Him in our neighbor.”²² Like many biblical writers, Wesley understood love as presence and action that promotes the well-being of others. Thus, Christian writers throughout history in tandem acknowledge the necessity of cultivating focus and practices of attentiveness as a means by which one experiences the ability to love God, self and others.

Contemporary

Equally copious and congruent, contemporary literature advocates the importance and influence of attentiveness as a means to living fully present to all the dimensions of humanity where God is at work. Proper hearing takes time and practiced attentiveness, resulting in a quality of presence one may bring to the entirety of one’s life.

Fully Present to God

Among the contemporary voices, a posture of attentiveness, i.e., being fully present to God, stands as foundational to recognizing God’s presence. For example, author and apologist C. S. Lewis articulates, “We may ignore, but we can nowhere evade, the presence of God. The world is crowded with God. God walks everywhere incognito. And the incognito is not always hard to penetrate. The real labor is to remember, to attend. In fact, to come awake. Still more, to remain awake.”²³ To awaken to something is to become fully aware of it, to respond rather than simply react, to enter into and become a full participant. To become awake is to see things one might have missed and to hear

²² John Wesley, *John Wesley: A Plain Account of Christian Perfection* (Pantianos Classic, 2017), 115.

²³ C. S. Lewis, *Letters to Malcolm: Chiefly on Prayer* (New York: HarperCollins, 1964), 101.

things that might have gone unheard. Lewis notes the difficulty of remaining present, or attending to, to the presence of God: this seems to be the real work of the Christian life. In a similar vein of thought Richard Rohr proposes, “We cannot attain the presence of God. We’re already totally in the presence of God. What is absent is awareness.”²⁴

Irish novelist and philosopher Iris Murdoch unequivocally links attentiveness to love: “Prayer is properly not petition, but simply an attention to God which is a form of love.”²⁵ With concurring voice, theologian and author Belden Lane notes, “One only can love what one stops to observe.”²⁶ French philosopher and Christian mystic Simone Weil articulates that attentiveness, a central theme of Weil’s spirituality, forms the basis of prayer: “Prayer consists of attention. . . . It is the orientation of all the attention of which the soul is capable toward God.”²⁷ With this in mind, prayer takes on a more of an orientation of the soul rather than a certain time, place, or method.

Quaker Thomas Kelly links a particular kind of alert hearing and responsiveness to God as the essential foundation of the Christian life: “But holy listening and alert obedience remains, as the core and kernel of the God-intoxicated life, as the abiding pattern of sober, work-a-day [*sic*] living.”²⁸ Similarly, American historical theologian R. Albert Mohler articulates the priority of attentiveness in spiritual formation: “Our ability

²⁴ Richard Rohr, *Everything Belongs: The Gift of Contemplative Prayer* (New York: Crossroad, 1999), 28.

²⁵ Iris Murdoch, *The Sovereignty of God* (New York: Routledge, 2001), 53-54.

²⁶ Belden C. Lane, *The Solace of Fierce Landscapes: Exploring Desert and Mountain Spirituality* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 189.

²⁷ Simone Weil, *Waiting for God*, trans. Emma Craufurd (New York: G. Putnam’s Sons, 1951), 105.

²⁸ Thomas Kelly, *A Testament of Devotion* (New York: HarperCollins, 1992), 32.

to focus attention is not just about the mind, for it is also a reflection of the soul. Our Christian discipleship demands that we give attention to our attention.”²⁹ In other words, the key to the integrated life which Jesus articulated in Mark 12 evolves and expands as one’s attention becomes a priority to be cultivated.

For ministry leaders, leading not only requires a practiced attentiveness but an equally important responsiveness to the sway of the Holy Spirit. Earl Creps aptly describes this way of leading: “Reflection on God’s activity among us places leaders in the proper posture for listening to God’s voice as the source of direction in ministry, and waiting for God’s Spirit to empower us in the task. Mechanics become important (which they are) only as they form a response to God’s leading.”³⁰ Creps underlines something important: leadership skills and competencies are not at odds with this attentive posture. Both leadership expertise and a posture of attentiveness are required and work in tandem with the Spirit’s movement. Once a leader discerns the direction or flow of God’s leading, the developed leadership skills and tools allow the leader to more fully and effectively participate in it. This ongoing rhythm of God’s initiative and a leader’s response, correlating divine presence with managerial techniques or personal competences, illustrates the constant and essential movement of spiritual leadership.

²⁹ Albert Mohler, “The Challenge of Attention in the Digital Age,” *Albert Mohler Blog*, May 22, 2008, accessed December 16, 2016, <http://www.albertmohler.com/2008/05/22/the-challenge-of-attention-in-the-digital-age/>.

³⁰ Earl Creps, *Off-Road Disciplines: Spiritual Adventures of Missional Leaders* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2006), 131.

Fully Present to Self

A necessary component of a ministry leader's well-being and effective ministry is being willing to attend to what is most real about oneself. Too often a gut-level disconnect exists from the truths they hold in their head (or the truths they preach) and the realities of their lives. Consequently, ministry leaders find themselves attempting to invite others into a life they themselves are not living. Far from being antisocial or narcissistic, being present to one's self rises as essential for a leader who leads from a place of authenticity, wholeness, and flourishing. Seth Richardson notes, "In a world where the conditions that supported long-held assumptions about church and leadership are shifting, I'm convinced that asking "what is going on?" is not only necessary for finding your bearings in the midst of disorientation, it is a fundamental pastoral practice."³¹ Noting also the importance of self-examination in a leader's life, Ruth Haley Barton concludes, "Spiritual leadership emerges from our willingness to stay involved with our own soul."³² In order to lead well, maintain proper discernment, and flourish as a person, leaders must pay attention to the unexamined inner dynamics that drive them. As Patricia Brown attests,

The failure of leaders to deal with their own souls, their inner life, is deeply troubling not only for themselves but also for the persons in the misery they cause. The destructive consequences from leaders who fail to work out of a deep

³¹ Seth Richardson, "The Most Important Pastoral Practice of Our Time," *Missio Alliance Blog*, February 3, 2017, accessed August 12, 2017, <http://www.missioalliance.org/important-pastoral-practice-time/>.

³² Ruth Haley Barton, *Strengthening the Soul of Your Leadership: Seeking God in the Crucible of Ministry* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2008), 23.

sense of their inner self are staggering. ... *Leaders have a particular responsibility to know what is going on inside their souls* [emphasis mine].³³

Emphasizing the role of a healthy soul in a leader's interior life, Michael Thompson sums up,

We have long ago dispensed with the notion that leadership is a set of competencies to be learned or just so many boxes to be checked. Admitting instead that, as Warren Bennis writes, it is the “integrated human being” among us—the individuated, mature, and developing man or woman—who is most fit for the task of leadership, we must look more carefully at the role the inner life plays in becoming that person.³⁴

Personal faithfulness for leaders must include a courageous readiness to not assume that all of their life is as it appears. Personal faithfulness must also include a profound willingness to live honestly and to invite God to expose the idols of their own hearts and name those unresolved inner dynamics that have shaped them. Such willing and radical honesty aids in an accurate self-knowledge, which leads to humility as the leader comes to grip with his or her need of grace. Ultimately, a proper self-awareness leads to a needed place of surrendered reliance on God.

John Piper, high-profile author and pastor of Bethlehem Baptist Church, after returning from an eight-month unexpected leave of absence from public ministry and speaking of diagnosing one's own struggle with sin admonished the need for self-awareness: “Pastors, you will know your people's souls best by knowing your own. So try to be ruthlessly honest with yourself. ... The key is brutal, broken vulnerability and

³³ Patricia D. Brown, *Learning to Lead from Your Spiritual Center* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1996), 11.

³⁴ C. Michael Thompson, *The Congruent Life: Following the Inward Path to Fulfilling Work and Inspired Leadership* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2000), 140.

honesty.”³⁵ Dan Allender points out the often superficial engagement prevalent in such a practice: “Our own life is the thing that most influences and shapes our outlook, our tendencies, our choices, and our decisions. It is the force that orients us toward the future and yet we don’t give it a second thought, much less a careful examination. It’s time to listen to your own story.”³⁶ In other words, it is the hidden or inner aspects of one’s life that guides and causes the things that matter most and contributes to a diminishing or expanding soul.

Practicing such honest self-awareness necessitates a way of being with one’s self, i.e., attending to one’s soul, and forms the basis of being with others. David Benner proposes, “Careful attention to one’s inner life is an indispensable prerequisite for caring for the souls of others.”³⁷ Similarly, Parker Palmer, noting the shadow side of leaders, admonishes a proper and exceptional demand for becoming fully aware of the consequences of inattentiveness to one’s interior life in leading others: “A leader is a person who must take special responsibility for what’s going on inside his or her consciousness, lest the act of leadership create more harm than good.”³⁸ Thus, essential to transformative leadership and the integrated self is the willingness to remain fully present

³⁵ John Piper, *Brothers, We Are Not Professionals: A Plea to Pastors for Radical Ministry*, rev. ed. (Nashville: B&H, 2013), 145.

³⁶ Dan Allender, “To Be Told,” *The Allender Center Blog*, accessed April 12, 2017, <https://theallendercenter.org/offerings/conferences/to-be-told/>.

³⁷ David G. Benner, *Care of Souls: Revisioning Christian Nurture and Counsel* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1998), 33.

³⁸ Parker J. Palmer, *Let Your Life Speak: Listening for the Voice of Vocation* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2000), 78.

to the realities of the inner life, for out of that place do these same realities flow out to others.

Fully Present to Others

Contemporary voices consistently acknowledge that attentive listening, i.e., giving one's full attention to others embodies the very act of love itself. Author David Augsburger contends, "Being heard is so close to being loved that for the average person they are almost indistinguishable."³⁹ Leighton Ford translates attentive listening to love when he writes, "Love is focused attention."⁴⁰ Douglas Steere, a Rhodes scholar at Oxford and eminent Quaker leader during the mid-twentieth century proclaimed, "To 'listen' another's soul into a condition of disclosure and discovery may be almost the greatest service that any human being ever performs for another."⁴¹ Thus, when Jesus gave the command to love others, He placed a listening posture, a way of being fully present, as the bedrock of being a loving person.

Kare Anderson, Emmy-winning journalist for NBC and the *Wall Street Journal*, also contends that being present is the least, and sometimes the most, an individual can do for another: "Giving undivided attention is the first and most basic ingredient in any relationship. It is impossible to communicate, much less bond, with someone who can't or won't focus on you."⁴² Listening, first and foremost, is about attentiveness: being fully

³⁹ David Augsburger, *Caring Enough to Hear and Be Heard* (Ventura, CA: Regal, 1982), 12.

⁴⁰ Leighton Ford, *The Attentive Life: Discovering God's Presence in All Things* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2008), 43.

⁴¹ Douglas Steere, *Where Words Come From* (London: Quaker Home Service, 1955), 14.

⁴² Kare Anderson, "What Captures Your Attention Controls Your Life," *Harvard Business Review*, June 5, 2012, accessed May 18, 2017, <https://hbr.org/2012/06/what-captures-your-attention-c>.

present in the moment, focused, and responsive to the one who is speaking. Attentive listening, however, requires availability and humility and carries weighty implications for a ministry in a culture of haste and efficiency. For leaders, remaining present will prove difficult. Often leaders' minds, in innocuously and in unwitting ways, flutter prematurely from one conversation to another while still physically present to the person in front of them. Leonard Sweet confronts this lack of presence: "Without laser-like focusing energy we suffer from what sociologists call 'absent presence.' Physically present we may be, but our attention drifts and pinballs, seldom in the here and now."⁴³

Additionally, a faithful witness to the world must include an incarnational way of relating to people; offering an openhearted, welcoming, and grace-filled presence to others. In an intensely practical way, an appealing invitation to relationship with non-Christians comes through an appreciative, curious, non-judgmental, and hospitable posture of another. Perhaps the most important walking expression of Jesus in postmodernism is listening.

Significantly, German theologian Dietrich Bonhoeffer affirmed the essential and critical link of an integrated life: loving God remains impossible without love (listening presence) for others when he noted, "Many people are looking for an ear that will listen. They do not find it among Christians, because these Christians are talking where they should be listening. But he who can no longer listen to his brother will soon be no longer listening to God either; he will be doing nothing but prattle in the presence of God too."⁴⁴

⁴³ Leonard Sweet, *Nudge: Awakening Each Other to the God Who's Already There* (Colorado Springs, CO: David C. Cook, 2010), 105.

⁴⁴ Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Life Together: The Classic Exploration of Christian in Community* (New York: Harper and Row, 1954), 97-98.

Thus, loving, undivided attention may be one of the most sacred gifts one can offer another and becomes established practical expressions of a truly integrated spiritual maturity.

The Voice of Neuroscience

Loving God according to the commandment of Mark 12:29-31 includes the ability to love God with all of one's mind. More than simple mental ascent, one must take seriously the connection between loving God and the brain's ability to bring that about. In recent years, new research in neuroscience has emerged which substantially confirms how attentiveness, a function of the soul, comes to control thoughts, actions, and affections, indeed, one's very life. Curt Thompson corroborates this connection: "By paying attention to our mind/body experience, we are paying attention to what the Holy Spirit is telling us."⁴⁵

Neuroscientists agree that what one pays attention to actually can create new neural pathways and connections in the brain—the essence of neuroplasticity. In other words, attention shapes the brain. Thompson attests, "Ultimately we become what we pay attention to."⁴⁶ Paul J. Pastor makes the connection between neuroscience and the integrated life: "When we see the ways neuroscience and faith connect, amazing things begin to happen. We begin to add brain health to the list of ways that we can bring our

⁴⁵ Curt Thompson, *Anatomy of the Soul: Surprising Connections between Neuroscience and Spiritual Practices That Can Transform Your Life and Relationships* (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale, 2010), 59.

⁴⁶ Curt Thompson, *The Soul of Shame: Retelling Stories We Believe about Ourselves* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2015), 48.

whole person to love and serve God and his people.”⁴⁷ Similarly, Thompson makes the significant link between the mind and an integrated life, as included in the commandment in Mark 12 to a life of wholeness: “And what does it mean to have the mind of Christ? I propose that it includes having a fully integrated mind—what the Bible calls ‘an undivided heart’—which draws us closer to and makes us more like Jesus.”⁴⁸ In Romans 12:1, the Apostle Paul links spiritual transformation to an ongoing process that occurs in the mind, which he calls the renewing of the mind. Renewing one’s mind can lead to a way of living that results in the wholeness that God intends. Thus, more than a leadership skill to be harnessed for a leader’s own ministerial purposes, attentiveness defines a way of life that transforms all the dimensions of life. The brain assists us in loving God with all of our minds and creates greater integration in all the dimensions of living. However, neurologists have concluded that people are neurologically blind to that which they are not intentionally attentive. Thus, in a culture of distraction each day erodes our ability for deep thinking, sustained focus and awareness. Ultimately, this scarcity of attention draws us away from noticing all the ways God is bringing healing and wholeness in our lives.

A Crisis of Presence: Disintegration

As previously noted, the capacity for sustained, focused attention constitutes one of the most important spiritual capacities that allow people to flourish as wholehearted beings, yet the loss of attention marks contemporary culture. So often people are not fully present. Termed by author Richard Foster as “The Age of Distraction,” the rampant

⁴⁷ Paul J. Pastor, “Leadership and the Brain,” *Outreach Magazine*, September/October 2016, 57-61.

⁴⁸ Curt Thompson, *Anatomy*, 4.

cultural characterization of distraction proliferates recent book subtitles and forms the subject of countless online articles and human science studies.⁴⁹ Cumulative research suggests that the contemporary cultural environment suffers from a kind of collective attention deficit disorder in which we are rarely “all there.” Linda Stone, author and founder of the Attention Project, terms this condition as “continuous partial attention.”⁵⁰ Stone additionally notes certain practices heighten or dilute attentiveness: “Attention is the most powerful tool of the human spirit. We can enhance or augment our attention with practices like meditation and exercise, or diffuse it with technologies like email and Blackberries.”⁵¹

Recent studies of visual perception demonstrate how startlingly little people see when they are distracted or not paying attention, a phenomenon known as “inattentional blindness.”⁵² People’s inability to see objects directly in front of them compounds in a culture devoted to multitasking. They remain convinced they are effectively accomplishing multiple tasks at the same time, yet new neurological studies confirm multitasking as a myth. Human brains do not perform two tasks at the same time. Instead, multitasking actually employs fast-toggling, causing an overload of the brain’s processing capacity. Daniel Siegel notes the detrimental consequences of multi-tasking:

⁴⁹ Brandon O’Brien, “Rx for Spiritual A.D.D.: Interview with Richard Foster,” *Christianity Today*, Summer 2011, accessed November 19, 2016, <http://www.christianitytoday.com/le/2011/summer/rxspiritual.html?start=2>.

⁵⁰ Linda Stone, “Beyond Simple Multi-Tasking: Continuous Partial Attention,” *Linda Stone Blog*, November 30, 2009, accessed November 19, 2016, <https://lindastone.net/2009/11/30/beyond-simple-multi-tasking-continuous-partial-attention/>.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Siri Carpenter, “Sights Unseen,” *Monitor on Psychology* 32, no. 4 (April 2001), accessed December 10, 2015, <http://www.apa.org/monitor/apr01/blindness.aspx>.

“This is because multi-tasking denies us essential pauses in our mental space. We need this time to develop our inner resources and grow neural connections in the cortex humanitatis—the part of brain that makes us civilized creatures.”⁵³ Rampant multitasking leaves people so dazed they lose awareness of their surroundings. Significantly, people without awareness remain unaware they are unaware, and distraction produces a worsening condition of diminishing returns. In other words, distraction begets distraction. In his studies on inattentive blindness Arienne Mack reports, “I came away from our studies convinced that there’s no conscious perception without attention.”⁵⁴

In addressing the human ramifications of distraction, American psychologist and neuroscientist Russell Poldrack confirms, “There is a cost to the way that our society is changing. Humans are not built to work this way. We’re really built to focus.”⁵⁵ Arthur Boers notes how, ultimately, technology and information distract attention from those things which are essential: “One of the most significant challenges of contemporary technology is how it shapes our awareness, where it attracts our attention, and ways that it sometimes—perhaps even often—draws us away from the things we value most.”⁵⁶ Herbert Simon warned over forty years ago, “In an information-rich world, the wealth of information means a dearth of something else: a scarcity of whatever it is that

⁵³ John Naish, “Is Multi-Tasking Bad For Your Brain? Experts Reveal the Hidden Perils of Juggling Too Many Jobs,” *Daily Mail Blog*, last modified August 11, 2009, accessed December 10, 2015, <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/health/article-1205669/Is-multi-tasking-bad-brain-Experts-reveal-hidden-perils-juggling-jobs.html#ixzz3rc1zdygx>.

⁵⁴ Carpenter.

⁵⁵ Naish.

⁵⁶ Arthur Boers, *Living into Focus: Choosing What Matters in an Age of Distractions* (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos, 2012), 81.

information consumes. What information consumes is rather obvious: it consumes the attention of its recipients. Hence a wealth of information creates a poverty of attention.”⁵⁷ Wen Stephenson similarly cautions, “As we spend our days on Twitter and Facebook, we stand to lose not just our capacity for sustained concentration, but our capacity for contemplative thought—maybe even our complexly associative long-term memory, the very material of the self.”⁵⁸ At risk for all of this distraction is a person’s most central resource: focus, or the ability to pay attention. Maggie Jackson warns, “The waning of our powers of attention is occurring at such a rate and in so many areas of our life, that the erosion is reaching critical mass. We are on the verge of losing our capacity as a society for deep, sustained focus.”⁵⁹ Daniel Siegel affirms multitasking’s implications, not only for the brain but personally and relationally:

The busy lives people lead in our technologically driven culture that consumes our attention often produce a multitasking frenzy of activity that leaves people constantly doing, with no space to breathe and just be. The adaptations to such a way of life often leave us accustomed to high levels of stimulus-bound attention, fluttering from one activity to another, with little time for self reflection or interpersonal connection of the direct, face-to-face sort that the brain needs for proper development.⁶⁰

Consequently, without this breathing room for reflection or insightful repose, a distracted culture leaves people with an inability to think well and think clearly.

⁵⁷ Herbert Simon, “Designing Organizations for an Information-Rich World,” in *Computers, Communication, and the Public Interest*, ed. Martin Greenberger (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins Press, 1971), 40-41, accessed April 6, 2017, <http://digitalcollections.library.cmu.edu/awweb/awarchive?type=file&item=33748>.

⁵⁸ Wen Stephenson, “The Internet Ate My Brain,” *Boston Globe*, June 6, 2010, accessed October 16, 2016, http://archive.boston.com/ae/books/articles/2010/06/06/the_internet_ate_my_brain/.

⁵⁹ Maggie Jackson, *Distracted: The Erosion of Attention and the Coming Dark Age* (Amherst, NY: Prometheus, 2008), 14.

⁶⁰ Daniel J. Siegel, *The Mindful Brain* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2007), 4.

According to the *Oxford Unabridged Dictionary*, the word “distract” comes from the Latin *distahere*, literally meaning, “to draw apart.”⁶¹ With a culture of scattered minds and lives, one’s ability to remain fully present to anything increasingly diminishes. A life of distraction can result in a divided life—separated from one’s heart, from the present moment, and from the ability to reflect, consider, and make sense of the things most essential to experiencing wholeness.

The implications of distraction on the soul and experiential wholeness remain profound. Andrew Sullivan, in an article on his personal devastation with technology, concludes, “But this new epidemic of distraction is our civilization’s specific weakness. And its threat is not so much to our minds, even as they shape-shift under the pressure. The threat is to our souls. At this rate, if the noise does not relent, we might even forget we have any.”⁶² Blogger Joe Kraus summarizes the dire implications of this distraction: “Simply put, at the heart of creativity, insight, imagination and humaneness is an ability to pay attention to anything—our ideas, our line of thinking, each other. And that is what’s most threatened.”⁶³ A weakened ability to focus, to remain fully present in the moment, results in an inability to remain fully present to God’s creative movements in one’s life and the unfolding of His will, a difficulty in maintaining the mental attention needed to experience the intimacy of prayer, the inability to engage in reflective and

⁶¹ *Oxford Unabridged Dictionary*, s.v. “distract,” accessed August 16, 2017, <https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/distract>.

⁶² Andrew Sullivan, “I Used to Be a Human Being,” *New York Magazine*, September 19, 2016, accessed December 20, 2016, <http://nymag.com/selectall/2016/09/andrew-sullivan-technology-almost-killed-me.html>.

⁶³ Joe Kraus, “We’re Creating a Culture of Distraction,” *Joe Kraus Blog*, May 25, 2012, accessed December 14, 2015, <http://joekraus.com/were-creating-a-culture-of-distraction>.

proper self-awareness, and a diminished capacity to cultivate deep and lasting relationships. Ultimately, this poverty of attention creates a divided life; where we are strangers to God, separated from our truest selves and disconnected from redemptive relationships.

Distraction and disconnection seep into every part of life, and, unfortunately, ministry leaders remain susceptible to this crisis of attention as well. As author and psychologist Daniel Goleman explains, “The link between attention and excellence remains hidden most of the time. Yet attention is the basis of the most essential of leadership skills—emotional, organizational, and strategic intelligence. And never has it been under greater assault.”⁶⁴ This loss of attentiveness can result in the devastating loss of connectedness (presence) to God, one’s self, and others—everything that creates wholeness and brings life to our souls. Blogger and director at “A Different Drum” Nick Ross calls attention to the soul’s response to relentless distractions:

When the soul of a person (“that which is essential”) is left behind, when we forego a language and appreciation for soul—when we no longer know or are able to stop long enough to let our souls ‘catch up’—the consequences are devastating. The soul of a person, as every poet knows, needs to speak, to muse, to consider and reflect if it is to be well, if it is to act as it should, as a guide for what is most important in our lives. It’s not a matter of indulgence. It’s a matter of sanity.⁶⁵

This loss of integration results in a divided life, as author Chuck DeGroat affirms:

As we’ve discovered, life pulled in a thousand different directions breeds exhaustion, reactivity, and dividedness both within and without. Pulled to and fro, we lose connection to our hearts. We lose touch with the

⁶⁴ Daniel Goleman, “The Focused Leader,” *Harvard Business Review*, December 2013, accessed October 16, 2016, <https://hbr.org/2013/12/the-focused-leader>.

⁶⁵ Nick Ross, “In the Shadow of VUCA: A Call for Soul and Sanctuary in Leadership,” *Nick Ross LinkedIn Blog*, May 11, 2016, accessed December 18, 2016, <https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/shadow-vuca-call-soul-sanctuary-leadership-nick-ross>.

conversation moment. We react anxiously. We get stuck in patterns that suck the life out of us—and those around us.⁶⁶

A key essential for ministry leaders is the ability to lead from a place of health and wholeness. However, without rhythms that foster a way of being present and alive to those things that matter most, the soul dis-integrates. Such rhythms must include practices that call the soul to attentiveness and a way of being fully present—a weighty task in a runaway culture of distraction. The spiritual disciplines provide that needed rhythms that create space in our over-scheduled, harried lives to train our hearts to remain fully present and surrendered to the fresh, on-going work of the Holy Spirit.

Training in Attentive Presence: The Spiritual Disciplines

Cultivating a way of living wholeheartedly will require arranging one's life in intentional ways. Contemporary writers and theologians point to the essential nature and practices of the spiritual disciplines, highlighting awareness as the key component of those practices. Research indicates that the spiritual disciplines include all the ways a person pays attention, not only to a deeper life with God (spiritual) but every sphere of human dimension in which God is at work bringing about healing and wholeness. Barry Jones notes these essential dimensions: “They are intentional practices of sustained focus—on God, on his story, on our neighbors and on the condition of our own souls.”⁶⁷ Thus, immersion and habituation in the spiritual disciplines create the conditions in

⁶⁶ Chuck DeGroat, *Wholeheartedness: Busyness, Exhaustion, and Healing the Divided Self* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2016), 71.

⁶⁷ Barry D. Jones, *Dwell: Life with God for the World* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2014), 106.

which human formation takes place spiritually, relationally, and emotionally, i.e., holistic living. James K. A. Smith comments on the repetitive qualities of sustained practices: “We neglect to consider that our habits not only are an action performed, but they have an effect on how we are formed; what we are repeating, and how we are repeating is significant in our formation as humans.”⁶⁸ To a great extent the ability to receive the abundant life Christ offers hinges on the ability to pay attention to God’s transforming presence. Spiritual practices foster this kind of attentiveness to the ongoing, creative, redemptive work of God transforming all the dimensions of human life. Jones concludes, “The spiritual disciplines are, at their most basic, means by which we pay attention.”⁶⁹

These practices allow one to remain fully present not only to God and His redemptive purposes in the world, but to others and to the condition of his or her own soul. Philip Sheldrake emphasizes the far-reaching impact of the spiritual disciplines: “Every moment, every action is a potential context for movements of God’s spirit to be experienced, for resistance to be overcome, for discernment to take place, for life-directing choices to be made, for commitment to God to be deepened. In this way our outer, public activities may be transformed into a genuine spiritual experience.”⁷⁰

Rather than techniques for achieving or managing spiritual vitality, spiritual practices position one in a place of attentive responsiveness to God’s initiating grace already at work. Leslie T. Hardin explains this perspective: “Practicing spiritual

⁶⁸ James K. A. Smith, *Imagining the Kingdom: How Worship Works* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2013), 183.

⁶⁹ Jones, 106.

⁷⁰ Philip E. Sheldrake, “Christian Spirituality as a Way of Living Publically: A Dialectic of the Mystical and Prophetic,” *Spiritus* 3, no. 1 (2003): 33.

discipline places the believer in a receptive posture to receive fresh ‘grace’ from the Spirit.”⁷¹ Responding and surrendering to this work of grace creates the kind of person who embodies the goodness and character of God. Theologian and ethicist Stanley Hauerwas describes the transformative quality of the spiritual practices: “Learning to follow Jesus entails engaging in spiritual practices in order to partake in God’s story and develop godly virtues that exemplify the ethics of the kingdom.”⁷² Thus, the spiritual disciplines include a partnership with the Holy Spirit that allows one to stay fully engaged in the fresh work of the Spirit. James K. A. Smith, highlighting this fresh work of the Holy Spirit as practiced in the Pentecostal tradition, writes, “Several aspects of the Pentecostal worldview are worth noting beginning with the radical openness to God and, in particular, God doing something different or new. This engenders an emphasis on the continued, dynamic presence, activity, and ministry of the Spirit.”⁷³ Keith Anderson summarizes the attentiveness quality of the spiritual practices: “The subject is God; the focus is on God’s already present action in our lives. We listen, or we simply show up; we pay attention.”⁷⁴ In this way, spiritual practices comprise all the ways in which one participates and keeps in the Holy Spirit’s movement in one’s life (Gal. 5:25).

⁷¹ Leslie T. Hardin, “Is a Pauline Spirituality Still Viable?” *Journal of Spiritual Formation and Soul Care* 8, no. 2 (Fall 2015): 135.

⁷² Stanley Hauerwas, *A Community of Character: Toward a Constructive Social Ethics* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1981), 40.

⁷³ James K. A. Smith, “Thinking in Tongues,” *First Things First: Journal of Religion and Public Life* (April 2008), accessed October 18, 2016, <https://www.firstthings.com/article/2008/04/003-thinking-in-tongues>.

⁷⁴ Keith Anderson, *A Spirituality of Listening: Living What We Hear* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2016), 50.

To live with such a way of being present and a ready-responsiveness to a fresh movement choreographed by the Spirit remains foundational to biblical leadership. Such leadership allows one to live in such a way as to draw others into this way of life and a way of being in the world with God. Pastor and author Eugene Peterson heartily summarizes the primacy of attentiveness in the role of leaders: “The pastor’s primary responsibility is to help people maintain their attentiveness to Jesus.”⁷⁵

The Apostle Paul, in a similar manner, daily practiced such disciplines in a way that allowed him to throw open his life to the transforming grace and work of God. Recognizing the impact of a daily praxis, Hardin explains, “Paul engaged in regular spiritual practices which fostered the power of the Spirit. That power certainly led to an *experience* of the Spirit of the risen Jesus, but was forged in these everyday practices (which some call disciplines) that allowed the Spirit to have free expression in Paul’s life and ministry.”⁷⁶

With practiced attentiveness, the spiritual disciplines cultivate the desire and ability to love God, i.e., the qualities of a devoted heart, as commanded by Jesus in Mark 12. James K. A. Smith proposes a devoted heart is learned: “Learning to love (God) takes practice.”⁷⁷ What one loves can be cultivated through intentional practices. With so many things vying for one’s attention, the strength of the spiritual practices remains critical to fostering love for God with the entirety of one’s soul. Smith expounds,

⁷⁵ Eugene Peterson, *Working the Angles: The Shape of Pastoral Integrity* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1987), 2.

⁷⁶ Hardin, 137.

⁷⁷ James K. A. Smith, *You Are What You Love*, 25.

It's crucial for us to recognize that our ultimate loves, longings, desires, and cravings are learned. And because love is a habit, our hearts are calibrated through imitating examples and being immersed in practices that, over time, index our hearts to a certain end. We learn to love, then, not primarily through acquiring knowledge about what we should love but rather through practices that form the habits of *how* we love.⁷⁸

In other words, no matter what one claims to believe about God, one will still be devoted to whatever he or she gives attention to. What one focuses on forms one's love. In this way, the spiritual practices cultivate practices of the heart's devotion. As Michael Frost acknowledges, "Our liturgical life and our habits shape and reorder our desires."⁷⁹

Another significant strength of the spiritual practices includes the actual bodily responses and embodied actions they require as essential for transformation. Even precisely exegeted information must be embodied in some way in order to produce transformation. In other words, knowledge must become a lived experience. John Ortberg explains, "The reason that spiritual disciplines are an important part of change is that they honor the physical nature of human life. Information alone doesn't override bad habits. God uses relationships, experiences, and practices to shape and reshape the character of our lives that gets embedded at the most physical level."⁸⁰ Thus, rather than allowing engagement with God to reside mostly as an intellectual pursuit, the spiritual practices offer a more holistic, bodily, incarnational approach to the biblical vision of humanity.

⁷⁸ Ibid., 21.

⁷⁹ Frost, 105.

⁸⁰ John Ortberg, "Can Neuroscience Help Us Disciple Anyone?" *Leadership Journal* (Summer 2014): 22.

Neuroscience and the Spiritual Practices

New studies in neuroscience reveal a remarkable connection between neuroscience and the spiritual practices in the transformation process. Rob Moll highlights this connection:

Through prayer, worship and study, as God rewires our brains and renews our minds, he makes us into new creatures. We can allow God to work his change in our lives by intentionally pursuing encounters with him. Our brains are made to change and to learn based on our experiences and our own efforts. Traditional spiritual practices seem to be rooted in the fact that modern science is only now discovering about how brains change. When we give focused attention and regular practice, whether through prayer, study, meditation, journaling or other means of attending to the presence of God, we can experience God in profound ways that lead to permanent changes in our lives.⁸¹

Thus, intentional spiritual practices may enhance and facilitate neuroplasticity.

Thompson explains, “In short, the disciplines enable us to pay attention to our minds in order to pay attention to the Spirit who is speaking to us through that very medium.”⁸²

Craig Keener expounds on the focused and repetitive nature and formative qualities of spiritual practices: “In such cases, walking by the Spirit rather than by the flesh requires a continuing, deliberate rethinking and retuning, with many determined decisions to believe God’s truth about our identity, until our brain is rewired enough that the new way becomes the more prevalent way.”⁸³

Living attentively, i.e., fully present, in a distracted world is no small thing. In the pace and muchness of daily life, it remains easy to blow past the significance of quiet

⁸¹ Rob Moll, *What Your Body Knows about God: How We Are Designed to Connect, Serve and Thrive* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2014), 170.

⁸² Curt Thompson, *Anatomy*, 180.

⁸³ Craig S. Keener, *The Mind of the Spirit: Paul’s Approach to Transformed Thinking* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2016), 263.

awareness to those things which will otherwise remain hidden. The remainder of this chapter offers concrete practices in attentiveness that allow one to remain fully present to God and all the ways He brings about personal wholeness, in living fully present with others, and in living fully present to self and the condition of one's own soul.

Fully Present to God: Practices of Attention

Throughout the life of the Church, Christians have engaged in spiritual practices to nurture their relationship with God. These habits have included a cultivated and specific focus on the importance of attentiveness to all the things that formed and sustained them as a people of God. For these early Christians, loving God wholeheartedly meant adjusting one's gaze. Sweet summarizes, "Paying attention is the highest form of opening to life and to God."⁸⁴ Over the centuries, Christians employed specific "practices of attention" as the means by which one trained his or her heart to stay connected to Christ's indwelling presence. The following practices of attentiveness influence one's life in relationship to God.

Silence and Solitude

Solitude allows undivided attention on God and creates a place of stillness where one can know God's love on a deep, experiential level. Solitude fosters a sense of God's movement in one's life. As Peterson explains, "We stop, whether by choice or through circumstance, so that we can be alert and attentive and receptive to what God is doing in and for us, in and for others, on the way. We wait for our souls to catch up with our

⁸⁴ Sweet, 54.

bodies.”⁸⁵ As well, entering into solitude allows one to stay connected to one’s own body and its well-being, to the inner working of the mind, and to the longings of the soul that may otherwise go unnoticed in the hurriedness of the day. Barton notes the integrative nature of solitude: “The discipline of solitude can be a place to rest our weary selves in God—body, mind and soul.”⁸⁶

Similarly, silence deepens the experience of solitude because in silence one chooses to unplug, not only from the constant stimulation of life in the company of others but also from one’s own addiction to noise, words, and activity. This kind of free space becomes the birthplace of creativity, faith, and a place to find grace. With the constant demands of time and energy of ministry life and a relentless pressure to “succeed,” for many ministry leaders such a seemingly nonproductive “activity” will prove difficult to practice. These practices of solitude and silence, however, allow ministry leaders to remain faithful to their own spiritual journey by cultivating an intentional and uninterrupted awareness of and relationship with God.

Prayer

More than convincing God to cooperate with one’s plans, contemplative prayer fosters attentiveness and a present participation in what God has already initiated. Sweet argues, “Prayer is not getting God to pay attention, but learning to pay attention ourselves

⁸⁵ Eugene Peterson, *The Jesus Way: A Conversation on the Ways That Jesus is the Way* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2007), 97.

⁸⁶ Ruth Haley Barton, “Are You Dangerously Tired?” *Christianity Today*, July 2007, accessed November 30, 2016, <http://www.christianitytoday.com/pastors/2007/july-online-only/le-040408a.html>.

to what God is doing.”⁸⁷ Prayer emerges as an orientation of the soul toward God and His Kingdom rather than just finding the right words to say. Curt Thompson explains that this kind of contemplative approach to prayer “requires us to be aware of God’s activity in everything. This, in turn, makes us more likely to sense his movement as he guides, directs, and comforts us.”⁸⁸ Thus, prayer, instead of functioning as a technique or a formula, issues from a stance, a way of being present. Rather than regarded as a set time and place, or even words (although it is that), prayer embraces the habit of turning one’s heart toward God throughout one’s day. Prayer encompasses all the ways and moments one communes with and remains present to God.

Reading Scripture Transformationally

To read Scripture in a transformational way requires this same attentive posture of presence and receptivity. To truly “hear” will require one to put aside his or her agenda and a need to control the text. Reading Scripture transformationally necessitates a willingness to “listen” to the text with a sense of wonder, vulnerability, and curiosity. This includes time to “sit” with the text: reading, re-reading, pondering, and reflecting until slowly but surely one meets God in the text. Author Marjorie Thompson articulates this receptive stance:

What makes our reading spiritual has as much to do with the intention, attitude, and manner we bring to the words as it does with the nature and content of those words. Spiritual reading is reflective and prayerful. It is concerned not with speed or volume but with depth and receptivity. That is because the purpose of spiritual

⁸⁷ Sweet, 52.

⁸⁸ Curt Thompson, *Anatomy*, 176.

reading is to open ourselves to how God may be speaking to us in and through any particular text.⁸⁹

Reading in this way allows the words of Colossians 3:16, “Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly,” to emerge as a reality in one’s life. Joel Green expounds on this submissive posture of the reader: “Emphasis falls on our disposition toward “standing under” (or toward “standing over”) the Scriptures. Center stage belongs to those practices of engaging with Scripture that embody the reader’s commitment to live faithfully (or not) before the God to whom the Scriptures witness.”⁹⁰ Reading the Scriptures adequately and accurately necessitates, at the same time, living them as Peterson notes, “. . . receiving the words in such a way that they become interior to our lives, the rhythms and images becoming practices of prayer, acts of obedience, and ways of love.”⁹¹ Through these kinds of spiritual practices, in incrementally and virtually immeasurable ways, ministry leaders can, on a continual basis, stay attentive and available to the ongoing work and presence of God in their life and ministry.

Sabbath

Practicing Sabbath promotes setting aside a period of time in which one chooses to live and experience a disengagement and different rhythm in order to delight in God. Barbara Brown Taylor explains, “Practicing it over and over again they become accomplished at saying no, which is how they gradually become able to resist the

⁸⁹ Marjorie J. Thompson, *Soul Feast: An Invitation to the Christian Spiritual Life*, rev. ed. (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2005), 18.

⁹⁰ Joel Green, *Seized By Truth: Reading the Bible as Scripture* (Nashville: Abingdon, 2007), 18.

⁹¹ Eugene Peterson, *Eat This Book: A Conversation in the Art of Spiritual Reading* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2009), 10.

culture's killing rhythms of drivenness and depletion, compulsion and collapse.”⁹² Author Mark Buchannan articulates the essence of Sabbath practice: “Sabbath is both a day and an attitude to nurture such stillness.”⁹³

For leaders to turn away from their normal pace, patterns, and responsibilities to attend to God in a particular way is no small thing. Yet, the soul, mind, and body were never created for unceasing activity, and to ignore such a boundary can leave one emotionally, physically, and spiritually depleted. Tragically, a leader may not recognize this desperate state as they step into a place of leadership. Busy ministry leaders need a rhythm of slowing. Practicing Sabbath enables leaders to foster an ability to bring something more real, more sacred, than all of their striving to those they serve and offers a flourishing beyond what one produces on his or her own.

Fully Present to Self: Practices of Attentiveness

Self-Examination

The practice of self-examination remains one of the most misunderstood and under-used spiritual practices, yet being present to self percolates to the top of essential components of leadership. Leading in a distracted culture (and leading as distracted individuals) requires practices which allow enough space and reflection for ministry leaders to ask probing questions such as, “How is my life unfolding? Is this how I want to

⁹² Barbara Brown Taylor, *An Altar in the World: A Geography of Faith* (New York: HarperCollins, 2009), 134.

⁹³ Mark Buchanan, *The Rest of God: Restoring Your Soul by Restoring Sabbath* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2006), 3.

live?” Ultimately, self-knowledge is at the heart of the spiritual journey and faithful leadership.

Christians for centuries engaged in the Prayer of Examen as a means of increased awareness of God’s activity, as well as a heightened self-awareness before God in the events of daily life. Author Tad Dunne notes that the Prayer of Examen, often referred to as “the practice of noticing,”⁹⁴ involves reviewing one’s day, in the presence of God, to observe and discern the motives and inner realities that may go otherwise unnoticed. It means pausing long enough, as Scottish theologian John Baillie points out, to “ponder the pattern my life is weaving.”⁹⁵

Similarly, author Morris Dirks articulates the importance of Examen: “This principle of self-awareness and the practice of Examen are critical to the health of the Christian leader.”⁹⁶ With the fast pace of ministry, Examen creates space for reflection to cultivate a sense of gratitude and joy in recognition of the graces, large and seemingly insignificant, that have marked one’s day. Without such a reflective practice, leaders may remain submerged in the daily trappings of ministry. In short, the Prayer of Examen is a discipline to stay awake to one’s life. James K. A. Smith explains, “Examen is a practice for paying attention to your life: reflect on God’s presence; review your day in a spirit of gratitude; become aware of your emotions before God; pray over one feature of your day;

⁹⁴ Tad Dunne, *Spiritual Mentoring: Guiding People through Spiritual Exercises to Life Decision* (New York: HarperCollins, 1991), 84.

⁹⁵ John Baillie, *A Diary of Private Prayer* (New York: Fireside, 1949), 27.

⁹⁶ Morris Dirks, *Forming the Leader’s Soul: An Invitation to Spiritual Direction* (Portland, OR: Soul Formation, 2013), 119.

and then intentionally look forward to tomorrow.”⁹⁷

Self-Empathy

Self-empathy is noticing what is going on in one’s life with curiosity and compassion rather than judgment. While self-knowledge is important, self-empathy involves learning to love one’s self regardless of what self-examination brings to light. Self-examination helps one stay more finely attuned to what is really going on in one’s life spiritually and emotionally, and self-empathy allows one to accept the invitations to change without guilt or self-condemnation.

Instead of pushing through or soldiering on disregarding needed rest or self-care, self-empathy allows a leader self-permission to say “No.” Self-empathy allows a leader to not be perfect, to fail, to be human, to lean into the process of becoming and embracing their life as it is. Self-empathy serves as a reminder that leaders are, after all, only human and helps leaders to stay in touch with the real human condition shared by all.

Confession

Ministry leaders enter ministry as broken people and remain susceptible to the unresolved and undetected wounds that formed them and now drive them. Leaders, in many cases, remain tethered to feelings of inferiority, shame, and a deep sense of worthlessness. Though some live consciously aware of the brokenness that still lies within them, much remains unknown beyond a conscious level. In many instances, and for many reasons, leaders create a different self they want people to see, yet in vulnerable moments these leaders remain confronted with the truth of their condition.

⁹⁷ James K. A. Smith, *You Are What You Love*, 52.

Ultimately, a proper self-awareness leads to a needed place of confession, lament, and surrendered reliance on God. In confession, one hands over one's image management, insecurities, need for control, and self-obsession and presents his or her broken self to God. Confession provides a way of surrendering, usurping any tendency to change by the power of self, and forges a pathway to healing.

Prayer of Lament

The distraction, intensity, and frantic pace of ministry life rarely allow the time needed for leaders to grieve the losses, hurts, and wounds of life. Consequently, leaders flitter from one life-impacting event to another without space to consciously absorb the weightiness of these events. The little-recognized and little-practiced prayer of lament forms the hard practice of putting words to those parts of one's life when words fail. Although difficult, prayers of lament often emerge as one's deepest and truest prayers. These prayers allow one to come to God boldly and directly, with defenses and self-management programs stripped away, and to speak honestly and from the depth of one's being. In so doing, ministry leaders are drawn closer and deeper to God, cracking open a door for resurrection to enter in.

In addition, without intentionally practicing lament, leaders may cling to the false pretenses that all remains well. Lament fosters a way of living vulnerably, having the willingness to feel everything, even when one feels betrayed, powerless, and hopeless. Lament invites leaders to stay open and allows for the capacity to encompass the entire range of one's human experience without hardening or closing off one's self. Living vulnerably helps one stay alive and attentive to one's soul.

Fully Present to Others: Practices of Attentiveness

Learning to Listen

Attentive listening requires time and careful attention, scarce commodities in a culture of haste and distraction. Good listening takes skill and practice. Deep, transformative listening embodies a quality of attentive listening, focus, and responsiveness to another or self. Rather than offering quick judgments or fast advice, leaders must become experts in the skills and techniques of artful listening. This will require leaders to put aside the need to fix preconceived opinions, spending time formulating their own response, and most importantly, surrendering the need to be right. Alice Fryling wisely instructs, “And I need to let go of the need to appear wise, good, or even spiritual.”⁹⁸ It will require patience, curiosity, asking perceptive and open-ended questions, and taking seriously the life-giving power listening offers to others. Again, Bonhoeffer notes, “This is the one service they have to render. They forget that listening can be a greater service than speaking.”⁹⁹

Listening in Community

The wholehearted/integrated life remains, ultimately, a shared journey. Companionship, notes Nouwen, is as essential to the formation of integrated leading and living: “Embarking solo on this journey can also be hazardous to the health of one’s soul. A communal journey is not merely an option; this is the way it should be. The supportive companionship of a friend and a guide is never a luxury; it is absolutely essential for the

⁹⁸ Alice Fryling, *The Art of Spiritual Listening: Responding to God’s Voice amid the Noise of Life* (Colorado Springs, CO: Waterbrook, 2003), 20.

⁹⁹ Bonhoeffer, 97.

life of the soul.”¹⁰⁰ DeGroat reveals, “In becoming aware and telling our stories in the context of redemptive relationships, we experience a longed-for sense of wholeness, integration, and overall health in our living and relating.”¹⁰¹ Trusted friendships allow space to reflect and to make sense of one’s story. Others offer perspective and insights that might go undetected otherwise and become moments of awareness, grace, and transformation. Best-selling author Lissa Rankin affirms, “Telling your story—while being witnessed with loving attention by others who care—may be the most powerful medicine on earth.”¹⁰² Similarly, offering the neuroscience perspective of the impact of listening communities, Curt Thompson suggests, “There is no such thing as an individual brain. Transformation requires a collaborative interaction, with one person emphatically listening and responding to the other so that the speaker has the experience, perhaps for the first time, of feeling felt by another.”¹⁰³

The desire to connect and feel valued remains a universal experience. Yet, whether intentionally or inadvertently, leaders often function as “lone rangers.” Author Fred Lehr confirms this trend: “One survey reposted that as high as seventy percent of ministry leaders do not have someone they consider a close friend.”¹⁰⁴ Cultivating

¹⁰⁰ Hernandez, 20.

¹⁰¹ DeGroat, 151.

¹⁰² Lissa Rankin, “The Healing Power of Telling Your Story,” *Psychology Today*, November 27, 2012, accessed December 18, 2016, <https://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/owning-pink/201211/the-healing-power-telling-your-story>.

¹⁰³ Curt Thompson, *Anatomy*, 137.

¹⁰⁴ Fred Lehr, *Clergy Burnout: Recovering from the 70-Hour Week ... and Other Self-Defeating Practices* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2006), 4.

friendships will require ministry leaders to act intentionally in allowing people to come alongside of them.

Inherently powerful in every relationship is one's own transformation, as pastor and author Keith Matthews indicates, "Transformation into Christlikeness will profoundly happen only when I engage others face to face with honesty an invitation to speak into my life and vice versa."¹⁰⁵ Often in these close friendships one finds another equally fraught with feelings of inadequacy and incompetence. Hanging out with others who fail forges not only deep connectedness but embraces a shared humanity of brokenness and imperfection. Being seen, heard, and understood may be the greatest gift toward wholeness one can offer another. Author Adam McHugh concludes that listening remains critical: "Being listened to is one of the great assurances in this universe that we are not alone."¹⁰⁶

Flourishing in leadership constitutes entering into a trusted relationship or friendship enacted through honesty, dialogue, and disclosure, creating a protected and safe place. In this safe place one can speak of hopes, longings, dreams, and failures. Ministry leaders need another who speaks life over the leader, sees and describes where God is at work, and calls out what makes that leader come alive. In other words, community is redemptive and relationships matter, and ministry leaders are no exception to this truth. Integrating neuroscience into this conclusion, Curt Thompson sums, "I

¹⁰⁵ Keith J. Matthews, "Alone Together: An Epidemic in the Church," *Conversations Journal* 13, no. 1 (Spring/Summer 2015): 55.

¹⁰⁶ Adam McHugh, *The Listening Life, Embracing Attentiveness in a World of Distraction* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2015), 26.

believe our lives will be abundant, joyful, and peaceful only to the degree that we are engaged, known, and understood by one another.”¹⁰⁷

Forgiveness

Because of the relational component, ministry inherently contains potential for personal hurt and woundedness. Pain resulting from harsh words or inconsiderate, even abusive, behavior can easily morph into responses of self-protection, isolation, or distraction from the pain. As a result, leaders may be tempted to live dutiful, guarded, and relationally cautious, with a numbness in their soul. Ultimately and tragically, leaders then cut themselves off from the life-giving flow of God’s gracious work in their lives and their ability to live wholly “all there.”

The process and ongoing practice of forgiveness remains difficult. Sermons on forgiveness are easier than the actual experience of forgiveness and often feel completely different than one imagines it to be. Daily leaders are confronted with the choice of surrendering their pain or retaining it for forgiveness to complete its work. Forgiveness, then, becomes essential to integrated wholeness and a thoughtful expression to others.

Hospitable Listening

Practicing hospitable listening notably characterizes welcoming others different than one’s social, economic, religious, or racial reality into one’s life. Hospitable listening invites strangers, without coercion to change, into friendship, acceptance, and care and offers the freedom for that person to be changed by grace. Nouwen describes such Christian hospitality as “primarily the creation of a free space where the stranger can

¹⁰⁷ Curt Thompson, *Anatomy*, xvii.

enter and become a friend.”¹⁰⁸ Nouwen continues, “Hospitality is not meant to change people, but rather to offer them a space where change can take place.”¹⁰⁹ Parker Palmer notes the power of hospitable listening as a form of acceptance and placing value on another person, “Here’s the deal. The human soul doesn’t want to be advised or fixed or saved. It simply wants to be witnessed—to be seen, heard and companioned exactly as it is.”¹¹⁰ Of course, this kind of listening necessitates the qualities of being wholly present, using the emphatic arts such as using eye contact, focused attention, and inquisitive, risk-taking, and spontaneous conversation.

Notably, hospitable listening plays a significant role in living generously and fully present to those outside of faith in Christ. In an intensely practical way, an appealing invitation to relationship to non-Christians comes through a listening posture. Rather than a top-down approach which emulates an air of superiority, control, and manipulation, hospitable listening creates an open stance toward others; a receptivity to who they are and a seeking to understand without ulterior motives. McHugh notes,

Listening offers others freedom from judgment creating space for transformation to take place. Listening offers the sacred gift of letting others be themselves. We let them have their own thoughts, feel their own feelings and believe their own beliefs without attacking them or running their words through our own critical filters. We aim to understand them on their terms, not ours.¹¹¹

¹⁰⁸ Henri Nouwen, *Reaching Out: The Three Movements of the Spiritual Life* (New York: Doubleday, 1986), 71.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

¹¹⁰ Parker Palmer, “The Gift of Presence, The Peril of Advice,” *On Being Blog*, April 27, 2016, accessed April 28, 2017, <https://onbeing.org/blog/the-gift-of-presence-the-perils-of-advice/>.

¹¹¹ McHugh, 150.

Understanding others on their terms requires being less absorbed with our agenda and being awakened to God's work of grace in their lives. Similarly, Michael Frost, a leading voice of the missional church movement, expresses, "The church must adopt a posture of active listening, of attentiveness to the disenchantment of our neighbors, in order to know how to offer something more than the deathly, heartless, hedonistic world of secularism."¹¹² Ultimately, a faithful witness to the world rightly includes a willingness to remain fully and personally present, without the need to fix or "save" the another person, allowing that person to be seen, heard, and valued just as they are. This kind of hospitable listening enters in to the lives of others free from one's judgment and refuses to diminish the image-bearing humanity of another. Leaders can extend the gift of listening to those outside of faith, their thoughtful and sincere presence becoming life-giving to the recipients of that gift.

Conclusion

Jesus's admonishment in Mark 12 is a call to a holistic endeavor and unified goal to be fully present to the all the dimensions that create human flourishing, i.e., God, self, and others. To cultivate one is to cultivate the others. One dimension without the other results in a diminished, dis-integrated soul.

Similarly, the weight of Christian history, past and present, supports this compelling call throughout Scripture to hear or "be present" as the foundation for human flourishing, transformation, and vitality. In the same way, research in neuroscience has

¹¹² Frost, 168.

emerged which substantially confirms how attentiveness controls thoughts, actions, and affections, indeed, one's very life.

In a culture full of scattered minds and lives, cultivating a way of living fully present imposes a weighty task and will require arranging one's life in intentional ways. The spiritual disciplines offer the antidote for such dis-integrated living. Theologians, pastors, and neuroscientists alike declare that our transformation as humans comes through ongoing, regular practices and activities that Ultimately, the result of living fully present, through the faithful embodied practices of spiritual disciplines, transforms all of the human dimensions Jesus describes in Mark 12. Thus, training in remaining fully present to these dimensions—God, others, and self—emerges as central to human flourishing and becoming a more loving, more whole, leader and individual.

CHAPTER 4: DESCRIPTION OF FIELD PROJECT

Introduction

This chapter provides details and procedures concerning the development and implementation of the three “The Attentive Leader” retreats. The four key aspects of the field project addressed in this chapter are (1) the preparation of the project, (2) the execution of the project, (3) the results of the project, and (4) reflections on the project’s contribution to ministry.

The substance of this project, reflected in chapters 2 and 3 and rooted in Mark 12:28-31 (the first and second greatest commandments), embraces three integrated concepts. First, attentive listening embodies being fully present and appropriately responsive to another (or one’s self). Second, Jesus offers an invitation to a holistic (abundant) life, outlined in the two greatest commandments, by remaining fully present and responsive to God’s ongoing, creative, and redemptive activity in one’s life, by living fully present to self and the condition of one’s own soul, and by living fully present and responsive to others. Third, attentiveness is cultivated through intentional, regular practices and activities and includes all the ways a person pays attention, not only to a deeper life with God but every sphere of human dimension Jesus describes in Mark 12. Ultimately, the result of ongoing and intentional training which fosters a way of being present in these dimensions—God, self, and others—percolates to the top of essential components of personal wholeness, life-giving leadership, and effective ministry.

This project implemented three one-day retreats for ministry leaders over a three-month period (one per month). The design of the retreats revolved around each of the three spheres of human dimension—God, self, and others—which became the focus of each of the three retreats. Thus, retreat #1 was titled, “The Attentive Leader: Living and Leading Fully Present to God.” The subsequent retreats followed the same template, replacing “God” with “Self” and “Others.”

The goal of the Attentive Leader retreats was three-fold: (1) to inspire leaders to understand the essentialness of attentive presence needed for integrated wholeness, (2) that leaders would deliberately practice a way of living and leading from a place of attentiveness to God’s movement and all the ways He brings about wholeness, which becomes the foundation for human flourishing, transformation, and vitality, and (3) that long after the retreats, leaders would continue to form practices that allowed them to cultivate and radically arrange their lives around spiritual practices which would, in turn, create a robust and maturing reality of this integrated life which would overflow into ministry.

Scheduled a month apart, each one-day retreat ran from 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m., with a forty-five-minute lunch. Participants were required to commit to attend all three retreats. The retreats were held at a central location of the state in Issaquah, Washington on February 22, March 22, and May 3, 2017. Each retreat included participatory learning techniques such as interactive teaching, group activities, facilitation of honest dialogue and self-disclosure in a safe environment, and post-retreat assigned spiritual disciplines. This intentional design allowed the participants to take part in an active and experiential posture of learning.

Preparation of the Project

Preparation for this project took place in three ways: (1) selecting ministry leaders, (2) securing a location, and (3) creating the pretest, posttest, and consent form.

Selecting Ministry Leaders

My first task was to create a list of ministry leaders to invite to the three retreats. I did not have a specific leadership requirement other than being active in ministry, nor did I impose any particular personal trait, perspective, age, marital status, or ministry title that dictated who I invited. Through previous similar experiences of leading women in ministry through a nine-month spiritual formation process, I understood the need for ongoing spiritual health in the midst of active ministry. I came to realize most of these female leaders were ministering from a place of disconnect, discouragement, and disillusionment. Ministry has taken on a form of bondage and oppression. Thus, I assumed all ministers, male and female, would benefit from these retreats, no matter their title, position, or spiritual health. I thoughtfully and prayerfully sought to discern the leading of the Holy Spirit in my selections. Many, but not all, were ministry associates in which I already had some level of relationship. Everyone would need to agree to attend all three consecutive retreats.

In October 2016, I compiled my list of ministry leaders, and in November 2016 I emailed prospective participants. I sent email invitations to thirty-six ministry couples and two single leaders.¹ Of the thirty-eight invitations, thirteen did not respond, fifteen ministry couples replied, “No,” and ten couples replied, “Yes.” These twenty people gave

¹ See Appendix A, “Invitation Letter to Attend Retreats.”

me enough statistical data for sufficient research for this project. For those who replied affirmatively, I immediately sent a follow-up informational email. A week before each retreat, I sent an email with some final details.

Securing a Location

My second task was to secure a location. Participants would come from across Washington State, so I tried to secure a centralized location along a major interstate. I found and rented a beautiful, detached outbuilding from Eastridge Church in Issaquah, Washington. The privacy and surrounding gardens provided a perfect retreat setting.

Creating the Pretest, Posttest, and Consent Form

My next task was to create a pretest and posttest (they were the same) and consent form. Rather than gauge outward behavior (which may or may not be an accurate measure of an inward reality), I wanted the pretest to encourage participants to assess and examine their inner attitudes and judgments. I wanted to research less quantitative information (e.g., “I have devotions every morning”) and unwrap more qualitative perceptions (e.g., “It is difficult to invest in my own spiritual development”). I included words such as significant, confidence, inadequacy, personal experience, disappointments, etc., so as to avoid mechanical feedback of behavior and to allow participants to reveal a more underlying awareness about themselves.

Dr. Jeffery Fulks, director of Adult and Graduate Studies at Evangel University, helped me better articulate some of these questions, and I developed a survey with a five-point Likert Scale ranging from “Agree Strongly” to “Disagree Strongly.” Besides the general ministry questions, the questions were segregated into the three concentrated themes of “Attentiveness to God,” “Attentiveness to Self,” and “Attentiveness to

Others.”² During this same time frame, I created the consent form with help from the AGTS D.Min. Project Coordinator, Dr. Lois Olena.³

Execution of the Project

The execution of the project included (1) setting the tone, (2) creating a safe environment by setting ground rules, and (3) leading the retreats.

The first retreat was held Wednesday, February 22, 2017, at the Issaquah location. Of the twenty registered participants, eight were lead pastors (all male), eight were other credentialed leaders (one male, seven female), and four were non-credentialed leaders (one male, three female), all of whom served in full-time ministry. Nineteen of the twenty attended the first retreat. After a brief welcome I handed out the consent form and then the pretest. I then had each participant introduce themselves and share why they said “Yes” to being part of the Attentive Leader retreats. To my surprise, all but one couple indicated it was their personal relationship with me and my credibility as a leader that formed their decision. Understandably, when asked to be part of something new and unknown (and a weighty investment of time and resources), most people rely on what they already know to be true and/or familiar.

Structure of the Retreats

I then introduced two key components necessary for each participant to receive the fullest impact from the retreats: (1) setting the tone and (2) creating a safe environment.

² See Appendix B, “Posttest and Pretest.”

³ See Appendix C, “Consent Form.”

Setting the Tone

I asked the leaders (1) to put aside their preconceived ideas of what the spiritual life looks like, acknowledging they have not yet experienced all that God has for them; (2) to be willing and open to what the Holy Spirit wants to do in their lives through this retreat; (3) to take off their preacher “hats” and resist the urge to say to themselves, “Oh, I’ve preached about that ten times. I know what that is about”; and (4) to fully engage in the spiritual practices. Lasting transformation happens through participation rather than passively gaining more information. The retreats focused more on practice than on theory. Those who fully engaged in the spiritual practices would likely experience the most transformation.

Creating a Safe Environment

I explained the following ground rules to ensure a safe and non-judgmental environment for sharing:

1. Honesty. “You do not have to share in dialogue and discussion, but I would like you to share as honestly and vulnerably as you can. I am not looking for ‘right answers.’ The right answer is the honest answer.”

2. Listening. “We will honor each other’s story and the ongoing work of grace in their lives. When someone shares, you should to be fully present to that person’s story, however it unfolds, believing that person is not a ‘problem to be solved.’ You are not to jump in with a Scripture verse, a Christian platitude, a correction, or a story about how you handled a similar situation. You are to listen and be attentive and encouraging.”

3. Confidentiality. “This is a safe place where what is shared here will not be shared outside the retreat setting.”

Leading the Retreats

Each couple received a notebook to hold handouts.⁴ The retreats involved various methods of teaching and coaching practices: PowerPoint, white board charting, participatory learning techniques such as question and answer opportunities as well as engaging in group spiritual practices, and handouts on the spiritual practices which were to be used as a resource for the following month.

After each retreat, participants were challenged to engage in at least one of the spiritual disciplines discussed in the retreat for the month preceding the next retreat. I offered suggestions on how they might engage in these practices over the course of the next month. Creating and maintaining intentional engagement in these practices would play a key role in their ability to create and maintain a posture of attentiveness to the fresh work of grace in their lives and where personal transformation would most likely take place. These practices were not designed as add-ons to their busy lives but would serve as a way to radically reorder their lives in life-giving ways. I also led ongoing, weekly email discussions as a forum to share their experiences with the disciplines and for me to give further instruction and offer encouragement.

Retreat #1, "Living Fully Present to God"

The first retreat took place on February 22, 2017, at the Eastridge Church location. Nineteen of the twenty registered participants attended. Snacks and lunch were provided. Some of the topics covered were (1) the significance of the spiritual life for

⁴ See appendices E through S for the various handouts.

those in ministry,⁵ (2) the neuroscience of attentiveness, (3) a culture of distraction leads to dis-integration, (4) the spiritual disciplines: practices in attentiveness,⁶ (5) listening to God in silence and solitude,⁷ (6) group discussion on 1 Samuel 30:1-25, (5) listening to God in Scripture,⁸ (6) the use of the Bible in the quiet time,⁹ (7) listening to God in prayer,¹⁰ (8) embracing Sabbath,¹¹ and (11) expanding our experience of God.¹² I concluded the retreat with final instructions and each participant sharing their “takeaway” from the day. I closed the retreat with a prayer from Ephesians 3:16-20.

Retreat #2, “Living Fully Present to Self”

The second retreat took place March 22, 2017, at the Eastridge Church location. Eighteen of the twenty registered participants attended. (Two were absent because of sickness.) Snacks and lunch were provided. After a brief welcome, we shared in a group discussion/review from the first retreat and their practices in the spiritual disciplines. I led with coaching questions:

- What spiritual discipline did you practice?
- What was your experience?
- What obstacles did you encounter?
- What did you discover about yourself?

⁵ See Appendix D, “Three Miles from the Coffee.”

⁶ See Appendix E, “The Spiritual Disciplines: Training in Attentiveness.”

⁷ See Appendix F, “Listening to God in Silence and Solitude.”

⁸ See Appendix G, “Listening to God in Scripture.”

⁹ See Appendix H, “The Use of the Bible in the Quiet Time.”

¹⁰ See Appendix I, “Listening to God in Prayer.”

¹¹ See Appendix J, “Embracing Sabbath.”

¹² See Appendix K, “Expanding Our Experience of God.”

- How did God reveal himself to you?
- What was your biggest takeaway?

Then I introduced the theme for this retreat, “Living Fully Present to Self,” using 1 Thessalonians 5:23-24 from the Message Bible as the key verse. This was followed by a group discussion answering two questions: (1) What are the messages you live with in ministry? and, (2) What impact does that have on you? We discussed the importance of (1) listening, i.e., living fully present to your own lives, (2) coming to grips with their own brokenness and being willing to deal honestly with those things that have lurked unnoticed under the surface of their lives, and (3) the importance of self-examination as being crucial to a leader’s capacity to lead from a place of ongoing wholeness.¹³ We then had a group discussion and answered these questions:

- What has been your experience (or lack of) with self-examination?
- What sounds inviting about self-examination?
- What makes you apprehensive?
- What keeps us from practicing self-examination?

This led to a discussion on the “False Self” (the image we create that we want people to see, hoping to achieve a sense of worthiness), self-empathy, and shame (the message we believe that we are not enough).

We then shared a group discussion of these questions on shame:

- What is your default response to shame?
- How do you run, hide, self-protect, numb, or deny?
- What does shame look like in ministry?

The questions led to a group study of 1 Samuel 25 and answering the question, “How is shame played out in this story?” I shared about the neurobiology of shame, the answer to

¹³ See Appendix L, “The Importance of Self-Examination.”

shame (tell your story), and the “True Self.” We discussed the spiritual practices (provided as handouts) for engaging in and forming the habits of self-examination and staying attentive to one’s life: (1) self-examination,¹⁴ (2) telling your story,¹⁵ (3) the prayer of confession,¹⁶ and (4) the prayer of lament.¹⁷ The participants were instructed to engage in at least one of these practices of living fully present to self for the next month until the final retreat.

Retreat #3, “Living Fully Present to Others”

The third retreat occurred May 3, 2017, at the Eastridge Church location. Eighteen of the twenty registered participants were present. (One couple was absent because of a family emergency.) Snacks and lunch were provided. We began our retreat with a group discussion and review from the second retreat on living present to self.

Questions included

- What did you practice? What was your experience with this practice?
- What do you think about that?
- What are the implications for your ministry?
- What obstacles did you encounter?

Next I introduced the theme of the third retreat: “Living Fully Present to Others.” During the retreat I provided insight and encouragement in several areas. First, listening is an act of love, and giving one’s full attention to others embodies the very act of love itself. This kind of transformative listening requires the specific skills like those of a life

¹⁴ See Appendix M, “The Prayer of Examen.”

¹⁵ See Appendix N, “Telling Your Story.”

¹⁶ See Appendix O, “The Prayer of Confession.”

¹⁷ See Appendix P, “The Prayer of Lament.”

coach.¹⁸ Second, hospitable listening can become our best apologetic to those outside of faith in Christ. Third, leaders themselves need to be involved in their communities as a way of listening together and being known and understood by another. Fourth, practicing forgiveness is necessary in relationships.¹⁹ Fifth, a rule of life helps structure their lives for living in a well-ordered way.²⁰ Finally, there is a five-step process to how we learn and change.²¹ We concluded our teaching and participation time together with communion and each participant praying for another. I administered the posttest (identical to the pretest) and a retreat evaluation based on their actual experience of the retreats.²² Each participant agreed to a six-month follow-up contact.

Results of the Field Project

Twenty people participated in the project, ten males and ten females. Their ages ranged from 38 to 62 with the average being 52 years of age. One participant did not complete the posttest, so his data was eliminated. This resulted in data being available for nineteen participant leaders. The impact of this project will be presented using both quantitative and qualitative data. This section first presents the quantitative findings, followed by the qualitative findings.

¹⁸ See Appendix Q, "Pushing the Arrow."

¹⁹ See Appendix R, "The Practice of Forgiveness."

²⁰ See Appendix S, "A Rule of Life."

²¹ See Appendix T, "Five Stages of How We Learn and Change."

²² See Appendix B, "Pretest and Posttest."

Measures

The impact of the retreat experience was determined from the results of the pretest and posttest as well as qualitative data from the participants. The assessment instrument consisted of twenty-two Likert scale items with responses on a five-point scale ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree or for two items, very well to very poor or very good to very poor. Low scores indicated greater levels of agreement. They were grouped in four categories: general ministry items, attentiveness to God, attentiveness to self, and attentiveness to others. Because this retreat was newly developed and used an assessment instrument created specifically for the retreat and the participant group size, this study is considered a pilot project. Decisions for statistical significance were made with $\alpha = .10$.

Quantitative Results

The quantitative results showed conclusive indications that the retreats produced compelling change in several areas of the participants' lives. The retreats made a statistically significant impact in the leaders' lives as demonstrated by comparisons between the pretest and posttest scores. For example, when asked to respond to the statement, "I feel overwhelmed by the demands of life," only 5 percent "disagreed" in the pretest, compared to the 42 percent who "disagreed" in the posttest. Pretest results indicated only 26 percent considered their current ministry work as significant and fulfilling, compared to 47 percent in the posttest results. Prior to the retreats, 64 percent of respondents "strongly agreed" (16 percent) or "agreed" (47 percent) with the statement, "I often feel inadequate as a ministry leader," compared to only 32 percent "agreed" in the posttest in which no one (0 percent) indicated a "strong" agreement.

When asked the question, “How would you rate your spiritual well-being?” in the pretest 52 percent of participants responded “very good or good.” Posttest responses to the same question significantly rose to 84 percent. The pretest indicated 32 percent do not take a daily quiet time; posttest results dropped to 5 percent. The pretest revealed 48 percent rated their emotional health as “average or below average,” compared to 69 percent in the posttest who rated their emotional health as “excellent or good.” When asked to respond to the statement, “I take time for self-reflection/examination,” the pretest results reported that 42 percent “disagreed or were undecided” compared to posttest results of 15 percent who “disagreed.”

Table 1: Means and Standard Deviations for Pretest and Posttest Scores for Retreat Assessment

<i>Pre- and Posttest Pairs</i>		<i>Mean</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>Std. Deviation</i>	<i>Std. Error Mean</i>
Pair 1	SIGNIFICANT	2.11	18	.963	.227
	SIGNIFICANTB	1.56	18	.616	.145
Pair 2	LESS CONFIDENT	4.22	18	.943	.222
	LESS CONFIDENTB	4.33	18	.594	.140
Pair 3	INADEQUATE	2.67	18	1.138	.268
	INADEQUATEB	3.28	18	.958	.226
Pair 4	SUCCEED	2.28	18	1.179	.278
	SUCCEEDB	2.06	18	.873	.206
Pair 5	SPIRITUAL WELLBEING	2.39	18	.608	.143
	SPPRIITUAL WELLBEINGB	2.00	18	.485	.114
Pair 6	SPIRITUAL_DEVELOPMENT	3.33	18	1.283	.302
	SPIRITUAL DEVELOPMENTB	3.83	18	.985	.232
Pair 7	DAILY QUIET	2.39	18	1.092	.257
	DAILY QUIETB	1.72	18	.826	.195
Pair 8	WASTED TIME	4.72	18	.575	.135
	WASTED TIMEB	4.67	18	.594	.140
Pair 9	SERMON	3.67	18	1.138	.268
	SERMONB	3.89	18	.832	.196
Pair 10	REST LUXURY	4.00	18	.907	.214
	REST LUXURYB	4.56	18	.616	.145
Pair 11	PRAYER AWARE	1.67	18	.840	.198
	PRAYER AWAREB	1.33	18	.485	.114
Pair 12	DISAPPOINT	4.28	18	.752	.177
	DISAPPOINTB	4.78	18	.428	.101
Pair 13	LISTEN	2.50	18	1.043	.246
	LISTENB	2.67	18	.970	.229

<i>Pre- and Posttest Pairs</i>		<i>Mean</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>Std. Deviation</i>	<i>Std. Error Mean</i>
Pair 14	EMOTION PRIORITY	2.33	18	.767	.181
	EMOTION PRIORITYB	1.94	18	.873	.206
Pair 15	EMOTION HEALTH	2.61	18	.608	.143
	EMOTION HEALTHB	2.22	18	.548	.129
Pair 16	POSITIVE	2.44	18	.984	.232
	POSITIVEB	1.94	18	.236	.056
Pair 17	OVERWHELMED	2.44	18	.705	.166
	OVERWHELMEDB	3.22	18	.808	.191
Pair 18	SELF-EXAM	2.56	18	1.042	.246
	SELF-EXAMB	2.11	18	.963	.227
Pair 19	INFERIORITY	2.67	18	1.283	.302
	INFERIORITYB	2.78	18	1.215	.286
Pair 20	DEPLETION	3.00	18	.970	.229
	DEPLETIONB	4.11	18	.758	.179
Pair 21	CLOSE FRIENDS	3.56	18	2.357	.556
	CLOSE FRIENDSB	3.61	18	2.004	.472
Pair 22	ACCOUNTABLE	2.78	18	1.166	.275
	ACCOUNTABLEB	2.22	18	.943	.222
Pair 23	LISTENER	2.33	18	1.029	.243
	LISTENERB	2.28	18	1.018	.240
Pair 24	UNSAVED	3.67	18	3.162	.745
	UNSAVEDB	3.67	18	3.447	.812

Means and standard deviation for each of the items are presented in Table 1 and the comparison data in Table 2. The retreats made a statistically significant impact in the leader's lives as demonstrated by comparisons between the pretest and posttest scores. In comparing the mean scores from the pre- and posttests, there were statistically significant changes on thirteen of the twenty-four comparisons. The most significant positive impact was seen in the leader's feelings of depletion with an improvement of $M = 1.111$ points. This was a statistically significant change with $t(18) = -3.828, p = .001$. Other notable improvements were for feelings of being overwhelmed with an improvement of $M = .778$ points and $t(18) = 3.500, p = .003$ and emotional health with an improvement of $M = .389$ points with $t(18) = 3.289, p = .004$.

Other scales with statistically significant changes from the pretest to posttest were for work significance ($M = .556$), feelings of inadequacy ($M = .611$), spiritual well-being ($M = .389$), spiritual development ($M = .500$), daily quiet time ($M = .667$), rest as a luxury

($M = .556$), feelings of disappointment in prayer ($M = .500$), overall health ($M = .500$), feeling overwhelmed ($M = .778$), self-examination ($M = .444$), and being accountable to friends ($M = .556$).

Table 2: Pretest and Posttest Comparisons for Retreat Assessment Items

<i>Item Comparison</i>	<i>Mean Difference</i>	<i>Std. Deviation</i>	<i>Std. Error Mean</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>p</i>
Significant	.556	.922	.217	2.557	17	.020
Less Confident	-.111	.832	.196	-.566	17	.579
Inadequate	-.611	1.092	.257	-2.374	17	.030
Succeed	.222	1.309	.308	.720	17	.481
Spiritual Well-being	.389	.778	.183	2.122	17	.049
Spiritual Development	-.500	1.200	.283	-1.767	17	.095
Daily Quiet Time	.667	1.237	.291	2.287	17	.035
Wasted Time	.056	.873	.206	.270	17	.790
Sermon	-.222	.878	.207	-1.074	17	.298
Rest Luxury	-.556	.984	.232	-2.397	17	.028
Prayer Aware	.333	.840	.198	1.683	17	.111
Disappoint	-.500	.618	.146	-3.431	17	.003
Listen	-.167	.786	.185	-.900	17	.381
Emotion Priority	.389	.979	.231	1.686	17	.110
Emotional Health	.389	.502	.118	3.289	17	.004
Positive	.500	.985	.232	2.153	17	.046
Overwhelmed	-.778	.943	.222	-3.500	17	.003
Self-Exam	.444	1.042	.246	1.810	17	.088
Inferiority	-.111	1.183	.279	-.399	17	.695
Depletion	-1.111	1.231	.290	-3.828	17	.001
Close Friends	-.056	1.589	.375	-.148	17	.884
Accountable	.556	1.338	.315	1.761	17	.096
Listener	.056	.639	.151	.369	17	.717
Unsaved Friends	.000	2.086	.492	.000	17	1.000

Note: Bolded items indicate statistically significant changes.

Qualitative Results

The positive impact of the retreats was also clearly reflected in the qualitative results. Some of the comments from the weekly email discussions were

“Often I come home drained of ‘life.’ This has been life-giving!”

“God turned my world upside down! My life has been radically changed as a result of our first retreat.

“For the first time in my life in ministry I am dealing with questions about my own abilities, some deep insecurities, jealousy, etc.”

“I cannot thank you enough for inviting me to be part of The Attentive Leader. Your desire was that I would be transformed. I have been transformed!”

Each leader who participated also submitted an evaluation form at the end of the retreats.²³ When asked if the retreats were relevant to the leaders personally, all but one (95 percent) indicated “very relevant,” and the other one responded, “important.” When asked what were the strengths of the retreats, responses included

“The teachings and discussions.”

“Being felt validated and respected in our thoughts and feelings.”

“The participation, input and honest discussions.”

“The ‘no fix’ rule and having a safe place to share.”

“The vulnerability of the leaders and willing to share their lives.”

“Gail’s extensive research and passion.”

Included in the posttest and identical to the pretest, participants responded to two additional questions:

(1) “If you could describe the spiritual life as it now ‘feels’ to you, what word would you use?”

Pretest responses included “demanding,” “empty,” “going through the motions,” “work,” “frustrating,” “trap,” “solving,” “forced,” “exhausting,” and “pressure to perform.”

²³ See Appendix U, “Retreat Evaluation Form.”

Posttest responses included “empowering,” “freedom,” “growing in a healthy reality and spirituality,” “fruitful,” “new,” “safe,” “renewal,” “hope,” “focus,” “life changing,” “meaningful,” “peaceful,” “adventure,” and “promising.”

(2) What is your “takeaway” from the retreats?

“The Christian life is meant to be experienced by me!”

“I need to focus on my spiritual well-being before trying to help others.”

“I now have hope to continue this journey for the long haul.”

“The retreats both encouraged and affirmed my need to make spiritual formation a priority in my life.”

“I’m on a path to being a better and more authentic leader.”

“Taking care of my soul and inner life is not selfish.”

The overall responses, including the weekly emails, the retreat evaluation form, and personal conversations, offer an overall positive and transformative experience for those who participated.

Contribution to Ministry

This project helped leaders on several levels. First, the research clarified and offered compelling biblical reasons why living and leading from a posture of attentiveness and responsiveness to the sway of the Spirit forms the essence of the spiritual life and the bedrock of spiritual leadership. When this same posture also includes an attentiveness to self and to others, it cultivates an ongoing process of integrated wholeness which intersects and shapes all human dimensions. This, in turn, allows leaders to bring something more fruitful, more robust, to their ministry than the destructive byproducts of dis-integrated living.

Second, the leaders came to understand and affirm the need for self-care. At the beginning of the retreats, leaders admitted that prioritizing the care of their soul felt self-indulgent and struggled to find time and energy to care for their own spiritual health. Many were experiencing depletion, discouragement, and emptiness and for the first time had to admit their old strategies of “soldiering on,” with no time for rest or renewal, could no longer bear the weight of ministry. After the retreats, the leaders recognized the need for sacred rhythms and structuring ministry around the care of their soul.

Third, a new measure for success was created. The leaders embraced a different definition of success. Rather than being measured by productivity or by numbers of things, success came to be defined by rightly ordering one’s life and living into ongoing rhythms of wholeness.

Fourth, the leaders experienced significant personal transformation. Through a safe environment of mutual vulnerability and respect and through opportunities for authentic discussions, honest personal assessments, and engaging in the practices of attention, participants cultivated and experienced personal integration and wholeness on many levels. This project also provided these leaders with a lifetime of spiritual practices that orient their lives to the Holy Spirit’s unceasing initiatives of works of grace. To live and lead in such a way allows leaders to offer those they serve a quality of presence shaped by God and becomes the essence of compelling and powerful ministry.

Fifth, this project can be reproduced and repeated to serve other ministry leaders in other districts in the Assemblies of God, as well as other denominations, and provide opportunities for the transformation of an unlimited number of ministry leaders.

Conclusion

All the participants in this field project were gifted, educated, and experienced leaders. Yet, it remains evident that effective ministry requires more than years of experience, education, or expertise. In a culture of relentless busyness and distraction, leaders need a way of living and leading through the clutter and chatter of daily life and ministry which fosters the ability to reflect, consider, connect, and make sense of the things most essential to experiencing wholeness. There remains a need for ministry leaders to experience a holistic, integrated transformation as outlined in the two greatest commandments. This cultivation of an integrated life requires the ability to live attentively present to how one's life is unfolding in relationship to the presence of God, others, and one's own soul.

It is my sincere hope that along with the tools, skills, and techniques of ministry, leaders will bring a robust perspective and maturing reality of an integrated life. I hope they come to rely on a cultivated attentiveness that transforms all of their human dimensions and relationships, making them into more loving and whole individuals who can then lead a more loving, more whole community involved in God's redemptive purpose in the world.

CHAPTER 5: PROJECT SUMMARY

Introduction

Chapter 5 provides an assessment of this project. This chapter discusses (1) evaluation of the project, revealing its reasons for effectiveness and need for improvement, (2) implications of the project, (3) recommendations for those seeking to implement a similar project, and (4) recommendations for future study.

To ensure accurate feedback and reflection, during the project I gathered my own insights from the retreats to be used for evaluation as well as the participants' evaluations: After each retreat I (1) asked participants for verbal feedback, (2) sat down with my retreat assistant and enlisted input, and (3) dedicated time to compile personal insights and record recommended improvements while they were fresh in my mind. Finally, (4) at the end of the project, I provided participants with a retreat qualitative evaluation form and asked them to share openly and honestly how to improve and strengthen the project's effectiveness. These personal reflections and the results of the participants' assessments shaped this evaluation.

Evaluation of the Project

Keys to Project Effectiveness

This project assisted twenty ministry leaders in spiritual renewal, personal transformation, and establishing consistent spiritual practices around an ongoing journey to integrated wholeness in the midst of ministry. The premise of this project, based on Mark 12:28-31, the first and second greatest commandments, was that giving careful

attention to every sphere of human dimension, i.e., love of God (with the entirety of human capacity—heart, soul, mind, and strength), love of self, and love of others, creates an integrated wholeness that becomes the wellspring of personal transformation and effective, sustainable ministry.

“The Attentive Leader” retreats aimed to equip participants with practiced knowledge of specific spiritual practices that allowed the participants to cultivate not only a deeper life with God but also ongoing attention and responsiveness to all the dimensions of human life (emotional, social, relational, etc.) in which God was at work in their lives, bringing about healing and wholeness. The hoped-for outcome was that the participant-leaders would continue to pursue and radically arrange their lives around spiritual practices which would, in turn, form in them a robust and maturing reality of this integrated life.

The design of the retreats revolved around each of the three spheres of human dimension—God, self, and others—which became the focus of each of the three retreats. Thus, retreat #1 was titled, “The Attentive Leader: Living and Leading Fully Present to God.” The subsequent retreats followed the same template, replacing “God” with “Self” and “Others.” Each retreat included participatory learning techniques such as interactive teaching, group activities, facilitation of honest dialogue and self-disclosure in a safe environment, and practical homework. This design allowed the participants to take part in an active and experiential posture of learning.

At the project’s conclusion, based on the qualitative personal evaluations, 90 percent of the twenty ministry leaders experienced a significant degree of spiritual and personal transformation. The greatest transformation came in the areas of their personal

connection with God and with an awareness and a willingness to deal honestly with their inner life and need of ongoing healing and wellness. The participants deemed the vulnerability of the leaders and their willingness to engage in honest and self-disclosing dialogue, as well as my personal contribution, as the greatest strengths of the retreats. A key outcome included the participants' intent to continue to prioritize spiritual, personal, and relational well-being over perceived ministerial success. Additionally, each participant possessed the ability and the tools to pursue ongoing transformation and wholeness long after the retreats were over.

Six key elements made the project effective: (1) theological background, (2) relational component, (3) pertinence of the subject matter, (4) creating a safe environment, (5) practicing the spiritual disciplines, and (6) authentic dialogue and discussion.

Theological Background

This project benefited from a strong theological framework, as detailed in chapter 2. At the first retreat, I brought a depth of foundational teaching and background to the concept that throughout Scripture, listening and hearing comprise the central acts of the people of God and that, accordingly, the fundamental stance of the person of faith is listening. Thus, spiritual leadership, first and foremost, involves leading from a place of hearing and responding to what the Spirit has to say. To cultivate such a posture of attentive listening and hearing (especially in a distracted culture) requires intentional training and practices that allow one to remain fully present. Prior to the first retreat, I sent each participant a copy of chapter 2 that allowed him or her to come prepared with a working knowledge of the material that would be presented. I used participatory learning

techniques as much as possible, which allowed participants to take an active posture in the learning process. Although the retreats were designed to be more practical and experiential in nature, many participants appreciated and valued the background and considered the subject matter as comprehensive, helpful, and providing a new and interesting perspective.

Relational Component

I invited twenty-eight ministry couples and one single ministry leader, inside and outside of my sphere of influence. However, when I asked the participants why they agreed to attend, most remarked that it was out of relationship to me personally.¹ As a result, I was personally acquainted with all but one ministry couple. So personal credibility and trust played a key role in their participation in the retreats, which might have also contributed to the openness and comfort level in the participants' personal interactions.

An added relational component among the participants included weekly email discussions. Between each retreat, participants were asked to practice one or more of the spiritual practices covered in the previous retreat. Then via a weekly online venue, participants could continue to dialogue on each other's progress, insights, and struggles. Additionally, sharing prayer requests and praying for one another contributed to the overall relational value of the group.

¹ Five of the ministry wives had previously participated in a nine-month spiritual formation experience with me and indicated they wanted their husbands to experience this similar journey as well.

Pertinence of the Subject Matter

At the heart of the retreats were the shared struggles of ministry life. Given the alarming statistics of ministry burnout, and not unlike many other ministry leaders, participants unintentionally found themselves in places of relational isolation, fear of failure, exhaustion, brokenness, disillusionment, shame, feelings of being overwhelmed, and the like. At least one participant had already experienced burnout and a few, by my estimation, were on the verge. The subject matter and discussions directly and honestly addressed these difficult realities. Freedom to share without judgment became profoundly impactful. Certainly, however, not all the participants came from a place of desperation. All participants were presented with a new perspective and approach to the spiritual life as that of proceeding from an attentive posture of listening. When asked on the evaluation, “How pertinent was the subject matter to you?” eighteen out of twenty participants (90 percent) used the adjective “very” to describe their response. The others used similar, positive adjectives. Other words used to describe their experience included “life-changing,” “life-giving,” and “validated and respected.” All the participants agreed to participate in a six-month follow-up group interaction. I can see the importance of continued future connection with group members as they begin to live out the spiritual practices in their context.

Creating a Safe Environment

Creating “ground rules” (presented at the beginning of the first retreat) proved indispensable to creating a safe and non-judgmental environment for sharing. The ground rules consisted of the following characteristics:

1. Honesty. “You don’t have to share in dialogue and discussion, but I’d like you to share as honestly and vulnerably as you can. I am not looking for ‘right answers.’ The right answer is the honest answer.”

2. Listening. “We will honor each other’s story and the ongoing work of grace in their lives. When someone shares, you should be fully present to that person’s story, however it unfolds, believing that person is not a ‘problem to be solved.’ You are not to jump in with a Scripture verse, a Christian platitude, correction, or a story about how you handled a similar situation. You are to listen and be attentive and encouraging.”

3. Confidentiality. “This is a safe place where what is shared here will not be shared outside the retreat setting.”

These ground rules were essential for creating a safe environment that fostered authentic conversation and allowed participants to share openly and honestly what was most real about themselves. At times I felt as though I was standing on sacred ground as each person set aside pretense and courageously spoke of deep discouragement and wanting to quit ministry, of needing to encounter Christ in a real way, and of keeping themselves busy so as not to face what bubbled under the surface of their lives. I was careful to model a non-judgmental attitude and the need to “fix.” Often I used coaching questions to help draw out further reflection. There were times we simply sat with the tension such revelations bring.

The setting/location added to the safe environment. The retreat took place at a church which had a large, detached (somewhat isolated), exquisite 1940s outbuilding surrounded by garden-like landscaping. It felt like an actual retreat setting in contrast to a public, stark, and distracting environment such as a hotel or classroom.

Practicing the Spiritual Disciplines

The ability to live and lead fully present to the things that matter most requires purposeful training in attentiveness. Understanding, as well, that transformation does not happen passively simply through the accumulation of knowledge but rather through intentional participation and experiential engagement, the Attentive Leader retreats were first and foremost practical in nature. The spiritual disciplines provide the necessary embodied and experiential transformational elements to habituate attentiveness and for transformation to take place. Barry Jones notes the spiritual disciplines' role in this process: "The spiritual disciplines are, at their most basic, means by which we pay attention. They are intentional practices of sustained focus—on God, on his story, on our neighbors and on the condition of our own souls."²

Thus, given those and other transformational qualities of spiritual disciplines, participants were "required" (although all participation was optional) to practice the spiritual disciplines covered in each retreat for the month between the retreats. At the beginning of each subsequent retreat, we discussed their experience with practicing those disciplines. I indicated there were no intended outcomes of either "good" or "bad" but to remain open to the work of grace in their lives in whatever form it took. As a result of their engagement with the spiritual disciplines, some encountered God in profound, life-changing ways, some struggled to simply engage the practices in a consistent way, and others struggled with the self-revelation the spiritual discipline brought to light. In unique ways, each participant's engagement proved to be transformational. The sharing of these

² Barry D. Jones, *Dwell: Life with God for the World* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2014), 106.

personal experiences, the struggles and the pleasant, offered enlivening and honest discussions.

Keys to Project Improvement

The first improvement would include creating a pretest that assesses the participant's real-life practices, not their perceived idea of how well they think they held to the practice. Although some affirmed the value of a specific practice, they overestimated their actual experience of it. For example, when asked to respond to the question, "A day of rest is a luxury I can't afford to take," many "agreed" or "strongly agreed." Upon real-life examination (brought to light in the discussions) only a few consistently engaged in a weekly practice of Sabbath-keeping. A better question would have been, "I intentionally and consistently practice a weekly Sabbath."

Second, several couples expressed how they appreciated having their spouse participate with them. While I did not indicate these retreats were specifically for ministry couples, I strongly recommend doing so for future retreats. The benefit of a common experience between spouses allowed not only for ongoing and enriching conversations (which many participants commented on) but offers a means of encouraging each other (even holding each other mutually accountable) with their spiritual practices. Sharing in each other's journey of personal transformation would be invaluable. Of course, non-married leaders would certainly be welcomed.

Third, several participants noted that these three retreats could have been extended into several more retreats, possibly over the course of a year. This would certainly be more advantageous and profitable for all those involved. As noted, a foundational premise of the Attentive Leader retreats included engaging in the ongoing

practicing as well as the inclusion of additional spiritual disciplines. Additional retreats could facilitate this progressive process.

Implications of the Project

Current Reality Awareness

Ministry leaders are not immune to the distractions of our culture that make them susceptible to the inability for deep, sustained focus needed for attending to the presence of God which remains at the heart of the spiritual journey and faithful leadership. In the same respect, in a ministry culture of relentless activity and productivity overload, many minister leaders find it difficult to give attention or priority to the long, slow process of cultivating the ability to recognize and respond to a fresh and creative work of the Holy Spirit, to be aware of what's going on in their own hearts and how their life is unfolding, and to live fully in the present moment with those they love and serve. Practices such as silence and solitude or Sabbath-keeping can feel self-indulgent, unattainable, undeserved or, worse, useless. Yet, without rhythms that foster a way of being alive to those things that matter most, a leader's soul dis-integrates and will no longer bear the weight of ministry.

It must also be noted that leaders enter into ministry as broken people. Leaders are not exempt from the inner brokenness from the unexamined and unresolved wounds of their past. With many ministry leaders finding themselves in places of exhaustion, disappointment, and disillusionment, soul care no longer remains optional. Ministers must begin to engage in ways of listening to their lives that cultivates an environment for healing to emerge.

Additionally, much of formal pastoral training has focused on the techniques and strategies of church growth to ensure pastoral “success.” Typically, this training has not included much attention to the minister’s need of ongoing personal transformation. Practical skills of leadership and management remain necessary, yet spiritual leadership calls for an integration of body, mind, and soul that affirms the Spirit’s transformative presence. Peter Scazzero draws attention to the condition of the leader’s soul as a critical component of spiritual leadership:

The overall health of any church or ministry depends primarily on the emotional and spiritual health of its leadership. In fact, the key to successful spiritual leadership has much more to do with the leader’s internal life than with the leader’s expertise, gifts, or experience.³

True transformation of a leader takes place in the deepest part of the soul in conjunction with and dependence on the work of the Spirit. Such change requires a familiarity with the complexities of the Spirit-led life and involves intentional practices that aid the ability to more fully recognize and respond to the Spirit’s movement.

Recommendations for National and Local Assemblies of God Ministry Leaders

National and local denominational leadership of the Assemblies of God play a critical role in influencing ministry leaders to prioritize faithfulness to their own spiritual, emotional, and relational journey. Denominational leaders must first recognize the vulnerable state of their pastors and ministry leaders. As well, they must take seriously the importance of the health and well-being of their ministry leaders, first and foremost, as people on their own journey to personal wholeness. Denominational leaders need the

³ Peter Scazzero, *The Emotionally Healthy Church: A Strategy for Discipleship That Actually Changes Lives* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2003), 20.

willingness to address, in serious discussion, the need to prioritize an ongoing, holistic well-being of their ministers alongside of, not subservient to, church strategies.

Second, by language, intentional processes, and leading by example, denominational leaders need to cultivate a non-judgmental ministry culture that fosters honesty and vulnerability among their ministry leaders. Denominational leaders must work to embrace and promote safe environments for self-disclosure, authentic conversations, and relational communities. They must strive to defuse the stigma of deficiency and the act of reaching out for help, encouraging leaders to pursue a healthy support system. Priority must be given to proactive rather than remedial pastoral care.

Third, the Assemblies of God (AG) would benefit from implementing the Attentive Leader retreats. Ideally, the retreats would consist of a monthly retreat over the course of six to eight months, but the pattern of three monthly retreats would still be profitable as demonstrated in this project. In fact, the Attentive Leader will be implemented in the fall of 2018 as part of the Northwest Ministry Network's three-year 2020 Revitalization Initiative. Every participant of the initiative will be required to attend the three Attentive Leader retreats. The Executive and Network Presbytery who will serve as coaches for the participants of the initiative will be required to first attend the three retreats to help facilitate their coaching effectiveness as well as their personal transformation.

Recommendations for Future Study

Because of the nature and limited scope of this project, further research will be needed to assess its long-term effectiveness. First, a future study could research how many participants followed through on a consistent basis with the spiritual practices and

those who did not. The study could further assess the personal well-being of the participants respectively. Transformation happens slowly and incrementally, so this study would necessarily need to take place a significant time after the retreats.

Second, all the male participants of the Attentive Leader were lead pastors of a church. Their spouses may or may not have been credentialed, but more importantly, they were not senior pastors who bore that specific and unique responsibility of ministry. A future study could include how these male leaders responded differently to the retreat than their female counterparts. From my observation, the female participants engaged more consistently in practicing the spiritual disciplines, and the men engaged more readily in the group discussions. Depending on the long-term evaluation results, there may be a need to restructure the retreats to accommodate these gender and leadership differences.

Third, the retreats were based on the assumption of the participants' general well-being. If a pastor is already in burnout mode, a future study could provide information as to whether the retreats provided the necessary help to restore them to health or whether a different intervention would be more effective.

Finally, a future study would be helpful to determine how the retreats, and, hopefully, the retreats' transformative quality, impacted the churches of those leaders who participated. The anticipated and hoped-for outcome of the Attentive Leader retreat was that those who participated might bring to their leadership their best, integrated, growing-in-wholeness self, shaped by God, that they might offer something more real and life-giving than anything they could produce on their own.

Conclusion

At the heart of the Attentive Leader is the conviction that the Holy Spirit is continually, dynamically, and creatively active in the transformation process. A posture of attentive listening and responsiveness allows a leader to partner with the Holy Spirit to stay fully engaged in this fresh work of grace. Given a culture of distraction and the harsh realities of ministry life, many ministry leaders often unintentionally find themselves disconnected from God, separated from their own heart and from the ability to reflect, consider, and make sense of the things most essential to experiencing wholeness. Without embracing a way of living that fosters being present and alive to those things that matter most, the soul dis-integrates and can no longer bear the weight of ministry. Therefore, the call to attentiveness to all the spheres of personal wholeness no longer remains optional.

For overly-productive, fast-paced ministry leaders, training in attentiveness may prove difficult. However, after witnessing ministry leaders become comfortable in God's presence, speak of God's Word in an alive and personal manner, experience prayer as a place of wonder and encounter, begin to live and minister from a place of rest and fullness, and offer their stories as yet unfinished but committed to a journey to wholeness, I remain hopeful that those leaders may catch a glimpse of an attentive life fully engaged and most alive. For it is a leader's own story of transformative grace that becomes truly compelling to others.

APPENDIX A: INVITATION LETTER TO ATTEND THE RETREATS

Hello!

As you might be aware, I am currently a candidate for a D.Min. in Leadership at the Assemblies of God Theological School. The title of my dissertation is “The Attentive Leader: Living and Leading Fully Present to God, Self, and Others in a Distracted World.” Often one of the most neglected parts of a minister is his/her own soul. Pulled to and fro, and with our lives on constant discharge, it seems that we only experience fragments of joy, fleeting moments of rest, and snippets of wholeness. We are never fully present to the things that matter most and that would bring us life. Equally concerning, it is from this place of distraction, anxiety, and weariness we serve others.

I am now in the research and project phase of my degree, and part of my program requirements is to conduct a “field study.” In other words, I need to test my research. That’s where you come in!

I would like to personally invite you to *three one-day retreats* (over a 3-month period, i.e., one retreat per month). The three retreats are based on Jesus’s command in Matthew 22:37-40, to love God with all your heart, soul, and mind and love your neighbor as yourself. Jesus’s command is an invitation to an integrated life by paying attention (be fully present to), what matters most, i.e., God, others, and self. In reality, what we pay attention to forms our lives.

The dates will be:

Wednesday, February 22 (9:00 AM–4:30 PM)

Wednesday, March 22 (9:00 AM–4:30 PM)

Wednesday, May 3 (9:00 AM–4:30 PM)

The retreats will be held at Eastridge Church in Issaquah, WA. Cost will be \$20 per person per retreat. (This covers the cost of lunch and snacks.)

Each retreat will cover one of the three themes of living fully present: (1) *living fully present to God*, (2) *living fully present to self*, and (3) *living fully present to others*. The goal is to equip you with practiced knowledge, necessary tools and specific spiritual practices which would allow you to cultivate, not only a deeper life with God but give attention also to all the dimensions of human life (emotional, social, relational, etc.) in which God is at work bringing about healing and wholeness.

Not only will you help me personally to accomplish an educational milestone, but my hope is that along with the tools, skills, and techniques of ministry, you will also come to realize the best thing you bring to their leadership is a robust perspective and the reality of an integrated life. It could transform your life and ministry.

I'd love to have you join me!

APPENDIX B: PRETEST AND POSTTEST

INSTRUCTIONS:

1. This survey is voluntary and your answers remain anonymous and completely confidential.
2. This survey is to be filled out by individuals, not by families. Each participant should complete the survey separately.
3. Because this survey asks questions about your spiritual life and habits, please *answer honestly and truthfully*. Do not try to give a “right” or “expected” answer. Your honesty in revealing the current nature of your spiritual life is vital for a proper assessment for my doctoral research.
4. Please circle the appropriate response to each question. If you change your mind, cross out the wrong answer and circle the correct one.
5. The survey should take approximately 10-15 minutes. However, please give yourself as much time as needed to answer as truthfully as you can.

General Statistics

Participant: Please assign yourself the last four digits of your social security number:

Gender: Male/Female

Age: _____

Highest Level of Education: _____

Marital Status:

Single, never married

Widowed

Divorced separated

Remarried

Married

What is your job title and/or ministry position? _____

Participant #

General Ministry Questions

My current ministry work is significant and fulfilling.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Undecided
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

I am less confident in my calling than when I began ministry.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Undecided
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

I often feel inadequate as a ministry leader.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Undecided
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

I feel pressure to “succeed” in ministry.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Undecided
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

Attentive to God

How would you relate your spiritual well-being?

- Very Good
- Good
- Average
- Below Average

- Poor

Participant #

It is difficult to invest in my own spiritual development.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Undecided
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

I daily take time to be quiet and alone to connect with God.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Undecided
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

The idea of being alone with God feels like wasted time.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Undecided
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

I read Scripture predominantly to gather material to use to in my next sermon/teaching.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Undecided
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

A day of rest is a luxury I can't afford to take.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Undecided
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

Participant #

Prayer draws me into a deeper awareness of God's presence in my life.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Undecided
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

Prayer is a disappointing experience.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Undecided
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

In prayer, I talk more than I listen.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Undecided
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

Attentive to Self

My emotional well-being is a high priority.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Undecided
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

How would you rate your mental and emotional health?

- Excellent
- Good
- Average
- Below Average
- Poor

Participant #

I experience positive feelings most of the time.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Undecided
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

I feel overwhelmed by the demands of life.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Undecided
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

How well do you sleep at night?

- Very Well
- Well
- Acceptably
- Poorly
- Very Poorly

My over-all health is:

- Very Good
- Good
- Fair
- Poor
- Very Poor

I take time for self-reflection/examination.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Undecided
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

Participant #

I struggle with feelings of inferiority and/or insecurity.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Undecided
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

I am ministering from a place of depletion.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Undecided
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

I feel completely alone.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Undecided
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

Attentive to Others

How many close friends do you have outside of your immediate family who you feel free to talk with about any issue of importance?

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Besides my spouse, I have a friend(s) to whom I am accountable.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Undecided
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

I am a good listener.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Undecided
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

What number of friends do you intentionally spend time with who don't know Jesus?

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

If you could describe the spiritual life as it "feels" to you, what word would you use?

If you could describe ministry life as it "feels" to you, what word would you use?

What is/are the "take-away" from the retreats you are hoping for?

APPENDIX C: CONSENT FORM

Consent Form for Participation

You are invited to participate in three retreats themed “The Attentive Leader: Living and Leading Fully Present to God, to Self, and to Others.” I hope you will be equipped with practiced knowledge, necessary tools, and specific spiritual practices which will allow you to cultivate, not only a deeper life with God but give attention also to all the dimensions of human life (emotional, social, relational, etc.) in which God is at work bringing about healing and wholeness.

You were selected as a possible participant in this study because you are an active ministry leader. As well as what you will gain, you will help participate in my field study research necessary for my Doctor of Ministry from the Assemblies of God Theological Seminary.

If you decide to participate, I will ask you 27 questions regarding your general experience in ministerial life, your relationship with God, your emotional health, and general relationship to others. The survey will be a hardcopy given at the beginning of the first retreat. I will ask you to be honest in your answers which hopefully will shed light on the current state of your spiritual, emotional, and relational health.

Any information obtained in connection with this study that can be identified with you will remain confidential and will be disclosed only with your permission. In any written reports or publications, no one will be identified or identifiable and only aggregate data will be presented. Your information will not be released to anyone and will remain private at all times.

Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your future relations with the Assemblies of God in any way. If you decide to participate, you are free to discontinue participation at any time without affecting such relationships.

This research project has been approved by my research advisor in accordance with the Assemblies of God Theological Seminary Levels of Review for Research with Humans. If you have any questions about the research and/or research participants’ rights or wish to report a research related injury, please call the AGTS D.Min. project coordinator, Dr. Lois Olena (417.628.1084).

By completing and returning the survey, you are granting consent to participate in this research.

You will be offered a copy of this form to keep.

You are making a decision whether or not to participate. Your signature indicates that you have read the information provided above and have decided to participate. You may withdraw at any time without prejudice after signing this form should you choose to discontinue participation in this study.

Signature

Date

Signature of Investigator

Date

APPENDIX D: THREE MILES FROM THE COFFEE:

A STUDY IN INTIMACY WITH GOD¹

Former senior pastor of First Assembly of God, San Diego, California, Richard Dresselhaus, in an article titled “Three Miles from the Coffee: A Study in Intimacy with God,” explains and laments many ministry leaders’ misperceptions, difficulty, and loss of genuine experience of intimacy with God. Dresselhaus notes how over time the perpetual obligations and duties of ministry can incrementally and imperceptively lead ministry leaders away from their original commitment and devotion of Christ. “We keep moving with the winds of duty and accommodation until suddenly we realize we have been disconnected from our beginning commitment—to know God intimately.”²

Looking back over forty years of pastoral ministry, when asked if he had any regrets Dresselhaus answered, “I would have cultivated a more intimate relationship with God.” As a seasoned pastor, his response should emerge as highly significant to all those who come after him. Many ministry leaders might nod in agreement with Dresselhaus’ conclusion of intimacy as essential in ministry. Yet this priority often gets buried in the urgency and competing demands of the day. Additionally, if some ministry leaders were honest, they might admit they do not what intimacy with God looks like or how to cultivate it is such a way that brings life and transformation to their souls.

Dresselhaus offers and emphasizes a keen and decisive definition of intimacy with God: “Intimacy with God is the life of Jesus released within the heart of the believer.”³ Dresselhaus notes three ways how this takes place in the life of a believer: through the practice of solitude, the cultivation of prayer, and receiving intimacy as a divine gift.

¹ Richard L. Dresselhaus, “Three Miles from the Coffee: A Study in Intimacy with God,” *Enrichment Journal*, Summer 2004, accessed May 2, 2016, http://enrichmentjournal.ag.org/200403/200403_034_intimacywithGod.cfm.

² Ibid

³ Ibid.

The Practice of Solitude

Dresselhaus explains the essentialness of solitude, “If the release of Christ within empowers the life of intimacy, solitude provides the context in which we experience that release. In other words, how can anyone whose life is consumed with the relentless rush and hurry of modern life have intimacy with God?”⁴ He expounds: “How do we, then, live a life of solitude in a fast-paced, rushing world? It is here that I find hope. There is an inner tranquility, quietness, and serenity that is attainable in the midst of a busy world. In other words, it is possible to live with an inner quietness, while navigating through the intersections of a rushing, out-of-control world.”⁵ Thus, solitude, trained and cultivated in a quiet place, extends and remains critical to intimacy with God in the noisy place.

Cultivated in the Fellowship of Prayer

Noting the frustration or dissatisfaction many experience in prayer, Dresselhaus writes, “Could it be we have given prayer a narrow definition that violates its very essence? Do we measure our prayer life against artificial criteria that is unbiblical and therefore unattainable?”⁶ Dresselhaus offers a different and broader understanding, one that portrays prayer not just as a single act but as a perpetual dimension of daily life but “a constant waiting on the Lord — praying inwardly even though occupied outwardly with the daily tasks of life.”⁷ Thus, a life of intimacy with God where the life of Christ is released in the life of a believer is fostered by the “by the practice of continuous prayer; a mind and heart set on God.”⁸ In this way, prayer becomes a persistent posture of the soul toward God.

Intimacy is Received as a Gift of Divine Grace.

Up to this point Dresselhaus provided the essential qualities needed to cultivate intimacy with God. Yet, he now acknowledges that how that actually takes place in one’s life remains a mystery, although he offers a significant clue: “Intimacy with God is possible only because He wills it to be. It is His gift to us. It is a demonstration of His unmerited favor. He reaches out, and we are given the privilege of response. Our part is to remove the barriers, come out of hiding, rid ourselves of shame, and receive the gift of His grace: intimacy.”⁹ In other words, intimacy with God is a work of grace: “Glorious, real and

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid.

incredibly divine.”¹⁰ Thus, intimacy with God arises as an initiating work of the Holy Spirit’s dynamic, creative, on-going activity in the life of faith. The real work for all those who desire intimacy with God pivots as a life of responsiveness to this fresh and powerful engagement.

¹⁰ Ibid.

APPENDIX E: THE SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINES:

TRAINING IN ATTENTIVENESS

God is always actively at work in our lives bringing about healing and wholeness in all the dimensions of human life (emotional, social, relational, etc.). In a culture of hurry and distraction, however, remaining attentive and responsive to God's purposes and good work in us will require ongoing and intentional training which fosters a way of being present in all the dimensions. The good news is, in the midst of our overly busy lives, we can partner with the Holy Spirit in the context of spiritual practices. When intentionally and regularly cultivated, these practices allow us to stay in a posture of attentiveness and faithful response to God's present work of grace in our lives. Ultimately, these practices allow the Holy Spirit to do what only he can do.

Craig Barnes in his book *An Extravagant Mercy* describes the practices this way,

The Bible often portrays the grace of God as a thin stream of refreshing water that perseveres in a desert land. The only way our parched souls can survive in a spiritually desolate society is to stay close to the stream. *That is why* we come to worship, read our Bibles, serve others, and pray without ceasing throughout the day. *It's all a way of drinking in the grace that keeps us spiritually alive.* The more time we spend by that stream, the more deeply our lives become rooted in God" [emphasis mine].¹

The struggle of the Christian life is really a struggle to stay by the stream. When authentically pursued, spiritual practices engage our souls far beyond the superficiality of our days ever could and allow us to throw our lives open to the transforming grace and work of God in all our human dimensions: attentiveness to God, cultivating a devoted heart, and forging an embodied faith.

Training in Attentiveness

Spiritual practices are not "spiritual principles" or "moral guidelines" we perform as a way to go about improving our condition or garnishing favor from God. The spiritual practices are not a formula we follow so we look godly. Rather, the spiritual practices

¹ Craig Barnes, *An Extravagant Mercy* (Ann Arbor, MI: Servant Publications, 2003), 8.

create space within us for God to work and allow us to move in the direction we most value. They are not a means of works but a means of grace (a work of the Holy Spirit) in that we realize our spirituality is not something we “do”; it is what is done in us through these practices.

Through the spiritual practices, in incrementally and virtually immeasurable ways, we cultivate a life with God; and live in ways we want to live. This long, slow work of formation is not about how we can make life “work” better but how we can, on a continual basis, stay attentive and available to the ongoing work and presence of God in our life and ministry. The spiritual disciplines help us to do just that as they keep us in a receptive posture to receive a fresh work of the Spirit in our lives.

What Others Are Saying

Barry Jones: “The spiritual disciplines are, at their most basic, means by which we pay attention. They are intentional practices of sustained focus—on God, on his story, on our neighbors and on the condition of our own souls.”²

Leonard Sweet: “Paying attention is the highest form of opening to life and to God.”³

Ruth Haley Barton: “In the end, this is the most hopeful thing any of us can say about spiritual formation. I cannot transform myself, or anyone else for that matter. What I can do is create the conditions in which spiritual transformation can take place, by developing and maintaining a rhythm of spiritual practices that keep me open and available to God.”⁴

Eugene Peterson notes that there are “actual practices that develop into a coherent way of life, practices that any of us can embrace, practices that engage with things local, practices that nurture personal relationships, practices that maintain a close and friendly relationship with the terrain and weather in the place where we live.”⁵

Eugene Peterson in *The Jesus Way* notes, “We stop, whether by choice or through circumstance, so that we can be alert and attentive and receptive to what God is doing in

² Barry D. Jones, *Dwell: Life with God for the World* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2014), 106.

³ Leonard Sweet, *Nudge: Awakening Each Other to the God Who’s Already There* (Colorado Springs, CO: David C. Cook, 2010), 54.

⁴ Ruth Haley Barton, *Arranging Our Lives for Spiritual Transformation* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2006), 12.

⁵ Eugene Peterson, forward to *Living into Focus: Choosing What Matters in an Age of Distractions*, by Arthur Boers (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos, 2012), x.

and for us, in and for others, on the way. We wait for our souls to catch up with our bodies.”⁶

Arthur Boers: “In fact many of the spiritual disciplines—lectio divina, meditation, contemplation, centering prayer, to only name a few—could all be summarized as teaching us how to be aware and attentive here and now. Christian spiritual tradition at its best reminds us to take seriously our daily life and daily realities in the place that we are located. It is here that we meet God and experience God’s grace.”⁷

Leslie T. Harden: “Paul engaged in regular spiritual practices which fostered the power of the Spirit. That power certainly led to an experience of the Spirit of the risen Jesus, but was forged in these everyday practices some of (which some call disciplines) that allowed the Spirit to have free expression in Paul’s life and ministry.”⁸

Harden continues, “A careful examination of Paul’s spirituality reveals more than experience. It was an everyday, practical partnership with the Spirit of God, one that gives the Spirit free reign in the life of the believer and free space to accomplish his purposes in maturity, holiness, and Kingdom advancement.”⁹

Richard Foster: “The Spiritual Disciplines in and of themselves have no merit whatsoever: They possess no righteousness, contain no rectitude. Their purpose—their only purpose—is to place us before God. After that they have come to the end of their tether. But it is enough.”¹⁰

Chuck DeGroat: “This isn’t an invitation to an idea, but an invitation to an experience known only through participation. There is no quick fast track to wholeness, no surefire method for experiencing perpetual heights of intimacy with God—only the invitation to dwell deeply in God’s life, which already dwells in you.”¹¹

⁶ Eugene Peterson, *The Jesus Way: A Conversation on the Ways That Jesus Is the Way* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2007), 97.

⁷ Arthur Boers, *Living into Focus: Choosing What Matters in an Age of Distractions* (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos, 2012), 164.

⁸ Leslie T. Hardin, “Is a Pauline Spirituality Still Viable?” *Journal of Spiritual Formation and Soul Care* 8, no. 2 (Fall 2015): 137.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 146.

¹⁰ Richard Foster, *Life with God: Reading the Bible for Spiritual Transformation* (San Francisco: HarperOne, 2008), 17.

¹¹ Chuck DeGroat, *Wholeheartedness: Busyness, Exhaustion, and Healing the Divided Self* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2016), 121.

Stanley Hauerwas: “Learning to follow Jesus and entails engaging and spiritual practices in order to partake in God’s story and develop godly virtues that exemplify the ethics of the kingdom.”¹²

Keith Anderson: “Our spiritual practices are what we do in response to something God has started within. This is not a principle of spirituality; it is the living relationship of all spirituality. Our spiritual disciplines are an action not only of human will but also of response to what God has done. We respond to the already active presence of God.”¹³

Anderson continues, “The subject is God; the focus is on God’s already present action in our lives. We listen, or we simply show up; we pay attention.”¹⁴

The Neuroscience of Spiritual Practices

The science of neuroplasticity shows that our brains were made to change and the most lasting transformation comes by experience and intentional efforts. Through the intentional, repetitive, and attentive nature of the spiritual practices, God rewires our brains, renews our minds, and forges lasting transformation in our lives.

Author Rob Moll makes the connection between neuroscience and the spiritual practices in the transformation process: “The science of neuroplasticity explains how every experience changes the brain, but it also shows that the most lasting transformation comes by intentional and attentive training.¹⁵ Moll continues,

Through prayer, worship and study, as God rewires our brains and renews our minds, he makes us into new creatures. We can allow God to work his change in our lives by intentionally pursuing encounters with him. Our brains are made to change and learn based on our experiences and our own efforts. Traditional spiritual practices seem to be rooted in the fact that modern science is only now discovering about how brains change. When we give focused attention and regular practice, whether through prayer, study, meditation, journaling or other means of attending to the presence of God, we can experience God in profound ways that lead to permanent changes in our lives.¹⁶

¹² Stanley Hauerwas, *A Community of Character: Toward a Constructive Social Ethics* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1981), 40.

¹³ Keith Anderson, *A Spirituality of Listening: Living What We Hear* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2016), 54.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 50.

¹⁵ Rob Moll, *What Your Body Knows About God: How We Are Designed to Connect, Serve and Thrive* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2014), 157.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 170.

Neurologist and author Curt Thompson: “Long before neuroscientists began advocating these approaches, believers engaged in spiritual practices that foster the mind’s development—whether we call it the undivided heart or an integrated prefrontal cortex.”¹⁷

Thompson continues, “Our brains were created with beautiful and mysterious plasticity. That means our neurons can be redirected in ways that correlate with joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. Instead of automatically following the wired sequence of our old memory; with reflection, we can choose to create new pathways. There is one requirement: we must pay attention.”¹⁸

Craig Keener acknowledges, “In such cases, walking by the Spirit rather than by the flesh requires a continuing, deliberate rethinking and retuning, with many determined decisions to believe God’s truth about our identity, until our brain is rewired enough that the new way becomes the more prevalent way.”¹⁹

Cultivating a Devoted Heart

A devoted heart is less about sincerity or good intentions than it is about training. If our hearts are not calibrated to devotion, it is likely we will not actually follow through with our obedience. Like the rich, young ruler (Mark 10:17-23), if our hearts have not been trained to love God more than other things, we will choose those things over faithfulness to God. The spiritual practices help create the habits necessary to shape our desires.

James K. A. Smith explains, “It’s crucial for us to recognize that our ultimate loves, longings, desires, and cravings are learned. And because love is a habit, our hearts are calibrated through imitating examples and being immersed in practices that, over time, index our hearts to a certain end. We learn to love, then, not primarily through acquiring knowledge about what we should love but rather through practices that form the habits of *how* we love” [emphasis his].²⁰

¹⁷ Curt Thompson, *Anatomy of the Soul: Surprising Connections between Neuroscience and Spiritual Practices That Can Transform Your Life and Relationships* (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale, 2010), 175.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 87.

¹⁹ Craig S. Keener, *The Mind of the Spirit: Paul’s Approach to Transformed Thinking* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2016), 263.

²⁰ James K. A. Smith, *You Are What You Love: The Spiritual Power of Habit* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2016), 21.

“Discipleship, we might say, is a way to curate your heart, to be attentive to and intentional about what you love.”²¹

An Embodied Faith

As integrated beings, a valuable quality of the spiritual practices is how they integrate and engage our bodies in the formation process.

Author Rob Moll instructs, “As much as we intellectually assent to our faith, the actions of our bodies must be aligned to these thoughts for us to have any success in our spiritual growth. This alignment is what makes the spiritual disciplines so valuable. By pairing thought with action, the spiritual disciplines provide the routines necessary to train our bodies, and thus our minds as well, to follow after Jesus.”²²

Noting that transformation does not happen passively, author John Ortberg expounds,

This also shows that the people in our churches will not be transformed simply by having more exegetical or theological information poured into them—no matter how correct that information may be. The information has to be embodied, has to become habituated into attitudes, patterns of response, and reflexive action. The reason that spiritual disciplines are an important part of change is that they honor the physical nature of human life. Information alone doesn’t override bad habits. God uses relationships, experiences, and practices to shape and re-shape the character of our lives that gets embedded at the most physical level.²³

²¹ Ibid., 2.

²² Moll, 116.

²³ John Ortberg, “Can Neuroscience Help Us Disciple Anyone?” *Leadership Journal* (Summer 2014): 22.

APPENDIX F: LISTENING TO GOD IN SILENCE AND SOLITUDE

When you ask someone how they are doing, what is their typical response? “I am so busy.” It is the sigh of our day. We wear busyness like a trophy and our exhaustion like a badge of honor displaying how important we are. The problem expounds when we live in a culture that thrives on packed schedules and harried lives. Consequently, there is culturally little that applauds our journey toward slowing or stopping. Barbara Brown Taylor in her book *An Altar in the World* summed up this proclivity: “In the eyes of the world there is no payoff in sitting on the porch.”¹ Practicing solitude offers us a way of living that allows us to stay connected with our own hearts and the abundant life Jesus is inviting us into. Solitude when practiced in tandem with silence allows us to find relief from the constant distraction and stimulation from a culture of noise.

Sitting on the Porch of our Soul

The idea of being alone, quietly alone, is unnerving for most Americans, even Christians. It can make us feel helpless, fearful, and vulnerable. We thrive on perpetual noise, packed schedules, and frenzied activity. The thought of pulling away from the noise and activity of the day seems frightening or too good to be true. We might not even be able to imagine what it would be like to be still long enough and quiet enough without having an agenda or a prayer list or a Bible study plan. To let go of the need to control or progress in the spiritual life may feel frightening or negligent. Perhaps, in our highly-productive, overly-active culture, such a non-productive space may feel like wasted time, a fate worst of all.

Time to Be with God

Henri Nouwen notes, “Without solitude it is virtually impossible to live a spiritual life. We do not take the spiritual life seriously if we do not set aside some time to be with God and listen to him.”² Elsewhere Nouwen writes,

...we simply need quiet time in the presence of God. Although we want to make all our time, time for God, we will never succeed if we do not reserve a minute, an

¹ Barbara Brown Taylor, *An Altar in the World: A Geography of Faith* (New York: HarperCollins, 2009), 134.

² Henri Nouwen, *Making All Things New* (New York: HarperCollins, 1981), 69.

hour, a morning, a day, a week, a month or whatever period of time for God and him alone. This asks for much discipline and risk taking because we always seem to have something more urgent to do and ‘just sitting there’ and ‘doing nothing’ often disturbs us more than it helps. But there is no way around this. Being useless and silent in the presence of our God belongs to the core of all prayer.³

Solitude offers a place for integrated transformation in the dimensions of human flourishing.

Be Still My Soul

Solitude with God stands as a premier discipline of the soul. Our soul’s well-being is guiding and causing everything that matters the most to us. Yet in the midst of a busy life, we can neglect those things that matter most. Living at break-neck speed makes us desperately in need of something real and sacred not found in the flurry of activity.

Nick Ross explains,

When the soul of a person (“that which is essential”) is left behind, when we forego a language and appreciation for soul—when we no longer know or are able to stop long enough to let our souls “catch up”—the consequences are devastating. The soul of a person, as every poet knows, needs to speak, to muse, to consider and reflect if it is to be well, if it is to act as it should, as a guide for what is most important in our lives. It’s not a matter of indulgence. It’s a matter of sanity.⁴

Solitude with God offers us a place that is sacred and inviolable that cannot be touched by outside suffering or pain. This inner sanctuary where God dwells and is known by us is where we keep those precious things that make life worth living, despite pain, despite loss. It is the place where we hang our hat of faith and hold on to hope. It becomes the place where we can pray and enjoy God. It is where we hear His voice speak to us. It becomes the place where we surrender our lives to His will and purposes and where we recognize God working below the surface of our lives. It becomes a place that can survive unfulfilled longings and recognize small signs of God’s activity in our lives. It is a place that embraces and recognizes divine appointments, opportunities for grace, and God-ordained, God-infused moments, and more.

³ Henri Nouwen, in *The Essential Henri Nouwen*, ed. Robert A. Jonas (Boston: Shambhala 2009), 98.

⁴ Nick Ross, “In the Shadow of VUCA: A Call for Soul and Sanctuary in Leadership,” *Nick Ross LinkedIn Blog*, May 11, 2016, accessed December 18, 2016, <https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/shadow-vuca-call-soul-sanctuary-leadership-nick-ross>.

“Here’s what I want you to do: Find a quiet, secluded place so you won’t be tempted to role-play before God. Just be there as simply and honestly as you can manage. The focus will shift from you to God, and you will begin to sense his grace” (Matt. 6:6, *The Message*).

Self-Awareness

The noise of our world has become a way of separating us from ourselves and from God. The continual noise restricts us from hearing what is going on deep within. The place of silence and solitude offers a place where our soul can come out. Thus, the things that have remained hidden in our lives have a chance to surface.

Henri Nouwen notes,

When we enter into solitude to be with God alone, we quickly discover how dependent we are. Without the many distractions of our daily lives, we feel anxious and tense. When nobody speaks to us, calls on us, or needs our help, we start feeling like nobodies. Then we begin wondering whether we are useful, valuable, and significant. Our tendency is to leave this fearful solitude quickly and get busy again to reassure ourselves that we are “somebodies.” But that is a temptation, because what makes us somebodies is not other people’s responses to us but God’s eternal love for us. To claim the truth of ourselves we have to cling to our God in solitude as to the One who makes us who we are.⁵

Quiet moments offer us the opportunity to pay attention to what is going on beneath the surface of our lives. Quietness can bring an awareness of a weariness, unresolved brokenness, or the like, that have unknowingly settled into our soul. The quietness then becomes a place of offering and surrender. It becomes a place of healing.

The Birthplace of Creativity

The quiet and still place offers an environment for the brain to be at rest from all the distractions of the day. In *Wired to Create: Unraveling the Mysteries of the Creative Mind*, University of Pennsylvania psychologist Scott Barry Kaufman and writer Carolyn Gregoire examine some of history’s finest “messy minds.” The result? One of the practices of the most creative people is to regularly set aside time for solitude—carving out moments to be fully removed from social distractions.

The brain is most active when it is at rest. Solitude creates the open space where we can leisurely process information and make surprising connections, and where our thoughts have a place to settle. The abilities to reflect, be inquisitive, and daydream, are given their

⁵ Henri Nouwen, “Clinging to God in Solitude,” *Henri Nouwen Society Blog*, August 16, accessed February 17, 2017, <http://henrinouwen.org/meditation/clinging-god-solitude/>.

place to be nurtured. Alone time fosters original thinking and allows God-inspired ideas to surface. It is the place where you can hear God's voice, stay involved wherever it may lead, and arrive somewhere no one has ever been before.

Jesus Practiced Silence and Solitude

Jesus lived out these rhythms, regularly seeking a solitary place where He could be alone with the Father. Amidst his earthly ministry of teaching, healing, performing miracles, and making disciples, Jesus modeled a life of silence and solitude.⁶ We, too, are invited to follow His example.

Elsewhere in Scripture we find amazing accounts during times of solitude when God was most active:

- Moses was alone on the backside of the desert when God showed up (Exod. 3:1-5).
- Gideon was by himself when he was commissioned to save Israel (Judg. 6:11).
- Elijah was alone in despair when the Lord came to him in a gentle whisper (1 Kings 19:12).
- Jesus often pulled away to be alone with His Father (Matt. 4:1-11, 14:23; Mark 1:32-39; 6:46; Luke 5:15-16; 6:12-19).
- Cornelius was by himself praying when the Angel of the Lord came to him (Acts 10:1-4).
- No one was with Peter on the housetop when he was called to the Gentiles (Acts 10:9-28).
- John wrote the Book of Revelation alone on an island (Rev. 1:9).

For many people, it is not until they hit some "wall" do they discover the value of solitude. For active and productive people, many do not feel any need for it until they run out of gas and they are forced involuntarily into a place of rest. How much better to embrace the values that silence and solitude offer on your own terms and as a way of caring for your souls?

It will take time to become comfortable with solitude and silence. It will take time to train ourselves to not require that "something happen" and give up our need to control the situation or accomplish something. It will take time to push beyond the distractions and noises of our mind. The key is to give ourselves a chance. Even when our times of silence and solitude are fraught with distractions, inner restlessness, preoccupations, boredom, or personal anxieties, I think just our showing up pleases God.

I invite you to spend some unhurried, uncluttered, spacious time with Him. Leave behind any agenda or hopes of discovering some marvelous strategy for fixing your life. Simply, sit quietly and alone with Jesus. Listen carefully for His loving voice. Embrace fully all that God desires to do in you as you sit quietly and patiently before Him.

⁶ See Matt. 4:1-11; 14:23; 17:1-9; Mark 1:35; and Luke 5:16; 6:12.

APPENDIX G: LISTENING TO GOD IN SCRIPTURE:

SEVEN WAYS TO BREATHE LIFE INTO YOUR BIBLE READING

We know reading Scripture is foundational to our faith. If we are honest, however, some of us might confess that reading our Bible has unintentionally become stale and no matter how we try it's hard to get excited about it. Too often we feel a disconnect between the Bible and our real, going-to-work, driving-the-kids-to-football-practice lives.

Equally frustrating is deciding which devotional to read. With so many devotionals to choose from, we stress over questions like, "What if I choose the wrong one?" So we make a decision. Yet too often our resolve to stick with it wanes as the year progresses. Worse, it seems no matter what devotional we choose, Scripture still feels "flat" and disconnected from our daily lives.

Perhaps it does not really matter which devotional we choose as much as our approach to Scripture. Perhaps what we need is a way to open ourselves to how God may be speaking to us in and through any particular text.

Here are some ideas to breathe life back into your Bible reading:

It's not about checking off the boxes.

For many years I followed a printed reading schedule, which often covered reading the Bible in a year. This kind of generic format was helpful but often there was an anxiousness to get through it and I felt guilt-ridden if I missed a day. Then I had to "make up" the days before I could catch up to the current day's reading. The motivation simply became "staying on task." In my efforts to "get it right," I missed the opportunity to listen or to linger because I had so much catching up to do. What God wanted to say to my heart was pushed aside in tenacious determination and imposed expectations. How often had I been so focused on "getting it done" that I missed God's presence in the midst of it?

In order for Scripture to take root in our hearts, our engagement of Scripture must go beyond an obligatory or cursory exercise. Our approach to Scripture must embrace different qualities such as attentiveness, leisurely reflection, openness, receptivity and response. In other words, as Marjorie Thompson points out, our focus should not be

about “speed or volume but with depth and receptivity.”¹ As we approach God’s Word through this more reflective posture, we begin to “see” things that we might have missed in our rush to get through it. This is where the words of Scripture begin to shape us, and Colossians 3:16, “Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly” becomes a reality in our lives.

John Wesley gave clear insight, “Be sure to read, not cursorily or hastily, but leisurely, seriously, and with great attention; with proper pauses and intervals, and that you may allow time for the enlightenings of divine grace.”²

Do not use the Bible to try and “fix” something that is not right.

People often read the Bible to find some formula that will solve a pressing need of the moment. “In our desire for a packaged, user-friendly, ‘just-tell-me-what-to-do’ life of faith, we distort the Bible into an owners’ manual for successful living.”³ Part of the problem, of course, comes when we no longer need something fixed, we no longer have any reason to encounter Scripture. The Bible is holy ground on which to encounter God, not a manipulation tool to get what we want.

Do not read simply to gather more information.

Biblical faithfulness has to be more than exegetical prowess. Information alone is not enough to experience real and lasting transformation. It is entirely possible to keep acquiring more and more information about the Bible but be less and less transformed by that knowledge. This could explain why so many people can read God’s Word and remain relatively unchanged by it. Too often we have approached God’s Word as simply a resource for teaching, or as an inspirational handbook for living, or as a mine of proof-texts for defending our dogmas, rather than the revelation of Christ to our hearts.

The formative qualities of Scripture happens by way of an engagement of the heart as Scripture gets internalized and integrated in our being so that it can have a much-needed way with us. As Robert Mullholland sums up in this book, *Shaped by the Word*, it is not about us mastering a text, but “it is to allow the text master you.”⁴

¹ Marjorie J. Thompson, *Soul Feast, Newly Revised Edition: An Invitation to the Christian Spiritual Life* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2014), 18.

² John Wesley, *The Works of the Rev. John Wesley, A.M.* (London: John Mason, 1842), 200.

³ Richard Foster, *Life With God: Reading the Bible for Spiritual Transformation* (New York: HarperCollins, 1984), 60.

⁴ Robert Mullholland, *Shaped by the Word: The Power of Scripture in Spiritual Formation* (Nashville, TN: Upper Room, 1985), 54.

Do not assume you know what it means.

To truly allow the text to come alive and connect with our lives, we must come to the text with humility and responsiveness. To truly “hear” will require we put aside our agenda and need to control the text and be willing to listen with a sense of wonder, vulnerability, and curiosity.

This approach will also require that we suspend our preconceived judgments and surrender ourselves to the text. Do you remember the “Magic Eye” that was popular in the 1980s? It required us to look differently, to see through to the “picture in the picture.” It required us to bring our whole self to the picture with openness, curiosity, and time. It was always exhilarating to “discover” the mysteriously hidden picture that was not obvious to the untrained eye.

Alive words should be read in an alive manner

As soon as we say, “Oh, I know what means,” referring to a particular text, we may miss how God may be speaking to us in a fresh new way. It is critical to approach the Bible as living and active and sharper than a two-edged sword (Heb. 4:12-13), not as metaphor but as reality. These words are not merely words on a page, but words that connect to the core of us.

In other words, because it is living and active, there is always more to discover. We are to experience the mystery of the gospel, not just learn about it. When we approach Scripture as the living word of God, Scripture invites us to pay attention to how we connect with God in ways we never dreamed possible.

Just showing up counts.

Too often we feel if there was not an “Ah-ha!” moment in our devotional time, our time was wasted time. Not true! Again, because God’s Word is alive and active, we can be confident that there is more going on underneath the surface of our lives than what we see or feel. There is a shift-taking place undetected in our souls. There is an anchor secretly being forged that will keep us in a time of need. When nothing seems to be happening, we can remain confident that just being with Jesus is transformative. “I have set the LORD continually before me; because He is at my right hand, I will not be shaken. Therefore my heart is glad, and my glory rejoices; my flesh also will dwell securely” (Ps. 16:8-9, NASB).

You have to live it.

Our engagement with Scripture has to make a difference in the way we live. The point is not to just believe things about Jesus but to encounter Him in the text in such a way that His presence becomes a shaping influence in our lives which is lived out in real,

life-giving ways to others. Eugene Peterson explains, “In order to read the Scriptures adequately and accurately, it’s necessary at the same time to live them.”⁵

“But if you just use my words in Bible studies and don’t work them into your life, you are like a stupid carpenter who built his house on the sandy beach. When a storm rolled in and the waves came up, it collapsed like a house of cards” (Matt. 7:26-27, *The Message*).

For all of our thoughtful engagement with Scripture, if it is not lived out, expressed in love, compassion and mercy to others, our hearts have not been formed as we think they have. Our faith must become an embodied faith, where our witness to the world is based more on the weight of our actions than the strength of our arguments.

⁵ Eugene Peterson, *Eat This Book: A Conversation in the Art of Spiritual Reading* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2006), xii.

APPENDIX H: THE USE OF THE BIBLE IN THE QUIET TIME¹

W. Graham Scroggie, in an article in the *Pentecostal Evangel* dated April 29, 1944 (reprint dated December 8, 2013), earnestly explains the necessary conditions and postures needed for the proper and effective use of the Bible the daily quiet time. One can assume Scroggie's portrayal of attending to God's presence, much like the contemplative approach, as inherently foundational in our Pentecostal heritage. Scroggie speaks of the precondition of "stillness within."² Scroggie instructs, "We must definitely recognize stillness of our soul as our need and go to Him about it, and be very definite about it."³ Inner stillness cultivates spiritual awareness. Stillness also offers a concrete expression of one's willingness to be in the moment, a willingness to release one's agenda, and to cease striving and receive whatever God wants to give.

Expectancy, Scroggie adds, also percolates to the top as essential in one's quiet time, noting that it produces gladness in one's soul. Scroggie explains, "If we expose all our soul to the Holy Spirit, we shall have many a thrilling surprise."⁴ An unhurried posture of anticipation creates an awareness of the Holy Spirit's movements that might otherwise go unnoticed.

Finally, Scroggie notes that one must have an object or purpose for the quiet time. The purpose or object of the quiet time is not to prepare for a sermon or teaching a class but to "nourish and upbuild one's own soul."⁵ Rather than concentrate on the benefit of others the focus of such time encompasses personal self-examination and self-renewal. Scroggie concludes,

The preparation of one's own soul is the best preparation for every service. Make that perfectly clear to yourself each day as you "enter in." I do not stand to help anyone else by neglecting myself. I cannot convey to others divine grace if I myself have a neglected leak. The object, therefore, of the Quiet Time should be

¹ W. Graham Scroggie, "The Use of the Bible in the Quiet Time," *Pentecostal Evangel*, April 29, 1944, 5. Reprint *Pentecostal Evangel*, no. 5196, December 8, 2013, 10.

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid.

self-examination and self-renewing.⁶

⁶ Ibid.

APPENDIX I: LISTENING TO GOD IN PRAYER

All Kinds of Prayers

Without a proper understanding of prayer it can develop in to a one-sided affair. Without an awareness of prayer as more than a time, a place or an event, one can fall into the trap of seeing and experiencing prayer as an inconvenience or devotional drudgery. As a result, one's prayer life can become stuck in myopic patterns and routines and one can remain unaware of the vast and expanse forms of prayer. Additionally, in a distracted culture, many experience the difficulty of being in fully present to the here and now, a quality essential for prayer to be integrated in to a life of faith.

If we understand it is God's nature to seek us out and to draw us into participation with what he is doing, then it becomes a way of communing with God and paying attention to Him. Prayer, then, becomes a way to hear God's voice, inviting us to follow the way of Jesus, and live a life of responsive obedience in ways that allow God to bring about His purposes.

Prayer is not about pestering or trying to manipulate God into doing what we want Him to do. If we think of prayer in terms of trying to get God's attention to serve our purposes, we will only turn to God in prayer when we need something. Neither is prayer so much about finding the right words to say to God (or saying them in just the right way) as it is a posture of the soul toward God. Prayer is so much less about technique or a formula to strong-arm God into intervening and make our life better. Rather than a set time and place, or even words, prayer is more about the habit of turning our heart toward God throughout our day.

Thus, prayer, whatever shape it takes, is becoming a simple directing of our attention always to God. Perhaps our real task in prayer "is to attune ourselves to the conversation already going on deep in our hearts."¹

Author Richard Foster writes,

Our problem is that we assume prayer is something to master the way we master algebra or auto mechanics. That puts us in the "on-top" position, where we are

¹ Marjorie J. Thompson, *Soul Feast: An Invitation to the Christian Spiritual Life* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2014), 31.

competent and in control. But when praying, we come “underneath,” where we calmly and deliberately surrender control and become incompetent. ... The truth of the matter is, we all come to prayer with a tangled mass of motives, altruistic and selfish, merciful and hateful, loving and bitter. Frankly, this side of eternity we will never unravel the good from the bad, the pure from the impure. God is big enough to receive us with all our mixture. That is what grace means, and not only are we saved by it, we live by it as well. And we pray by it.²

Often prayer can become an empty habit or a mindless exercise. There are times when we might realize that our praying is an almost autopilot activity. We are speaking words, but we are not always sure they are expressing our heart to God. “Dear Jesus, thank you for this day... .” Sometimes, instead of praying, we can find ourselves thinking about praying, evaluating how we are praying, figuring out what is proper or most effective.

Perhaps prayer becomes drudgery because prayer has become one dimensional, uncreative and disconnected from the realities of our daily life. Prayer can take on many forms depending on what is needed in the moment. Identifying these prayers help us engage in prayer in a more intentional, creative, and formative way.

The Jesus Prayer

This is the oldest of post-biblical, early Christian recorded prayers, in place as early as the fourth century. It is strongly rooted in the Gospels, an amalgam of many who called out to Jesus. It combines the prayer of the tax collector from Luke 18:13 (“God, be merciful to me, a sinner”) with the earliest confession of the Christian church (“Jesus is Lord”). The cry for mercy, for God’s unrelenting steadfast love, is a constant of Scripture. To cry out for mercy is not in God’s willingness to have mercy, but in our forgetting that we need it. Lapsing into ideas of self-sufficiency, asking for mercy reminds us that we are still poor and needy; all the more reason for us to make it a practice.

The long form of the Jesus Prayer is, “Lord Jesus Christ, Son of the living God, have mercy on me, a sinner.” The short form is “Lord, have mercy.” It is such an appropriate prayer for any circumstance, for always we are in need of God’s mercy.

Examples: My child is sick. “Lord, have mercy.”
We are in financial difficulty. “Lord, Jesus, have mercy.”
Our family is in crisis. “Christ Jesus, have mercy.”

² Richard J. Foster, *Prayer: Finding the Heart’s True Home* (San Francisco: HarperCollins, 1992), 7-8.

Breath Prayer

Traditionally, this is a short, simple prayer that can be said or thought in a single breath. Both in Hebrew and in Greek, the words for breath and spirit are the same (*ruach*, *pneuma*, respectively). The Breath Prayer reminds us that God's Holy Spirit is nearer to us than our own breath. It stands in contrast to long, lofty prayers and is perhaps the most authentic prayer we pray. Using this kind of prayer with every breath is a way of living out Paul's instruction to "pray without ceasing."

Breath prayers are especially easy to learn and practice and can be returned to throughout your day. Practically speaking, breath prayers can also be when you are "in the moment." When you feel intimidated, fearful, or anxious these prayers allow us to respond like Nehemiah: "*Give me strength*" (Neh. 6:9).

Breath prayers from the heart crying out to God are among some of the Great Prayers of the Bible:

- Matthew 8:25 (the disciples on the Sea of Galilee in a storm)
"*Lord, save us!*"
- Matthew 9:27 (two blind men)
"*Have mercy on us!*"
- Matthew 14:30 (Peter, when Jesus walked on the water and Peter started to walk on the water, but began to sink)
"*Lord, save me!*"

Other Examples:

- Holy Spirit, give me peace.
- Father, show me Your love.
- Jesus, you are all I need.

Scripture Prayers

Praying Scripture allows us to turn God's Word over in our mind in such a way that the words of Scripture to become our own. Combining both Bible reading and prayer allows us to "pray through" a passage allowing the depth of its truth to be more and more revealed in our hearts. When Scripture is personalized as prayer we focus on God's Word itself and it begins to direct our thoughts, attitudes and ultimately our actions.

Examples:

- My soul magnifies the Lord!
- Be still and know that I am God.
- Create in me a clean heart, O God.
- Be Thou my vision, O Lord of my heart.
- Shout to the Lord, all the earth, let us sing!

Liturgical Prayer

Many who were raised in the Protestant tradition might not be familiar or comfortable with liturgical prayer. This prayer may be viewed as mechanical, insincere, and meaninglessly repetitive. Yet, any form of prayer, even spontaneous prayers, can be mindlessly performed (“going through the motions”) with little attention to what is being said or a real heart connection.

The repetitive nature of liturgy, as it turns out, proves to be part its strength. Author Adele Calhoun instructs, “Liturgy is grounded in repetition, not improvisation. Liturgical patterns call us to let go of our compulsion to lead or plunge ahead in any way we want. Their rhythms draw us into established patterns of attending to God. They allow the prayers of others to become your own when your heart feels empty, allowing the repetitive nature of the liturgy to shape your life. It allows us to stay in dialogue with God when our spontaneous prayers run dry.”³ In this way, when we do not have to think about what words we are going to say next, we are free to fully enter into the act of praying.

Too often prayer can lapse into self-preoccupation, and liturgical prayer can also be effective in displacing our self-centeredness and lift us beyond ourselves. At other times, liturgical prayers, can connect us with fellow believers, past and present, with the with the rich deep prayers of others and give us words that express our soul’s cry to God when we have none.

Examples of Liturgical Prayers:

Christ Be With Me

Christ be with me, Christ within me,
 Christ behind me, Christ before me,
 Christ beside me, Christ to win me,
 Christ to comfort and restore me.
 Christ beneath me, Christ above me,
 Christ in quiet, Christ in danger,
 Christ in hearts of all that love me,
 Christ in mouth of friend and stranger.

This was taken from a section of “St. Patrick’s Breastplate” prayer credited to St. Patrick, early 5th century.⁴

³ Adele Ahlberg Calhoun, *Spiritual Disciplines Handbook: Practices That Transform Us* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2005), 239-240.

⁴ To read the prayer in its entirety, go to http://prayerfoundation.org/st_patricks_breastplate_prayer.htm.

A Sample of Morning prayer:

“Lord, may my soul rise to meet you as the day rises to meet the sun.”

“Dear Lord, before I hit the ground running, I pause to be claimed again by you, to be reminded of what matters most, to offer myself for your service in whatever opportunities you give me this day. Thank you for another day and for a safe night passed in your care.”⁵

A Sample of Evening prayer

“Dear God, soon I will sleep. Grateful for this day with all its joys and all its complications, I give myself to your loving care and I am happy to rest and your love. Forgive me for my errors, my neglect, my hard heartedness of today. Lord, have mercy. Amen.”⁶

Saint Theresa of Avila’s Prayer

May today there be peace within.

May you trust God that you are exactly where you are meant to be

May you not forget the infinite possibilities that are born of faith.

May you use those gifts that you have received, and pass on the love that has been given to you.

May you be content knowing you are a child of God. Let this presence settle into your bones, and allow your soul the freedom to sing, dance, praise and love.

It is there for each and every one of us.⁷

Praying the Psalms

The Book of Psalms is a prayer book and hymnal combined. These prayers, spanning time and cultures, have helped God’s people express their prayers. The Psalms encompass the full range of being human into prayer. Praying the Psalms may not be familiar to most of us as a “formal” kind of prayer but the actual practice of praying with

⁵ Lonni Collins Pratt and Father Daniel Homan, *Benedict’s Way: An Ancient Monk’s Insights for a Balanced Life* (Chicago: Loyola Press, 2000), 43.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Maureen Dillon, “14 of the Most Powerful Peace Quotes from Teresa of Avila,” *Cora Evans Blog*, accessed November 11, 2017, <https://www.coraevans.com/blog/article/14-Of-The-Most-Powerful-Peace-Quotes-From-St-Teresa-Of-Avila>.

Scripture has formed our evangelical tradition for many years. However, for evangelicals, prayer and Scripture reading are inseparable.

George Whitfield spoke of, “praying over every line and word”⁸

Thomas Merton explains,

No matter whether we understand a Psalm at first or not, we should take it up with this end in view: to make use of it as a prayer that will enable us to surrender ourselves to God. If we keep this one thing in mind, the various Psalms will gradually yield their mysteries to us, and we will begin to find out that certain ones fit our own condition and our own experience better than others. This recognition of a special appropriateness for our own lives, in particular Psalms, is an actual grace of God. It is an invitation of the Holy Spirit, urging us to pay more attention to these Psalms, to use them more frequently in our prayers and meditations, to adopt them for our own use.⁹

And, finally, Eugene Peterson instructs, “Most Christians for most of the Christian centuries have learned to pray by praying the Psalms.”¹⁰ So we see that praying Scripture isn’t new, perhaps it is just new to us. In your daily reading of the Psalms, try taking the passage and rewording in your own words, turning it into a prayer.

Prayer of Petition

God invites us to ask him for things. In fact, it’s encouraged in the Bible and should be seen as a part of normal prayer. “Ask and it will be given to you,” says Jesus (Luke 11:9). In the upper room discourse, recorded in John 13-17, six times Jesus invites us to ask God for anything (John 14:13-14; 15:7; 15:16; 16:24; 16:26) in His name (Matt. 7:8; 7:11). I am convinced we have not because we ask not. God invites us to ask for His help in our needs. “Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need” (Heb. 4:16).

Speaking in Tongues

Scripture reveals speaking with tongues the initial sign or evidence of the Holy Spirit’s infilling as one of the gifts for building up of the body of Christ. However, speaking in tongues can be equally as powerful as a personal discipline for spiritual growth and

⁸ George Whitfield, as quoted by James Gordon, in *Evangelical Spirituality* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 1991), 61.

⁹ Thomas Merton, *Praying the Psalms* (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1956), 17-18.

¹⁰ Eugene Peterson, *The Message Study Bible* (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 2012), 775.

vitality. Speaking in tongues serves as a private prayer language for personal edification (1 Cor. 14:4). Praying in tongues as a daily practice can help us to be ever-conscious of God's indwelling presence in the present moment, an essential movement of the spiritual life.

Praying in tongues offers direct access to God with Spirit-directed prayers, allowing us to pray things through us about which our natural mind knows nothing. "For anyone who speaks in a tongue does not speak to people but to God. Indeed, no one understands them; they utter mysteries by the Spirit" (1 Cor. 14:2). There is freedom from trying to figure things out and abandonment to God's will and ways in such prayers.

In a similar manner, the Holy Spirit helps us pray when we do not know how to pray. How often do we pray not knowing what is actually needed in a given situation? Most often we pray from a position of not knowing. Praying in the Spirit allows us to join God in the prayer He is already praying and join Him in that prayer. In doing so, and amazingly, Scripture assures us we pray in alignment with the will of God. "In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us through wordless groans. And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for God's people in accordance with the will of God" (Rom. 8:26-27). Speaking in tongues offers all this, and so much more and becomes all the different ways the Spirit shapes and orders our lives.

Listening Prayer

"Listening is the fundamental stance of the person of faith"¹¹ and a vital part of our faith journey. Yet, almost everything in our world inhibits our ability to sustain any kind of focus or attention. Because we are compelled to accomplish as much as possible as quickly as possible, we skim over our lives, hoping somewhere along the way we will hear God. Most often we do not. We are so consumed with the goings-on around us there is little or no practice or opportunity for sustained listening. God continues to speak long after we've gotten up from our devotional place or closed our Bible. The ability to listen and hear God's voice grows over time with practice, yet too often we grow weary with the invitation to linger in quietness or get impatient with the discipline it takes to listen deeply.

For many of us, we try to hear God's voice on the run and then always wonder why He doesn't speak. Once we start practicing attentive listening we may be amazed how much God has to say! There are just no shortcuts. Listening will take time. Our busy schedules will scream that we need to simply "get on with it" to the task at hand. As Gordon Smith, in *On the Way*, points out, "It is inconceivable to think that God would give us so much

¹¹ Christine Valters Paintner and Lucy Wynkoop, *Lectio Divina: Contemplative Awakening and Awareness* (New York: Paulist Press, 2008), 17.

to do that we can no longer spend extended time with Him. Listening doesn't detract from our service; it empowers it."¹²

Eldon Trueblood notes,

Among the important lessons that the spiritual giants can teach us, and on which they have striking agreement, is that we are not likely to experience reality in prayer unless we practice a great deal of silent waiting. Far from prayer being a matter of words, it is often, at its best, freedom from words, since our own chatter can prevent our listening. Important as it may be for us to express our deepest desires to God, much as a little child expresses his desires to his earthly father, it is even more important to be truly receptive in order to learn what the Divine Father is trying to say to us. This is because, though we already know what we want, we do not know what God wants.¹³

The Daily Office or Fixed Hour of Prayer

The term Daily Office (also called *Fixed Hour of Prayer* or *Divine Office*) differs from what we label today as quiet time or devotions. When most people describe their devotional life, the emphasis tends to be on “getting filled up for the day.” The root of the Daily Office is not so much turning to God to get something but consist, intentional patterns of attending to God throughout the day.

The word “office” comes from the Latin words *opus*, “work,” and *facere*, “performance of a task, do.” For the Early Church, the Daily Office was always the “performance of the work of God.”

The Daily Office was structured around seven prayer periods throughout the day:

- Vigils: 3:45 AM (middle of the night)
- Lauds: 6:00 AM (Pre-dawn)
- Prime: 6:25 AM (“First” hour)
- Sext: 12:15 PM (Sixth hour)
- None: 2:00 PM (Ninth hour)
- Vespers: 5:40 PM (Evening hour)
- Compline: 7:40 PM (Before bed).

This formal approach to the Daily Office probably seems an unrealistic endeavor for our busy lives. This practice need not be abandoned as unworkable. Your time of prayer may only include stopping a few times throughout your day. Decide when and how often to pray that best fits your daily routine. The use of modern technology can assist in

¹² Gordon Smith, *On the Way: A Guide to Christian Spirituality* (Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 2001), 72.

¹³ Elton Trueblood, *The New Man for Our Time* (New York: Harper & Row, 1970), 73.

signaling when those set times arrive. The point is to make tangible reminders in the midst of daily life to attend to God's presence.

The Daily Office usually contains 4 elements:

1. *Stopping* - This is the essence of the Daily Office. At each Office we create the time and the space in our busy lives to meet with God.
2. *Centering* - "Be still before the Lord and wait patiently for him" (Ps. 37:7). Stillness and waiting allow us to give God our undivided attention.
3. *Silence*—The noise of our world has become a way of separating us from ourselves and from God. Silence enables us to be present to God in the moment and prepares us to hear the words of God.
4. *Scripture*—A psalm, a parable, a biblical story, a saying of Jesus, or a word of Paul, Peter, James, Jude, or John can help us to focus our attention on God's presence.

APPENDIX J: EMBRACING SABBATH:
THE CURE FOR RUNAWAY SOULS

For many, observing a regular or weekly Sabbath has not been part of their traditional rhythm of their faith practices. However, in an increasingly distracted and frenzied culture, including a leadership culture of pounding productivity, the need to embrace a rhythm different from all our drivenness and make space for intentional rest becomes paramount.

In the midst of our scattered lives God offers an invitation to rest and to embrace those things more essential to our flourishing as a people. Our souls, minds, and bodies were never created for unceasing activity, and to ignore such a limit can leave us emotionally, physically, and spiritually depleted. Tragically, we often do not recognize this desperate state as we step into a place of leadership.

Our Lives Are in Danger

The pace of life can leave us struggling for a space to breathe. To whiz through our obligations without time for a single, mindful breath has become the model of success. Yet, this is our undoing. Many could nod in agreement with Job: “I have no peace, no quietness; I have no rest but only turmoil” (3:26). Author Wayne Muller laments,

Our culture invariably supposes that action and accomplishment are better than rest, that doing something ... anything ... is better than doing nothing. Because of our desire to succeed, to meet these ever-growing expectations, we do not rest. Because we do not rest, we lose our way. We miss the compass points that would show us where to go, we by pass the nourishment that would give us succor. We miss the quiet that would give us wisdom. We miss the joy and love born of effortless delight. Poisoned by this hypnotic belief that good things come only through unceasing determination and tireless effort, we can never truly rest. And ... for want of rest, our lives are in danger.¹

¹ Wayne Muller, *Sabbath: Restoring the Sacred Rhythm of Rest* (New York: Bantam, 1999), 1.

The danger of all this endless dizzying haste is that our bodies will suffer, our souls will suffer, and our relationships with God and with others will suffer. The Chinese pictograph for “busy” is composed of two characters: *heart* and *killing*. Hurry kills everything from creativity to compassion. Yet, as author Barbara Brown Taylor notes regarding the consistent practice of Sabbath, “Practicing it over and over again they become accomplished at saying no, which is how they gradually become able to resist the culture’s killing rhythms of driven-ness and depletion, compulsion and collapse.”²

A Rhythm of Rest

All of creation operates on pre-established rhythms. Muller notes,

There is a rhythm in our waking activity and the body’s need for sleep. There is a rhythm in the way day dissolves into night, and night into morning. There is a rhythm as the active growth of spring and summer is quieted by the necessary dormancy of fall and winter. There is the tidal rhythm, a deep, eternal conversation between land and the great sea.³

In a similar manner, our souls, minds, and bodies were created with the essential rhythm of activity and rest. We were not created with the ability to bear the unrelenting weight of the life and ministry. To ignore these rhythms can have far-reaching and profound consequences in all these dimensions of living. Ultimately, we can choose to rest or life has a way of choosing it for us. Daniel Spaite cautions, “If you don’t give your body its Sabbaths, your body’s own system of checks and balances will take them back.”⁴

Noting these essential rhythms, Ruth Haley Barton writes, “Sabbath keeping is the linchpin of a life lived in sync with the rhythms that God himself built into our world. Its rhythms match how we were created; only in its keeping can we truly flourish.”⁵ Rest was never meant to be a luxury; it is a necessity. The literal meaning of Sabbath in the Hebrew is “Stop it. Quit.” It can also mean to catch our breath. We are not only invited to join God in His work, but according to the fourth Commandment, we are invited to share in His rest:

Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is a sabbath to the Lord your God. On it you shall

² Barbara Brown Taylor, *An Altar in the World: A Geography of Faith* (New York: HarperCollins, 2009), 134.

³ Muller, 1.

⁴ Daniel, Spaite, *Time Bomb in the Church* (Kansas City, MO: Beacon Hill Press, 1999), 66.

⁵ Ruth Haley Barton, *Sacred Rhythms: Arranging Our Lives for Spiritual Transformation* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity), 2006.

not do any work, neither you, nor your son or daughter, nor your male or female servant, nor your animals, nor any foreigner residing in your towns. For in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but he rested on the seventh day. Therefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy (Exo. 20:8-11).

Sabbath was designed to be a gift for God's people and offers a rhythm of time and a rhythm of celebration that we can live in. It has to do with setting aside a day in which we live differently and we experience life differently. It means being set apart as a people and setting apart time in a way that makes it different from our obsessive patterns of relating to the world.

Menuha is the Hebrew word for rest, but it is better translated as joyous repose, tranquility, or delight. God did not rest in the sense of taking a nap or chilling out; instead, God celebrated and delighted in His creation. It seems fitting that we should build into our days a rhythm of rest, an intentional pausing that we might delight in God. Contrasted with the sorrows, struggles, and pain of the other six days, it stands out as distinct, i.e., as "holy." Author Dan Allender explains, "Holy simply means set aside, not lost in the sea of everything else."⁶

In Jesus's six recorded clashes with religious leaders over Sabbath keeping, Jesus did not dispute the significance of the Sabbath. Instead He addressed appropriate behavior and embraced the qualities of it. For example, when the Pharisees questioned Jesus and His disciples about breaking the Sabbath law for plucking heads of grain on the Sabbath, Jesus firmly establishes the foundation of Sabbath keeping: "The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath" (Mark 2:23-27).

Jesus reiterates Sabbath as a sheer gift, not something to which one must slavishly conform. Jesus consistently healed on the Sabbath, whether it was a disabled, paralyzed man on a mat or a blind man or a disabled woman. He healed people on the Sabbath because the Sabbath was about giving life to people.

Psalms 92 titled "A Psalm for the Sabbath" captures the spirit of Sabbath when it gives these instructions: Give thanks, make music, declare God's love and faithfulness, rejoice with a spirit of gladness, sing a song of joy, exalt the Lord, celebrate God's justice, praise God for His provision and power.

Practicing Sabbath

While not advocating a strict adherence to Jewish Sabbath as it is traditionally practiced, let us focus on the invitation of Jesus for abundant life. As a way of example, but certainly not prescribed, let me share some hints:

⁶ Dan Allender, *Sabbath* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2009), 27.

First, plan for it.

Practicing Sabbath has to be intentional. Otherwise it will get gobbled up in the same hurried, frantic pace of the rest of the week. When my kids were growing up, I tried to protect Saturday night; no one was allowed to stay out late. Typically, Sunday is not a Sabbath day for ministry leaders. Choose a different day. Whatever day you choose, however, intentionally make it a true Sabbath day.

Second, it involves rest.

Take a nap. Sit in a lawn chair. Sometimes the most spiritual thing you can do is sleep. Resist the urge to label this time as “wasteful.” Resist the urge to feel guilty. Listen to your body. Move in a different intentional pace from the drivenness of the week.

Third, it involves delight.

What brings you delight? Do *that*. This could mean doing one thing that brings pleasure and refreshes the soul. Read (for leisure, not self-improvement); eat (perhaps design special meals eaten only on Sabbath); go for a walk (a walk without a purpose, no need for insight or revelation); visit with friends; hike; read a Psalm or favorite Scripture; play music; enjoy nature; pray (prayer is like a mini-Sabbath); read the Bible (linger and savor it; read it differently than normal); play games with your kids; cultivate gratitude; do something pleasurable like write a poem, cultivate a garden or go for a long motorcycle ride on a hot day; gaze at the stars; lay in the grass; pay attention to the things you might have missed; pay attention to God’s presence and movement in your life; take a long hot bath with bubbles; extend forgiveness; or ask for forgiveness.

Fourth, involve family and friends.

In practicing Sabbath it is not necessary to stop moving altogether. It is a matter of moving in different, more meaningful ways. It is a day when we not only rest, but when we clear away the bustle to attend to God in a particular way such as in community. Invite friends over, have dinner, play games, share with one another what God is doing in your lives. Celebrate the work of God in each other.

Finally, be sure to incorporate gratitude.

Sabbath should help us slow down to notice and appreciate the things of God, the ways of God, and the blessings of God. As we practice gratefulness, we enjoy Sabbath. Life is meant to be much different—fuller, richer, deeper, slower, from what it is. Sabbath is a gift to restore your runaway soul.

In the spirit of the Celtic Christians who had a special prayer for every activity, here is an “Entering Sabbath” prayer.

Father, Son, Spirit, I offer this time as a Sabbath of rest and communion with You.

Enlighten my eyes to see whatever Your Spirit is showing me.

Open my ears to hear whatever Your Spirit is saying to me.

Quiet my heart with Your songs of love.

Draw my mind to focus on things above, and not on empty human concerns.

May that which blesses me today, become a blessing to others tomorrow.

I ask in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

A Sabbath Liturgy

Discuss with your family (including kids and teens) how you might try to arrange your Sabbaths so everyone can do some of what is life-giving, refreshing, and delightful. Practice Sabbath as best you can. Accept less than perfect. Here is a simple “liturgy” you might consider:

At the first sign of stars to appear in the evening sky on Saturday (or the night before the day you choose as *your* Sabbath):

- Light 2 candles (rest and freedom)
- Put all handheld electronics in a Sabbath box
- Read Psalm 92 (A Psalm for the Sabbath day)
- Recite the “Prayer to Welcome the Sabbath.”⁷ (Or write out your own!)
- Dinner (same each week ... to keep it simple) (hopefully with family)
- Bless your children
- Go to bed early
- The next day (Sunday, or the day you choose as *your* Sabbath) ... start with a prayer together
- Do what brings life! (Go for a walk, play with your grandchildren, garden, read a book for pleasure, lay in the grass, watch kids play baseball, etc.)
- End the Sabbath day with a prayer

⁷ Shane Claiborne, Jonathan Wilson-Hartgrove, and Enuma Okoro, *Common Prayer: A Liturgy for Ordinary Radicals* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2010), 554.

APPENDIX K: EXPANDING THE WAYS

WE EXPERIENCE GOD¹

As we consider the role of the spiritual practices in the life of a believer, author Shauna Neiquist made some key observations how the spiritual practices need to change and be refashioned in new seasons of faith. Each spiritual practice becomes a tool in a toolbox that can become faithful companions in our ever-changing journey of faith. Neiquist explains, “Because for a while, the tools that worked for me were youth group, morning quiet times, and singing worship songs. Then for a while the tools that worked for me were poetry, silence, sitting by the ocean. Then writing, then singing again. In this season, centering prayer, truth-telling with my closest friends, meditating on sections of scripture.”² In this way, spiritual practices are most beneficial and fitting when they are allowed to adjust in ways that are most attuned to the shifting of one’s spiritual journey.

Too often Christians don’t have the language or the tools to adapt to the ebb and flow of the spiritual life and wrongly conclude they are losing their faith. Instead, however, what might feel like a spiritual undoing could simply mean one has outgrown the familiar tools that worked in the past. This seeming crisis of faith could be a catalyst in looking for new and surprising ways to connect with God. Neiquist notes, “So much of spiritual growth, I’m finding, is adding tools to the toolbox, and connecting with God in ways that are right for each season of life. Some seasons require poetry, and others preaching. Some season mystery, some music. Some seasons call for silence, some for deep connection.”³

Thus, spiritual practices are limitless as they embrace all the ways we respond to a fresh work of grace by the Holy Spirit in our lives. (Note: The classical practices such as Scripture reading, silence and solitude, and prayer remain essential to cultivating a life with God no matter where we are in our spiritual journey.) Neiquist concludes,

God wants to connect with us, and He created each one of us so uniquely. It makes sense, then, that we would connect with Him in all sorts of unique ways,

¹ Shauna Neiquist, “Expanding the Ways We Experience God,” *Relevant Magazine*, April 21, 2015, accessed November 9, 2017, <http://www.relevantmagazine.com/god/practical-faith/expanding-ways-we-experience-god#TuemSzjlih16jjfG.99>

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

and that as our lives change, our ways of experiencing faith would change, too. The toolbox, clunky image that it is, makes me feel hopeful, like my journey of faith will be long and surprising, full of discovery and beauty, full of silence and singing, each in their seasons, full of experiences with God that I can't even yet imagine from where I am right now.⁴

⁴ Ibid.

APPENDIX L: THE IMPORTANCE OF SELF-EXAMINATION

The practices for being present to self must percolate to the top of essential components of leadership. Leading in a distracted culture (and leading as distracted individuals) requires practices which allow enough space and reflection for ministry leaders to ask probing questions such as, “How is my life unfolding? Is this how I want to live?” Noting the importance of self-examination in a leader’s life, author David Benner proposes, “Careful attention to one’s inner life is an indispensable prerequisite for caring for the souls of others.”¹ Ultimately, self-knowledge is at the heart of the spiritual journey and faithful leadership.

What Others Are Saying

Author Ruth Haley Barton instructed, “Spiritual leadership emerges from our willingness to stay involved with our own soul.”²

Author Patricia Brown noted, “The failure of leaders to care for their own souls, their inner life, is deeply troubling not only for themselves but also for the persons in the misery they cause. The destructive consequences from leaders who fail to work out of a deep sense of their inner self are staggering. Leaders have a particular responsibility to know what is going on inside their souls.”³

C. Michael Thompson concluded, “We have long ago dispensed with the notion that leadership is a set of competencies to be learned or just so many boxes to be checked. Admitting instead that, as Warren Bennis writes, it is the ‘integrated human being’ among us—the individuated, mature, and developing man or woman—who is most fit for

¹ David Benner, *Care of Souls: Revisioning Christian Nurture and Counsel* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1998), 33.

² Ruth Haley Barton, *Strengthening the Soul of Your Leadership* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2008), 23.

³ Patricia D. Brown, *Learning to Lead From Your Spiritual Center* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1996), 11.

the task of leadership, we must look more carefully at the role the inner life plays in becoming that person.”⁴

Trappist monk Thomas Merton cautioned, “He who attempts to act and do things for others or for the world without deepening his own self-understanding, freedom, integrity, and capacity to love, will not have anything to give others. He will communicate to them nothing but the contagion of his own obsessions, his aggressiveness, his ego-centered ambitions, his delusions about ends and means, his doctrinaire prejudices and ideas.”⁵

New Testament scholar William Barclay made this observation: “One of the great neglected duties of the Christian life is self examination, and maybe self examination is neglected because it is so humiliating an exercise.”⁶

Author Kerry Walters explained, “Busyness has a way of shielding us from a self-scrutiny that can reveal unpleasant truths about our reasons for doing what we do. By immersing ourselves in the frantic race to get things done, we conveniently bypass considerations of why and focus exclusively on what. And once we cross over into the realm of whats, the only thing that matters is accomplishment. I am my tote sheet, my per capita production, my vitae, and my worth is proportionate to how many whats I achieve.”⁷

Author Simon Chan wrote, “Modern living with its’ constant pressure to compete, excel and produce has created a mindset not very different from the psychology of the mob. We are efficient to the extent that we perform by reflex action without giving much thought to what we do. Our basic lifestyle makes us not very different from a driver who tears along routinely at high-speeds. Before long the humdrum of driving lulls her to inattention. She is not prepared for the surprises or emergencies that can accompany high-speed driving. This is why self examination is essential. It provides the necessary speed check for those driving in the fast lane.”⁸

⁴ C. Michael Thompson, *The Congruent Life: Following the Inward Path to Fulfilling Work and Inspired Leadership* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2000), 140.

⁵ Thomas Merton, *Thomas Merton: Spiritual Master: Essential Writings*, ed. Lawrence Cunningham (Paulist Press: 1992), 375.

⁶ William Barclay, *Flesh and Spirit* (London: SCM Press, 1962), 72.

⁷ Kerry Walters. *Soul Wilderness: A Desert Spirituality* (New York: Paulist Press, 2001), 39-40.

⁸ Simon Chan, *Spiritual Theology: A Systematic Study of the Christian Life* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Academic, 1998), 154.

APPENDIX M: THE PRAYER OF EXAMEN:
STAYING ATTENTIVE TO ONE'S LIFE

“Examine yourselves to see whether you are living in the faith” (2 Cor. 13:5).

“Surely you desire truth in the inner parts; you teach me wisdom in the inmost place”
(Psalm 51:6).

The practice of self-awareness remains one of the most misunderstood and underused of the spiritual practices. Historically, self-examination emerged as bedrock in the spiritual life and practice of the ancient Church. Christians for centuries engaged in the Prayer of Examen as a means of increased awareness of God's presence and activity throughout the day, as well as a means to honestly examine and review all the ways one remained blind or indifferent to God's presence.

Author Morris Dirks notes, “The principle of self-awareness and the practice of Examen are critical to the health of the Christian leader.”¹ The formalized practice of this discipline dates back to the 16th century but grows out of the words and intentions recorded in Psalm 139:23-24, where the Psalmist says, “Search me, O God, and know my heart, test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any hurtful way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.”

Philosopher James K. A. Smith writes, “Examen is a practice for paying attention to your life: reflect on God's presence; review your day in a spirit of gratitude; become aware of your emotions before God; pray over one feature of your day; and then intentionally look forward to tomorrow.”²

The Prayer of Examen is often referred to as “the practice of noticing.”³ It involves reviewing one's day, in the presence of God, to observe and discern the motives and

¹ Morris Dirks, *Forming the Leader's Soul: An Invitation to Spiritual Direction* (Soul Formation, 2013), 119.

² James K. A. Smith, *You Are What You Love: The Spiritual Power of Habit* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2016), 52.

³ Tad Dunne, *Spiritual Mentoring: Guiding People Through Spiritual Exercises to Life Decision* (New York: Harper Collins, 1991), 84.

inner realities of self-protection, avoidance, denial, defensiveness, and the like, that may go otherwise unnoticed. It means pausing long enough, to “ponder the pattern my life is weaving.”⁴ This practice of examination is not to produce self-condemnation or shame but a deepening of self-understanding in the safety of God’s love. Author Marjorie Thompson writes, “Facing toward God’s tenaciously faithful love frees us to start being real. In the light of God’s grace and mercy, we find the courage to look honestly at who we are.”⁵ The Examen offers a way of paying attention to and dealing honestly with the “unfinished places of you soul”⁶ and opens up the possibility and opportunity for confession and to receive and experience healing from the inner brokenness that has shaped one’s life.

“How was God alive, active and working in my life today?” Examen is a tenacious look for that.

With the fast pace of ministry and no intentional practice of self-awareness, leaders can remain blind to the operation of the false self and the shadow side of their lives. Examen creates space for reflection of the graces, large and seemingly insignificant, that have marked their day, as well as the space to reflectively ask themselves the question, “How is my life unfolding? Is this how I want to live?” Without such a reflective practice, leaders may remain submerged in the daily trappings of ministry.

The Prayer of Examen involves reviewing your day using a variety of questions.

- **Where have you noticed God’s presence in your life today?**

“Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things” (Phil. 4:8).

Ask the Holy Spirit to bring to mind when you acted out of love today, paying attention to feelings such as joy, hope, generosity, and compassion.

Here are some other helpful questions that will lead you to personal reflection and self-discovery:

- Where was God in this situation?
- What Scripture came to mind throughout my day?
- How did I sense God leading me?
- What led me toward God?

⁴ John Baillie, *A Dairy of Private Prayer* (New York: Fireside, 1949), 27.

⁵ Marjorie Thompson, *Soul Feast: An Invitation to the Christian Spiritual Life* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2005), 91.

⁶ Ruth Haley Barton, *Invitation to Silence and Solitude* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2004), 96.

- **Where have you missed God’s presence in your life today?**

“Let us test and examine our ways, and return to the Lord” (Lam. 3:40).

In the safety of God’s love you can now deal honestly about what is most real about you. Marjorie Thompson notes, “Only under God’s steady gaze of love are we able to find the healing and restoration we so desperately need.”⁷ Ask God to reveal to you the events and patterns of the day that did not lead to love and freedom in Christ (such as anger, pride, jealousy, and anxiety). Some helpful questions you might ask:

- What kept me from noticing God’s presence today?
- What was motivating my response or action?
- What unresolved or undetected inner brokenness still drives me?
- In what ways did I self-protect, deny, hide, or numb myself?

Ultimately, a proper self-awareness leads to a needed place of confession. Marked by humility, in confession you acknowledge and surrender your propensities and acts of self-sufficiency, image management, illusions of control, self-sufficiency, self-preoccupation, and the ways we have been given over to distractions and sin. Be truthful about your lack of love, negative patterns, and underlying dynamics that have wounded your life or the lives of others. Do not gloss over your sin or blame others. As you confess these things in the safety and security of God’s love, you are naturally led to a surrendered reliance on God for forgiveness and healing. Confession provides a way of usurping any tendency to change by the power of self and forges a pathway to healing, which ultimately leads to freedom. “If we confess our sins he is faithful and just to forgive us and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (1 John 1:9).

The Prayer of Examen, when used regularly, keeps you from merely floating through your spiritual life and remaining at the mercy of your own driven-ness. It allows you to remain attentive to the movements and activity of the Holy Spirit and all the ways He is at work restoring and healing you. The Examen allows you to notice all the ways you have ignored, been distracted, indifferent, or attentively responded to this great work of grace. Ultimately, it allows you to keep in step in the lively dance of redemption.

Resources:

The Bible app You Version has a daily reading you can sign up for. Download the You Version app on your smart phone. Under “Read” search for “Examens.”

An online resource is www.examen.me

⁷ Marjorie Thompson, *Soul Feast: An Invitation to the Christian Spiritual Life* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2005), 90.

APPENDIX N: TELLING YOUR STORY: THE MOST POWERFUL MEDICINE ON EARTH

Each leader comes to ministry with her or her own story. Each story represents a unique, sacred experience and a constantly unfolding journey of faith. As author Chuck DeGroat reveals, “In becoming aware and telling our stories in the context of redemptive relationships, we experience a longed-for sense of wholeness, integration, and overall health in our living and relating.”¹

The process of reflecting on and telling others one’s own story constitutes an important way of knowing, thinking, and feeling that can embrace one’s life with a fullness not possible by any other means. Yet, a willingness to remain transparent, vulnerable, and authentic—to live in the light of one’s motives, fears, sin, shame, and weaknesses requires courage, hard work, and intentionality. Transformation does not transpire apart from inviting someone else into the contours of one’s world, without which, would remain truncated and immature.

Making Sense of Your Story

Trusted friendships allow space to reflect and to make sense of one’s story. Others offer perspective and insights that might go undetected otherwise and become moments of awareness, grace, and transformation. Journalist Lissa Rankin affirms, “Because telling your story—while being witnessed with loving attention by others who care—may be the most powerful medicine on earth.”²

Psychiatrist and neurologist Curt Thompson adds, “This is a much deeper and richer experience than simply knowing the bare facts of my story. It reflects what neuroscience

¹ Chuck DeGroat, *Wholeheartedness: Busyness, Exhaustion, and Healing the Divided Self* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2016), 151.

² Lissa Rankin, “The Healing Power of Telling Your Story,” *Psychology Today*, November 27, 2012, accessed December 18, 2016, <https://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/owning-pink/201211/the-healing-power-telling-your-story>.

and related disciplines are teaching us about what it means to live an integrated life—both as an individual and as part of community.”³

The integrated life remains, ultimately, a shared journey. This means one must not only be willing to grow in self-awareness and self-disclosing, but allowing one’s life open for exposure, i.e., remaining “all there” with another or others as well. Author Chuck DeGroat assesses the need for community: “Our divided hearts cannot heal in a vacuum. At some level, the healing journey requires relational vulnerability.”⁴

In other words, community is redemptive, relationships matter, and ministry leaders are no exception to this truth. Flourishing in leadership constitutes entering into a trusted relationship or friendship enacted through honesty, dialogue, and disclosure that creates a protected and safe place. In this safe place one can speak of hopes, longings, dreams, and failures. Ministry leadership needs another who speaks life over the leader, who sees and describes where God is at work and calls out what makes that leader come alive. Equally fundamental in these trusted relationships is the invitation and willingness to fail—to let go of facades, release performance and competition, and expose one’s flaws. Often in these close friendships one finds another equally fraught with feelings of inadequacy and incompetence. Hanging out with others who fail forges not only deep connectedness but embraces a shared humanity of brokenness and imperfection. Author Sherry Turkle suggests that the very act of failing offers a gift to others and one’s self: “But it is often when we hesitate, or stutter, or fall silent, that we reveal ourselves to each other. And to ourselves.”⁵

The Greatest Gift toward Wholeness

Being seen, heard, and understood may be the greatest gift toward wholeness one can offer another. Author Adam McHugh concludes listening remains critical: “Being listened to is one of the great assurances in this universe that we are not alone.”⁶ In confronting the powerful pull of isolation, cultivating friendships will require ministry leaders to act intentionally in allowing people to come alongside of them. Integrating neuroscience into this conclusion, Thompson sums, “I believe our lives will be abundant,

³ Curt Thompson, *Anatomy of the Soul: Surprising Connections between Neuroscience and Spiritual Practices That Can Transform Your Life and Relationships* (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale, 2010), xvi.

⁴ DeGroat, 51.

⁵ Sherry Turkle, *Reclaiming Conversation: The Power of Talk in a Digital Age* (New York: Penguin, 2015), 23.

⁶ Adam McHugh, *The Listening Life: Embracing Attentiveness in a World of Distraction* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2015) 26.

joyful, and peaceful only to the degree that we are engaged, known, and understood by one another.”⁷

⁷ Thompson, xvii.

APPENDIX O: THE PRAYER OF CONFESSION:

ADMITTING WHAT IS TRUE ABOUT US

In a culture where image is everything, confession can be very hard to do. We are really committed to looking like good moral people. This very appearance of goodness, however, can be a way we defend ourselves against our sin.

Confession is in response to self-examination.

Self-examination is a process whereby the Holy Spirit opens our hearts to what is true about us. Ultimately, a proper self-awareness leads to a needed place of confession for, if we cannot see our sin and brokenness, we have nothing to confess or offer. “If we say we have no sin, we are only fooling ourselves and refusing to accept the truth. But if we confess our sins to him, he is faithful and just to forgive us and to cleanse us from every wrong. If we claim we have not sinned, we are calling God a liar and showing that his word has no place in our hearts” (1 John 1:8-10.)

Confession forces us to put aside our inclination to hide, run, deny our sin and look at our sin without blame or rationalization. Confession also prevents a “take charge” response and forces us to acknowledge our poverty and inability to heal ourselves. As long as we hang on to the illusion that our lives are not as we assume them to be, we are prevented from receiving the healing only God can do. Author Brennan Manning acknowledges, “For what is not offered cannot be healed.”¹

Pray for the Holy Spirit to open your heart to *what is true about you*.

German theologian Dietrich Bonhoeffer articulates:

Confess your faults one to another” (Jas. 5:16). He who is alone with his sin is utterly alone. It may be that Christians, notwithstanding corporate worship, common prayer, and all their fellowship in service, may still be left to their loneliness. The final break-through to fellowship does not occur, because, though

¹ Brennan Manning, *Posers, Fakes and Wannabes: Unmasking the Real You* (Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 2003), 50.

they have fellowship with one another as believers and as devout people, they do not have fellowship as the undevout, as sinners. The pious fellowship permits no one to be a sinner. So everybody must conceal his sin from himself and from the fellowship. We dare not be sinners. Many Christians are unthinkably horrified when a real sinner is suddenly discovered among the righteous. So we remain alone with our sin, living in lies and hypocrisy. The fact is that we are sinners!²

Author Richard Foster adds:

Confession is so difficult a discipline for us partly because we view the believing community as a fellowship of saints before we see it as a fellowship of sinners. We come to feel that everyone else has advanced so far into holiness that we are isolated and alone in our sin. We could not bear to reveal our failures and shortcomings to others. We imagine that we are the only ones who have not stepped onto the high road to heaven. But if we know that the people of God are first a fellowship of sinners we are freed to hear the unconditional call of God's love and to confess our need openly before our brothers and sisters. We know that we are not alone in our sin. The fear and pride which cling to us like barnacles cling to others also. In acts of mutual confession we release the power that heals. Our humanity is no longer denied but transformed.³

Author Adele Calhoun instructs:

Set aside some time for confession and self-examination. In the presence of God ask for light to pierce your defenses. Then ask yourself, '*Who have I injured lately through thoughtlessness, neglect, anger, and so on?*' As the Holy Spirit brings people to mind, confess your feelings about these people to God. Ask God to forgive you and, if need be, to give you grace to forgive them. Write an apology, make a phone call, or have a face-to-face conversation to put the relationship back on track. [emphasis hers]⁴

This is the ultimate gospel paradox: we cannot be whole until we see, really recognize, the scars, the flaws, the sin, and the brokenness are all places of grace to experience the fullness of life Jesus promised that we could never produce on our own. For in our imperfections lie our stories of grace.

² Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Life Together: A Discussion of Christian Fellowship* (New York: Harper and Row, 1954), 110.

³ Richard Foster, *Celebration of Discipline: The Path to Spiritual Growth* (San Francisco: HarperCollins, 1988), 145.

⁴ Adele Calhoun, *Spiritual Disciples Handbook: Practices That Transform Us* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2005), 93.

APPENDIX P: THE PRAYER OF LAMENT: OUR TRUEST PRAYER

Most of us are in too big a hurry to take time to grieve the losses, the hurts, or the wounds we receive along our spiritual journey. Think on some of your own losses. *Praying the lament is difficult. But so often they are our deepest and truest prayers.* Scholars indicate that over 40 percent of the Psalms are prayers of lament.¹ Most of us are unfamiliar with the outer expressions of lament. Yet, most of us are familiar with the internal experience of lament.

Typically we are not familiar or comfortable with lament. If someone displays signs of sadness we quickly jump in with a Scripture to try to coax them to a place other than their pain or to placate our own discomfort. We are afraid they (and maybe ourselves) may never recover from that dark place. But the Psalms seems to demonstrate that lament ultimately helps us to recover God. The Psalmist, (no matter how bleak the circumstances) seems to most always end his psalms with a shout of praise to God and assurance of help that is sure to come.

Scripture reveals the nearness and availability of Jesus to those who are brokenhearted (Psalm 34:18). However, when we try to run from, deny, or cover our pain we often short-circuit the process and space lament offers . . . the process that makes us human. When we boldly hold our sorrows, fears, and anger in God's presence and speak truth from our depth, we find that God meets us there.

Author Keith Anderson writes, "Spirituality does not stop when we grieve. Biblical spirituality is not a spirituality of denial of loss, pain, grief, and depth; it is a spirituality that calls us to continued attention even in the midst of our pain."² Deep calls to deep; this allows what is deep is in us to connect to what's in the depths of God. Our spirit connects with the Holy Spirit through lament. This is profound because it is coming from a deeper place. Sometimes it sounds so unfiltered and messy, and that's what makes lament powerful. The moment we begin to bring these things out in the open into God's presence comes the possibility of resurrection.

¹ Keith Anderson, *A Spirituality of Listening: Living What We Hear* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2016), 133.

² *Ibid.*, 132.

I'm reminded of a story of a man who lost his son in a car accident. He said the only thing he could pray for six months was Psalm 88, a Psalm of Lament. Instead of "bucking up" or soldiering on, he allowed lament to give voice and words to the ache and devastation of his soul. Only after he could "be with what was real" was he able to move on and find healing. The point is to turn to God in whatever state we are in! That's why we can pray even when we do not feel like it. It can be as a sigh ... deep in our spirit. *I think the sighs of the Spirit are heard most clearly in the laments of the Psalms.*

What might praying Psalm 88 look like for you?

Spiritual Practice:

If appropriate in your life right now, write your own Psalm of Lament.

Begin with... "Oh, Lord, how long.....?"

APPENDIX Q: PUSHING THE ARROW

Open-Ended Questions

Keeping the arrow point at the other person, not you. How? Open-ended questions.

1. Ask “What” or “How” questions. “What was that about?”
2. “Tell me more.” Or “What did you think about that?”
3. Reflect back what you have heard. “That must have been exhausting/difficult/painful.” You validate an emotion.
4. Answer a question with a question. “What do you think is needed?”
5. Listen actively; body language: eye contact, leaning forward, responding with “uh huh,” “hummm,” “really?”

Adapted from Adam McHugh, *The Listening Life: Embracing Attentiveness in a World of Distraction* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVaristy, 2015), 143-148.

Guidelines for Inviting Dialogue¹

Listen, hear, and speak respectfully. Respect is a relational activity; it is not an individual internal characteristic. Respect is having and showing regard and consideration for the worthiness of the other. It is communicated by attitude, tone, posture, gestures, eyes, words, and surroundings.

Listen, hear, and speak as a learner. Be genuinely curious about the other and sincerely believe that you can learn something from them. Listen and respond with sincere interest in what the other person is talking about—their experiences, their words, their feelings and so forth.

Listen, hear, and speak to understand. Do not understand too quickly. Understanding is never-ending. Be tentative with what you think you know. Knowing interferes with

¹ Harlene Anderson, “Some Notes on Listening, Hearing and Speaking and the Relationship to Dialogue,” (paper presented at the Eighth Annual Open Dialogue Conference: What is Helpful in Treatment Dialogue? Tornio, Finland, August 29, 2003), accessed March 15, 2017, <http://harleneanderson.org/articles/newbatch/Dialogue%20-%20listening%20speaking%20hearing.pdf>.

dialogue: it can preclude learning about the other, being inspired by them, and the spontaneity intrinsic to genuine dialogue. Knowing also risks maintaining or increasing power differences.

Listen, hear, and speak with care. Pauses are important. Pause before you speak: Give the other person time to finish. And give yourself a moment to think about what you are going to say and how you will say it.

Listen, hear, and speak in a self-reflective manner. Reflect. Do not minimize the complexity of a dialogue by reducing it or its process to techniques. Listening, hearing and speaking are not techniques. They are relational activities and processes.

APPENDIX R: THE PRACTICE OF FORGIVENESS:

RECOVERING FROM INJURY¹

After my workout at the gym one day, while doing a routine stretching exercise, I heard a snap. Immediately I felt a sharp pain in the back of my leg. I knew instantly I'd pulled my hamstring. Serious? I was being careful! I was doing everything right! How did that happen? I wanted to scream. Someone helped me up but I could barely walk. I hobbled home, frustrated and angry.

So I found out that typical injury symptoms for this kind of injury includes tightness, general soreness, dull ache, throbbing, sharp pain, and numbness. I treated it as best I could but recovery was more painful and lasted longer than I anticipated. It sidelined me for six weeks. Eventually I was able to put more weight on that leg but I found myself "baby-ing" it, holding back from my usual intensity for fear of re-injury. I even adjusted my workout routine that did not require use of that muscle. I did not want to risk the possibility of re-injury or more pain.

Life is full of hurt and woundedness.

Life is full of hurt and woundedness. People wound us with words said or inconsiderate, even abusive, behavior. These injuries can occur any time, taking us by surprise, even when we are doing everything right. No doubt it is hard when something happens to you that is not your fault. You feel betrayed often by the people you should be able to trust the most. The temptation is strong to react to this kind of injury by "tucking in" and self-protecting. When we do, we begin to live dutiful, guarded, and cautious. In other words, we numb. And as author Brene Brown insightfully taught, we do not get to selectively numb our emotions. When we numb the bad, we also numb the good things like joy, contentment, and gratitude. Sometimes we vow to ourselves that we will never be hurt like that again. The problem is that this "shift" is so imperceptible. Our hearts have turned and we do not even know it. So we hobble around with a tightness, a dull ache, most often a numbness, in our soul, with little to offer those we serve.

¹ This article first appeared on Gail Johnsen Blog, "Recovering from Injury: Rehabilitating the Soul," April 19-20, 2015, accessed April 19, 2017, <https://gailjohnsen.com/2015/04/20/recovering-from-injury-rehabilitating-the-soul-part-2/>.

With my torn hamstring I knew I needed physical therapy. I had to work to re-strengthen that area, or a scar tissue would develop that is not as flexible and may lead to the same reoccurring injury. We need the same prescription for our spiritual injury.

Sometimes, however, instead of pursuing healing, we focus our attention on anything that would distract us from the source of the pain (family, pleasure, “I think I’ll redecorate the house.”) More often, and even more destructive, we become frozen in time at that point of hurt and we allow “scar tissue” to form in our hearts. When that happens our pain soon defines our lives, and we wonder if we will ever fully recover.

Hebrews 12:14-15 offers us a stern (and scary!) warning: “Make every effort to live in peace with everyone and to be holy; without holiness no one will see the Lord. See to it that no one falls short of the grace of God and that no bitter root grows up to cause trouble and defile many.”

When we “baby” our pain (rehearse and retain it), a bitter root forms and grows deep in our hearts, and, like a physical injury, it can “sideline” us. According to this passage in Hebrews, what it actually does is cause us to “fall short” of the grace of God in our own lives. In other words, if we do not pursue healing (forgiveness), God’s creative, dynamic, life-giving activity and ongoing work of healing and restoration gets cut off and our ability to experience his transforming presence will diminish. (That’s how I like to define grace: God’s powerfully creative, continually redemptive work in our lives!) This is the grace that keeps us alive spiritually! What we discover is forgiveness is more about us and our well-being than being about someone else and what they did. This makes unforgiveness is no small thing! Unforgiveness will keep you from experiencing the fullness of your life with God and all that He has for you. Tragically and ultimately, the writer of Hebrews tells us, without pursuing healing from injury, our soul will atrophy because it has been cut off from the life-giving flow of God’s gracious work in our lives.

No doubt life is messy and sometimes it hurts even when we are doing everything right. There are no slick formulas that make it all better. The soul’s journey to back to health is not so much about “Take one of these and you’ll feel better in the morning,” as it is a long but grace-filled process.

How does one rehabilitate the soul?

So we understand that forgiveness is what’s needed if we are to move on and live free from the weight of all this. We know it’s us who suffer under the burden of unforgiveness. We know that we need to forgive with the same grace as we have been forgiven. We get it. There are enough blogs, articles and sermons about the need to forgive ... for our own sake. But what do we do when our actual experience of forgiveness often feels completely different than we imagine it to be.

Perhaps you had the courage and stepped across that line and took action: you made a phone call or met face-to-face over coffee or wrote a difficult letter. Maybe those that hurt you are not available for such restitution, but you vividly remember releasing your

need to get revenge or see them suffer. Maybe you even said out loud, “I forgive you!” knowing that this came from a deep part of your soul and it was the realest thing about you. Why is it then that every time you remember the moment of betrayal, all the pain comes rushing back again? I forgave them! You protest. Why does the pain persist? You thought forgiveness would stop the pain. And you feel ashamed or confused that it did not “work.”

It does. But forgiveness is not just a one-time event. It’s not a single moment in time. Forgiveness is ongoing. Forgiveness requires that we forgive, again and again and again. So what’s with that? Does that mean we will spend a lifetime in a cycle of pain and forgiveness? Does it mean we will never really be free from the hold our pain has on our lives?

It helps me to think of forgiveness like a huge bell. Every time this bell makes its monstrous clang it causes you to remember that unforgettable moment of hurt and your pain comes flooding in. Yet with each clang, instead of this being a place of shame or anger, this becomes an opportunity of grace in your life to extend forgiveness and it becomes a place of healing. Then the bell clangs again. The pain returns and you tenaciously offer forgiveness again; and again; and again. Eventually, however, as all bells do, the clanging loses its momentum and power. Each subsequent clang gets softer, losing its strength. The frequency between clangs lessens and your healing comes, grace upon grace, with each intentional act of forgiveness. This must be what Jesus implied when asked how many times one should forgive and he answered seventy times seven. You do not keep track. You just keep on forgiving until one day you wake up and, much to your surprise, you are no longer angry. There is no searing guilt. You are no longer consumed with the need for revenge. Forgiveness has completed its work. You feel truly free for the first time.

Khaled Hosseini, in his novel *The Kite Runner*, beautifully depicts this place of freedom: “Then I realized something: The last thought had brought no sting with it. Closing Sohrab’s door, I wondered if that was how forgiveness budded, not with the fanfare of epiphany, but with pain gathering its things. *Packing up, and slipping away unannounced in the middle of the night*” [emphasis mine].²

The amazing thing is that you are now in a place of actually blessing those that hurt you. When fear and shame no longer control you, you stand at a place of living from a place of wholeness and are able to offer something life-giving to others.

Life will always be messy. Injuries occur even when we are following the rules. The reality is we do not have to hobble around any more. Is forgiveness easy? It is incredibly difficult. Daily we are confronted again and again with the choice of surrendering our pain or retaining it. True freedom and healing from our hurt is available but we must

² Khaled Hosseini, *The Kite Runner* (New York: Penguin, 2003), 359.

partner with the process. Yet, 2 Cor. 5:19 reminds us, “I want to remind you that you have a mighty God inside of you, he has not left you helpless.”

May you set someone free and find out it is you.

APPENDIX S: A RULE OF LIFE: KEEPING GOD AT THE CENTER

God's desire for each of us is that we would enter into a with-God life, growing daily into the image and likeness of Christ. This does not happen automatically or haphazardly. It requires a great deal of intentionality and walking in a well-ordered way.

As we have come to understand, the process of our spiritual formation is participatory, one in which we engage and make ourselves available and open to God's work and leading. As Paul said, we work out our faith with fear and trembling (Phil. 2:12). We must desire it enough to engage in the process. We are not only subjects of the kingdom of God, we are participants in it, as we submit to God's reign in our lives and allow His presence to shape our reality.

The purpose of the Rule of Life is to help us answer the question, "How can I live in such a way to participate with God and bring about His kingdom purposes?"

It is not a technique or a spiritual diet but a framework that helps us step by step and in a natural way, to incorporate reminders of God's presence into the life we already live. A Rule of Life, very simply, is an intentional, conscious plan to keep God at the center of everything we do.

Keeping God at the center of everything we do comes only when we have engaged in the practices of self-examination, discernment, and prayer. This is why the crafting of a Rule comes at the end of those practices. Author Ruth Haley Barton writes that any rule of life, "is simply a pattern of attitudes, behaviors and practices that are regular and routine and are intended to produce a certain quality of life and character."¹

"So here's what I want you to do, God helping you: Take your everyday, ordinary life—your sleeping, eating, going-to-work, and walking-around life—and place it before God as an offering. Embracing what God does for you is the best thing you can do for him" (Romans 12:1, The Message).

¹ Ruth Haley Barton, *Sacred Rhythms: Arranging Our Lives for Spiritual Transformation* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2006), 147,

In *Soul Feast*, Marjorie Thompson says,

A rule of life is a pattern of spiritual disciplines that provides structure and direction for growth in holiness. When we speak of patterns in our life, we mean attitudes, behaviors, or elements that are routine, repeated, regular. Indeed, the Latin term for ‘rule’ is *regula*, from which our words regular and regulate derive. A rule of life is not meant to be restrictive, although it certainly asks for genuine commitment. It is meant to help us establish a rhythm of daily living, a basic order within which new freedoms can grow. A rule of life, like a trellis, (The word ‘rule’ comes from the Greek for ‘trellis.’) curbs our tendency to wander and supports our frail efforts to grow spiritually.²

Steve Macchia, in *Crafting a Rule of Life*, describes a Rule like this: It is “a holistic description of the Spirit-empowered rhythms and relationships that create, redeem, sustain, and transform the life God invites you to humbly fulfill for Christ’s glory.”³

A Sample Rule of Life

Listed below is a sample Rule taken from *Emotionally Healthy Spirituality* by Peter Scazzero:

1. Scripture.

Our lives are built on the Word of God. It is our food and primary means of revelation from Him. We spend time each day in Scripture, seeking God’s face, dwelling in His presence and praying out of His Word.

2. Silence and Solitude.

We spend at least one full day a month in silence with God. (Each person goes to a place outside their home, whether a beach, a local retreat center, or a park, to be alone with God for the day. The one requirement is not to do the work of church on that day, but to be with God.)

3. Daily Office.

We pause two to three times a day to spend time in communion with God, preferably with Scripture, silence, meditation, and prayer.

4. Study.

We are taking steps to keep learning.

5. Sabbath.

Each week, we set aside a 24-hour period to keep Sabbath to the Lord, structuring our

² Marjorie J. Thompson, *Soul Feast: An Invitation to the Christian Spiritual Life* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2005), 146.

³ Stephan A. Macchia and Mark Buchanan, *Crafting a Rule of Life: An Invitation to the Well-Ordered Way* (2012). Patterned after Benedict’s 1,500-year-old Rule of Life, this book provides a template for creating a personal rule.

time around four characteristics of biblical Sabbaths: Stop, Rest, Delight, and Contemplate.

6. Simplicity.

We model percentage giving (using the tithe as a minimal guideline) in giving to God's work here at Faith.

7. Play and Recreation.

We have a life outside of Faith for balance and health.

8. Service and Mission.

A critical issue for healthy service is clear and realistic expectations. We regularly update job descriptions and goals in order to meet these challenges.

9. Care for the Physical Body.

We seek to regularly care for our physical temples through healthy eating habits, consistent exercise, and sufficient amounts of sleep, respecting our God-given limits.

10. Emotional Health.

We embrace emotionally healthy skills and behaviors that put feet on our theology to love well (1 Cor. 13).

11. Family.

We believe in the equal value of God's call to both singleness and marriage. We affirm with Scripture the gift of singleness for leadership (1 Cor. 7:25-40). We desire high-quality marriages, out of which we are able to minister to others.

12. Community.

We encourage all staff members to be in relationships with mature people outside Faith; these relationships might be with a spiritual director, a mentor, a counselor, or a mature friend, depending on each person's unique needs and season in God.

Crafting a Rule of Life

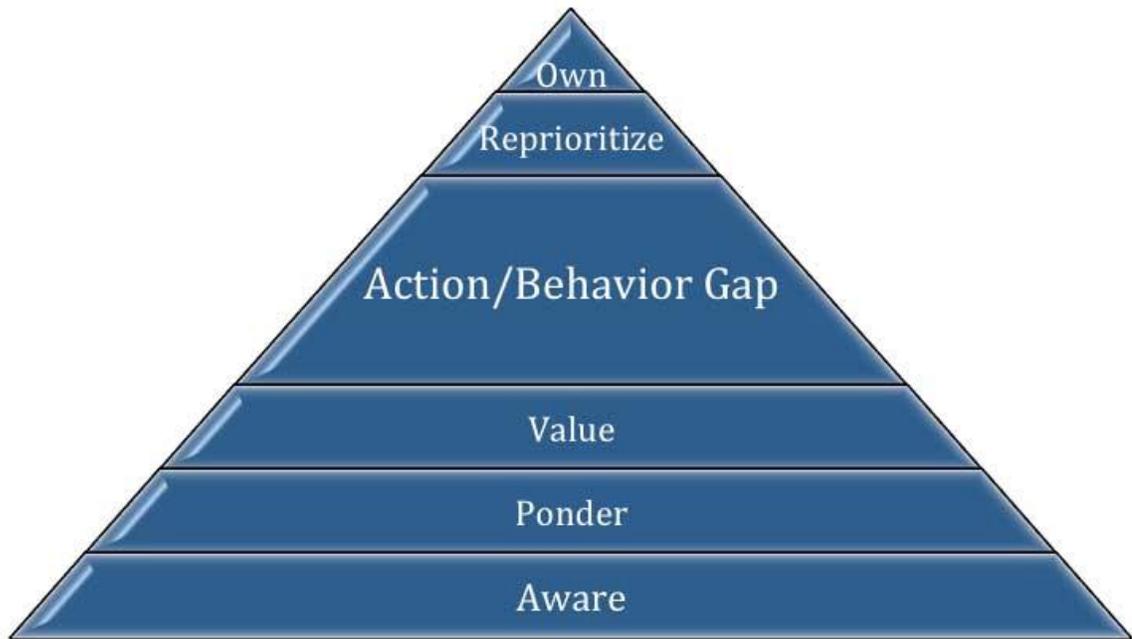
What rhythms or spiritual practices are already a part of your life?

What new rhythms or spiritual practices would you like to incorporate?

Write a simple Rule:

Write one down that you will begin this week:

APPENDIX T: FIVE-STAGE PROCESS OF HOW WE LEARN AND CHANGE¹



1. Awareness: “Slowing down is an interesting idea.”
2. Ponder: “Help me understand more about slowing down.”
3. Value: “I really believe it is important for everybody to slow down.”
(This is when we craft a sermon.)
4. Prioritize: “I am shifting my entire life around as I slow down to be with Jesus.”
Time, energy, schedule, etc.
5. Own: “All my decisions and actions are based on this new value.”
(Peter Scazzero: 6-8 years!)

¹ Peter Scazzero, *The Emotionally Healthy Leader: How Transforming Your Inner Life Will Deeply Transform Your Church, Team, and the World* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2015), 44-45.

APPENDIX U: RETREAT EVALUATION FORM

1. Was an adequate overview of the retreat materials presented?
2. Was each retreat properly paced? Too slow? Too fast? Not enough discussion?
3. How pertinent were the materials to you personally?
4. How pertinent were the materials to you for ministry?
5. What was the most effective resource/element for personal change from the retreats?
6. What were strengths of the retreats?
7. What were weaknesses of the retreats?
8. Would you be willing to respond to a follow-up survey at the end of six months?

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