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“Intimacy with God: Practicing the Presence of God”: A Master’s Level Course

Patricia H. West

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Ministry Focus Paper Approval Sheet

This ministry focus paper entitled

“INTIMACY WITH GOD: PRACTICING THE PRESENCE OF GOD”:
A MASTER’S LEVEL COURSE

Written by

Patricia H. West

and submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Ministry

has been accepted by the Faculty of Fuller Theological Seminary
upon the recommendation of the undersigned readers:

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Tom Schwanda
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A MASTER’S LEVEL COURSE

A MINISTRY FOCUS PAPER
SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF THE
SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY
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IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT
OF THE REQUIREMENT FOR THE DEGREE
DOCTOR OF MINISTRY

BY

PATRICIA H. WEST
AUGUST 2012
ABSTRACT

“Intimacy with God: Practicing the Presence of God”: A Master’s Level Course
Patricia H. West
Doctor of Ministry
School of Theology, Fuller Theological Seminary
2012

The purpose of this study is to establish and address the need for a graduate course, “Intimacy with God: Practicing the Presence of God,” among seminary students that includes experiential learning in regards to growing a deeper relationship with God. This project argues that scriptural knowledge alone cannot fulfill students’ needs for the intimacy they seek with God. This premise will be tested among the seminarians at Regent University in Virginia Beach, Virginia.

This project will be presented in three parts. Part One exegetes the culture of Regent University Divinity School, revealing the diversity among students and faculty. It also describes the need that exists among the student body for a deeper relationship with God. Part Two offers the theological basis for spiritual intimacy among seminarians. Here the concept of intimacy is defined, and its necessity in the life of the seminary student is supported by Scripture. Scripture also is used to establish the manner in which intimacy can be achieved. The spiritual lives of the saints from the past, examples of revivals, and today’s spiritual openness and receptivity to God’s invitation also are examined. The final part outlines the strategy for helping students move into an intimate relationship with God. The role of worship, specific spiritual disciplines, and the church community are set forth. The role of the instructor is defined, and the instructor’s needs in preparation are identified. Part Three also explains the course design, its purpose, and its implementation. This discussion also evaluates the course’s effectiveness. Student feedback and general insights from this project will guide future revisions and teaching of this class.

Content Reader: Tom Schwanda, PhD

Words: 266
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BIBLIOGRAPHY
INTRODUCTION

I remember sitting at my seminary graduation waiting to be called up to the platform to receive my hard-earned diploma. I should have been ecstatic with my accomplishment of a 3.97 grade-point average, but instead I was depressed. Something was definitely wrong. I tried to convince myself that I was exhausted from the long years of study, but I knew better.

I was graduating with a master of divinity degree and had learned many things in the process. I was taught the proper way to study and research the Bible. I had learned Greek, ancient history, Christian ethics, world religions, missiology, vital information from various courses in advanced biblical studies, and much more. However, this head knowledge had failed to sink down to a heart level. I simply had not experienced God in all of my learning. I was not given opportunity to experience this knowledge in regards to my relationship with Him. I had not applied this information to my personal growth in Christ and felt this lack to be an indication of my own failing. Looking back, I realize that my long hours of study had become my “first love.” All of my study never penetrated deep down to the inner soul to affect my connection with God.

So there I sat feeling a great sense of loss in regards to my desire to know God intimately. I wondered if other students felt the same way. At that point, I decided I would try to make a difference by becoming a catalyst in the lives of other students. It now was apparent to me that students not only need to study about God in the seminary setting, but they also need to experience Him. While balancing knowledge and experience is of the utmost importance, having spiritual knowledge without an
opportunity to experience it only serves to puff one up (1 Cor 8:2b-3). This deficiency amongst seminarians needs to be addressed.

I have decided to meet this challenge by writing a semester-long course of study called “Intimacy with God: Practicing the Presence of God,” in order to deal with this experiential aspect of learning. God desires that we know Him in the most intimate way and experience Him, as others have experienced Him throughout Scripture (Deut 4:29). When a student has a close relationship with the Father, it overflows into other lives and as a result can “turn the world upside down.” Luke states this in Acts 17:5-6:

But the Jews who were not persuaded, becoming envious, took some of the evil men from the marketplace, and gathering a mob, set all the city in an uproar and attacked the house of Jason, and sought to bring them out to the people. But when they did not find them, they dragged Jason and some brethren to the rulers of the city, crying out, “These who have turned the world upside down have come here too.”

Regent University Divinity School in Virginia Beach, Virginia was chosen to host this course for several reasons. First, it is a multidenominational school that has a diverse cross-section of students: a mixture of domestic and international students, a variety of generational groups, and a gender mix. Second, it is a school that stresses leadership training, which will have an even greater impact on those who eventually will sit under the students’ leadership in the future. Finally, Regent is a university that remains open to fresh ideas that can enhance the programs already in place for the benefit of the students. Ultimately, it proved to be the right place for this research. Regent University Divinity

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1 All Scripture in this paper is from the Holy Bible: New King James Version (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1982), unless indicated otherwise.
School is not the only Christian school facing this challenge; therefore, it is my desire that the end results of this project will enhance academic programs in other schools as well.

This course, “Intimacy with God: Practicing the Presence of God,” has been developed to help students grow deeper in their relationship with God. A survey was given to over 90 percent of Regent’s divinity students. This survey overwhelmingly revealed the hunger of students not only to know the deeper things about God but to experience Him as well. Over 95 percent of the students surveyed saw the need to integrate experience with knowledge.

Knowledge alone cannot fulfill students’ needs for a deeper relationship with God, yet seminaries often offer courses based on biblical knowledge alone. These courses often lack this intimate connection. According to 1 Corinthians 8:1-3, “Knowledge puffs up, but love builds up. The man who thinks he knows something does not yet know as he ought to know. But the man who loves God is known by God.” Courses that draw students closer to God in this love relationship are few and far between. This leaves a hunger in seminary students that is not being satisfied.

Many students attend seminary but graduate without the proper balance between the head and the heart—that is, knowledge of the Word coupled with experience of the Word. Integration of the two is essential. Without this integration, students will minister as pastors, missionaries, or into other areas of calling without truly knowing the God they hope to share with others. This experiential course seeks to create opportunities for

\[\text{2 This survey will be discussed in detail in Chapter 2.}\]
seminary students to deepen their relationship with God, thus preparing them to guide others into this intimacy with the Lord.

Chapter 1 of this paper will cover foundational information about Regent University Divinity School. The culture of the university setting will be examined, revealing the diversity among the seminary students. Specific statistics will be outlined. Such data will include enrollment figures and gender statistics along with information about ethnicity, religious affiliation, marital status, and generational percentages.

Chapter 2 will address the importance of intimacy with God among seminary students. Not only does God pursue His people, but He wants them to pursue Him as well. Since human beings are made in His image, those who experience God also earnestly seek to grow in intimacy with Him. The results from the seminary survey mentioned above will be used to confirm this need for spiritual intimacy among seminarians.

Chapter 3 will form the biblical foundation for this course, using scriptural examples from the Old and New Testaments. A definition of what intimacy with God is and what it is not will be approached through the use of Scripture. Special emphasis will be given to John, the beloved disciple. The question of why John was called the beloved disciple will be addressed in the course.

Chapter 4 will explore the historical side of intimacy with God, as viewed by men and women. These will include the desert mothers and fathers, Bernard of Clairvaux, Jeanne Guyon, and others. This area of study will bring historical clarity and confirmation
to the topic. Emphasis on spiritual receptivity leading up to historical revivals will be examined closely from Protestantism, especially from Pentecostalism.

Chapter 5 will discuss how students can develop an intimate relationship with God. Worship reaches the heart of God (2 Chron 7:1-3), so it is important to know the true meaning of worship. The spiritual disciplines—including meditation, prayer, fasting, Bible study, and others—will be addressed in this section as well as the importance of establishing community. Not only is personal intimacy necessary; but according to Scripture, intimacy in and through community is also essential. Ultimately, there is a need for each student to be accountable to another mature Christian, since it is easy to become forgetful in one’s spiritual walk.

Chapter 6 will explore the role of the instructor, including the preparations needed for teaching such a course. The instructor serves as a model of intimacy students will look to for guidance and functions as teacher, mentor, and the designated prayer intercessor for the students enrolled in the course. The instructor must be willing to wage a good fight on behalf of the students (Eph 6:11-19). When someone is drawing closer to God, warfare can be expected since the enemy despises those who love God with all of their heart, mind, soul, and strength (Eph 6:10-13).

Chapter 7 will detail the lessons that were learned from teaching this course for the first time. The students’ midterm and final assessments will be analyzed to determine whether the goals were achieved. After reviewing these assessments, the strengths and weaknesses will be examined, determining the changes that are needed. These changes then will be implemented into the revised course.
PART ONE

MINISTRY CONTEXT
CHAPTER 1
EXEGESIS OF THE CULTURE

This chapter covers foundational information relating to Regent University, particularly its fundamental belief structure. Also discussed are the geographic, demographic, and historical contexts of Virginia Beach. Specific statistics for Regent University Divinity School will be addressed: enrollment figures, gender statistics, denominational comparisons, international enrollment, ethnicity, marital status, and generational percentages. Though the statistics will show a wide range of diversity, there is also a common bond that cannot be overlooked: the deep hunger and thirst for God among the divinity students and professors, thus turning this diversity into a blessing for everyone involved.

The Founding of Regent University

Regent University was founded in 1978, in Virginia Beach by Pat Robertson, past president and chancellor. Robertson states that the reason he founded the university was “to provide passionate individuals with a place to sharpen their skills and prepare them to
help transform the world through Christian leadership.”¹ He not only had a heart for students but a heart to see the world changed with the Gospel. He continues, “Regent University is an academic environment where Christian leaders are taught to discern and respond to the times. Through the years, we have created a university that is a leading center for Christian thought and action. Our graduates are servant leaders who are providing godly solutions to many of the challenges we face as a society.”² Robertson stresses servant leadership, because servant leadership originates through God (cf. Acts 6:1-6; Matt 23:11).

The university is made up of nine different schools, and each one stresses godly leadership. Each school offers graduate degrees in business, communication, the arts, divinity, education, government, law, global leadership and entrepreneurship, and psychology and counseling. It also offers undergraduate degrees in numerous areas of study.³ Regent University is fully accredited by the Commission on Colleges of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS).⁴

Regent is committed and dedicated to developing Christian leadership that will “change the world.”⁵ Changing the world for Jesus Christ is the main focus. At Regent,


² Ibid.


“Christ-centered leaders see themselves as having Christ in the center of their consciousness, perhaps in the center of their very being. Christ is there working through them.”⁶ This profound level of leadership involves not only godly principles but, most importantly, God Himself. In this way, Regent’s ultimate goal is to teach Christian leadership that goes beyond simple skill and expertise. To do this the university combines academics with biblical teaching and uses Scripture as the foundational structure when teaching academics, religion, or other subjects.

Regent University’s preamble states: “Regent University is an institution of higher learning that exists to bring glory to God the Father and His Son Jesus Christ through the work of the Holy Spirit.”⁷ Teaching students is much more than academics; it includes first and foremost glorifying God. Dallas Willard would agree. Talking about Christian college presidents, he states, “They must stand as those who understand knowledge and understand its subordination to faith in Jesus Christ.”⁸ In this way, always keeping God as the main focus and priority is essential.

Regent University states, “Our mission is to serve as a leading center of Christian thought and action providing an excellent education from a biblical perspective and global context in pivotal professions to equip Christian leaders to change the world.”⁹

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This falls in line with Scripture. Knowledge should lead to action, with this action being love (1 Cor 8: 1-2). Furthermore, the Regent University declares, “Our vision, to become a leading global Christian university, will be accomplished by developing an international reputation for academic excellence, scholarship and action, and by significant expansion of enrollment and global reach.”\textsuperscript{10} This coincides with Regent’s mission to glorify God by preparing Godly leadership to go out and change the world. As president of Regent University, Carlos Campo says, “Our unflinching mission is to prepare committed men and women to excel both in mind and spirit; Christian leaders who will help shape the future for our communities, our cities, our nation, and our world.”\textsuperscript{11}

\textbf{The Geographic, Demographic, and Historical Context of Regent University}

It is necessary to look at the context of Regent University in order to understand why this school was chosen as the site to pilot the course described in this project. Regent University is housed in an ideal location, particularly for the commuter population as well as those living in university housing. The nature of this context allows for easy travel to and from the university. There is even daycare nearby for families who attend the school.

There is also a good deal of diversity. A vast mix of ethnic groups, denominations, and even a military presence amplify the diversity on campus. The ethnic mixture adds a context where students learn to work with and among other cultures—


which functions well, especially when God deals with community issues. The multi-denominational factor adds to the challenges of unity and community building, particularly among those who share views different from one’s own. The military factor opens opportunities for men and women who want to touch military personnel for the Lord and desire training as military chaplains.

Finally, Virginia Beach holds great historical significance. This is the area where the first English settlers dedicated this new land to God in 1607. The historical factor sets the foundation for a God-fearing and God-loving divinity school.

Location

Regent University is located in Virginia Beach, Virginia, a popular city known for its tourism. The students live in close proximity to one another, whether in university housing or local apartments, or come from an even greater distance such as another Tidewater city that includes Norfolk, Newport News, the Historic Triangle, Middle Peninsula, Outer Banks, South Hampton Roads, and the Virginia Peninsula. With the tunnels, bridges, and good roads, the commute is made simple. For the most part, weather is usually very mild and causes little problem for travel. Students can carpool to school easily or use public transportation, especially since the interstate is so close to the university gate. Since Virginia Beach is centrally located and is easily accessible from a large international airport, students can fly in from any place around the world and be only minutes away from the university.

The travel and distance factors open more opportunities to grow into a closer community among the student body and faculty. It is not uncommon for students to meet
in small groups for Bible studies or to join other families for supper. Several times during the year, there are divinity school gatherings where students and faculty meet for suppers, refreshments, live music, fun, and fellowship. An intimacy among students, between students and faculty, and with God grows during these times.

Demographics

It is important to understand how demographics can play into the divinity students’ growth in their relationship with God and with one another. This section will cover the statistics for the population and ethnicity of the city of Virginia Beach as well as take a quick look at the economy and overall church statistics. This further illustrates the need for a growing intimacy with God among the divinity school’s student population.

The population of Virginia Beach is reported at 442,707 residents, the largest city in Virginia. The city’s ethnic statistics are as follows: 64.5 percent White, 19 percent Black, 6 percent Asian, 6.6 percent Hispanic/Latino, 3.2 percent and .3 percent Two or more Races, .2 percent other races alone, and 1 percent native Hawaiian and other Pacific Islander alone. The eighteen-and-over population stands at 72.5 percent, and sixty-five and older hovers at 32.7 percent. The average age is 34.9 years. Virginia Beach has an incredibly young population. This is partially due to the large military presence in

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14 Ibid.
Virginia Beach that affects the city’s age statistics. Regent University’s age statistics do not reflect these percentages. The age of master’s and doctoral level students for the most part are older.

There is an ethnic mixture in Virginia Beach, which is an asset since Regent is also ethnically diverse. The students feel comfortable in this city and even can focus their ministry on certain ethnic groups, especially those who speak the language of one of these groups. Due to this diversity, it is also easy to find a church home where one feels most comfortable.

Economy is also part of Regent’s community aspect. The Virginia Beach economy depends on a large military presence. Four Navy bases exist within the city; and the surrounding cities have Navy, Marine, Coast Guard, and Air Force bases. For those Regent students who train for military chaplaincy, having the military at Regent’s doorstep is a blessing for them. The university draws students who enter the military as well as those already enlisted. The military presence adds another dimension to the diversity at the university and to community relationship. Tourism is at the heart of Virginia Beach’s economy and brings in people globally. Many tourists have heard of the Christian Broadcasting Network or Regent University and visit while vacationing.

Through this process, some decide to register for classes and become part of the community at Regent.

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The city’s diversity is seen vibrantly through the different churches. There are sixty mainline Protestant churches, ninety-nine Evangelical congregations, twelve Catholic churches, two Orthodox ones, and eleven other denominational churches in Virginia Beach. Overall, 14 percent are Southern Baptist, 13 percent are United Methodist, 28 percent are Catholic, 12 percent are Charismatic, and other denominations encompass 33 percent. All of this diversity contributes to the university’s multi-ethnic, multidenominational relationship which helps to unite those who are diverse, much in the way the stage of diversity was set for the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2:8-11).

Enrollment Statistics for Regent University

Since Regent’s various schools within bring in students of diverse ages, gender, denominational challenges, and even generations, Regent University’s enrollment has a direct impact on the diversity mentioned previously. More students bring more challenges. More challenges yield more opportunity for students to grow in biblical community.

The university continues to increase yearly. As of Fall 2011, Regent had a student body of more than 5,915 students in nine different schools, with five different degree programs: associate, bachelor, a first professional degree, a graduate program that includes a master’s degree, and other doctoral programs. According to John Davis, the director of Institutional Research at Regent University, the overall graduate enrollment

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18 Ibid.
for Fall 2011 was at 2,554 students.\textsuperscript{19} The School of Divinity’s enrollment for Fall 2010 (2011 unavailable) consisted of 673 students.\textsuperscript{20}

School of Divinity Gender Ratio

There are gender considerations when addressing diversity and growing together in community. The controversial issue of women in ministry can surface quite often with the different views existing on campus—whether students arrive with a traditional perspective, male-leadership perspective, plural-ministry perspective, or egalitarian perspective. For authentic and intimate community to occur, there must be unity between the male and female divinity students. This often can be a challenge.

The School of Divinity male enrollment is at 59 percent, and the female is at 41 percent.\textsuperscript{21} The female population struggles with issues related to women in ministry and in certain arenas has great difficulty finding ministry positions following graduation from Regent. Even at a school as progressive as Regent, there are still those who believe that women do not belong in pastoral ministry or in any ministry where they might have authority over men. For there to be intimacy among divinity students, there must be acceptance of call on each life, whether male or female.


\textsuperscript{21} Ibid.
School of Divinity Denominational Diversity

Within Regent University, twenty-three mainline denominations and other religious affiliations are represented in the divinity school. This makes for an interesting mix and an even more interesting challenge. Studying theology with the many diverse denominations brings a much needed balance to the ministers in training. It also lends itself to opportunity of acceptance and unity among the brethren.

Regent has 215 divinity students who identify themselves as nondenominational: seventy-four are affiliated with the Assemblies of God, fifty-four are Pentecostal, forty-seven are Charismatic, and six are from the Foursquare denomination. This is not surprising for a university that embraces the renewal perspective and reclaims “certain biblical affirmations that have been largely neglected or given insufficient attention.”

Despite Regent’s perspective regarding renewal theology, the Baptist enrollment increased from 2006 to 2010. In 2010, it was at 14 percent (ninety-four students) and was higher than for those from the Assemblies of God. The Presbyterians, Methodists, the Church of God, and Church of God in Christ each have twenty students attending. The Pentecostal Holiness students number at thirteen, and both Lutherans and Church of Christ have seven attending. There are ten Episcopalian students and two Roman Catholics enrolled. One student is from the Disciples of Christ (Christian Church) denomination, and seven are from the Church of Christ. The Church of the Nazarene has four students, and the Evangelical Lutheran Church of America has seven enrolled. Two students from the Mennonite Church

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22 Ibid.

23 J. Rodman Williams, Renewal Theology (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1996), 12.
(USA) also are registered. A willingness for these students from diverse denominations to love other brothers and sisters in Christ requires the fruit of the Spirit: “love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness” (Gal 5:22) and “righteousness and truth” (Eph 5:9). The divinity students are learning to accept one another as Jesus accepts them, simply as they are. This challenge has proven to be very beneficial and has caused within the students a desire not only to grow closer to one another with understanding but to draw closer to the God of diversity (cf. John 13:35; Rom 13:8; Gal 5:13; 1 Thess 4:9; 1 John 3:11; 4:7; 1 Pet 3:8; 4:8).

Since sixty students checked “other” on their enrollment forms, the university record is vague regarding this large percentage of students. Patricia Mercier, the school’s enrollment manager, explains: “The ‘other’ category is put on the application to allow students the opportunity to note their religious affiliation that is not on the list. Some students do not feel their church is described by the denominations on the list and will therefore choose the ‘other’ category. Many of these students would consider themselves Charismatic.” With this being the case, it again confirms that a university adhering to renewal theology draws more renewal denominations and affiliations than Protestant mainline denominations—though there are exceptions, like the group of Baptist students.

International Student Statistics

Due in part to its renewal emphasis, Regent draws an international student population, since the Lord is moving in this way in many countries across the world.

24 Patricia Mercier, enrollment manager at Regent University, interview by author, Virginia Beach, VA, 2010.
Renewal theology started on the Day of Pentecost and was renewed in Topeka, Kansas in 1901 and has since circled the globe with a renewing of the spiritual gifts “that dwarfs anything seen since the days of the early church.” 25 From 1901 to the end of 1999, over a half million people were touched by this movement. 26

Students from eighty-two countries are represented within the Regent University student body. 27 The divinity school consists of students from twenty-five countries: Barbados, Belarus, Bermuda, Burkina Faso, Canada, Colombia, Croatia, Czech Republic, Egypt, Germany, Honduras, India, Indonesia, Jamaica, Kenya, Republic of Korea, Mexico, Nambia, Singapore, South Korea, Spain, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Ukraine, and Zambia. There are fifty-nine international students enrolled in the divinity school, the highest ratio of all schools in the university.

This is an important concern when planning, writing, and teaching a master’s level course of any kind. No longer are Regent University professors teaching students with a Western worldview only. Since students come from twenty-five different countries, in effect there are twenty-five different worldviews. This is because everyone sees the world differently, and views are influenced by culture. David N. Entwistle defines “worldview” as the “window through which a person views the world, assumptions, and beliefs that color

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26 Ibid.
27 Regent University, “Regent University Facts.”
what he or she sees.” B. J. Walsh and J. R. Middleton state that a worldview “stimulates how the world ought to be, and it thus advises how its adherents ought to conduct themselves in the world.” Therefore, when there are twenty-five distinct worldviews, things can become challenging. The common bond of the renewal emphasis helps to balance these differences, as students learn from one another and accept one another in agape love. In this way, the fruits of the Spirit continue to mature in each student’s life. A hunger for the heart of God continues to grow, as the Regent community bonds together in an intimate relationship. Ultimately, this is how diversity has become a blessing.

Ethnic and Cultural Mix

Ethnicity affects how divinity students experience intimate community and personal growth. The ethnic and cultural mix at Regent provides an opportunity for students to grow deeper in love with Christ and with one another. Ethnic and cultural origins determine how a person, Christian or non-believer, views the world; and this can become a stumbling block, if it is allowed to be one. Even Stephen Cornell and Douglas Hartmann, both professors at non-Christian universities, state, “On US college campuses, in corporations, and in major cities dealing with ethnic and racial issues argue that diversity should be a

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28 David N. Entwistle, Integrative Approaches to Psychology and Christianity (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2004), 67.

strength not a weakness.” Helping diversity to be seen as “a strength” takes commitment and a desire to please God.

Regent’s divinity school has a significant and diverse ethnic population. The White population is the highest at 50 percent followed by African Americans at 39 percent. Hispanics total 4 percent, while the Asian population comprises 3 percent of the total population. The international portion of enrollment is at 3 percent, and those with ethnicity as “unknown” total 1 percent. With these statistics, divinity and faculty alike have an opportunity to add a new dimension to a loving communal relationship with others and God.

Referring to the melting pot philosophy, Lynne C. Lancaster and David Stillman write: “There is a new recipe in town, and it’s called diversity stew. What is it like? It contains a variety of ingredients living and working together, but . . . no one has to melt.” They urge people to view diversity as a good ingredient in the mix and not one that should be blended together where ethnic distinctions are lost. So often it is thought that there should be a cultural blending, where cultures “melt” into one thing—looking the same, acting the same, eating the same, and worshipping the same. On the Day of Pentecost there were many cultures in Jerusalem, and over three thousand individuals

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31 Regent University, “Student Profile.”

found the Lord from those cultural groups (Acts 2:41). However, they did not change who they were but instead came together in a true community.

Regent welcomes a culturally diverse population and continues to bring diversity together under one roof. This is pleasing to the Lord. Revelation 7:9-10 speaks plainly concerning culture and ethnicity, leaving no doubt where God stands on this issue: “After these things I looked, and behold, a great multitude which no one could number, of all nations, tribes, peoples, and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, with palm branches in their hands, and crying out with a loud voice, saying, “Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!”

This Scripture is honored at Regent University.

Marital Status

The divinity school has approximately 424 married students and 181 students who are single, with 68 students declining to reveal this information. This shows that there are different needs to be addressed for all three groupings. Despite their status, all the students need community to help them with their individual challenges.

Those students who are single have specific needs that accompany singleness. Being single can be a very lonely place, whether one is young or old. Often these individuals do not fit in with the married couples, especially if children are involved. However, singleness can be especially difficult for older men and women due to other issues that arise, such as aging alone, being recently widowed, and many other painful

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33 Regent University, “Student Profile.”
issues that come with being a senior and single. Samantha Landy states that senior singles should learn to flourish where they are and how to thrive in their current situation. They need community groups geared toward present challenges as well as future ones. They especially need fellowship for comfort, reassurance, and to help them continue to grow in their relationship with God, since transformation never ends no matter how old one gets.

Being in close community also holds true for the divorced or recently separated students. Being divorced and/or separated can seem like the end of the world due to thoughts of failure, losing friends, negative comments from family, and the like. Even the simplest thing like sitting in church alone can cause one to drive home in tears. These students who are divorced or separated have their own set of trials as well. For example, other Christians will sometimes “cold-shoulder” them, causing them to feel like second-class citizens. They often are overlooked for ministry positions, due to their divorced status. For many, being separated or divorced from a spouse can mean being separated from the Body of Christ, due to the stigma associated with what is perceived as “failure.” The widowed are also a part of the Regent community and require special understanding, especially if they still are working through the loss of a soul mate. Support community groups within the university setting are needed, especially since all of these single students are trying to follow God’s call on their lives and cannot do it alone. They need student support, those who are intimately involved to encourage them, pray for them, accept them without judgment, and to love them with God’s unconditional love.

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Generational Diversity

The generational groupings found in the divinity school at Regent University include the Builders, the Boomers, the Generation Xers, and the rising Millennials.\(^{35}\) This also extends to the divinity faculty. Both students and faculty have been placed in generational groups in order to compare the faculty’s groupings with the student mix. It is imperative to look at the diversity of each generation involved and the gaps that can exist when there is interaction among them. Since all four generations can be in the same classroom, which is often the case, the professor needs to be aware of the differences that can trigger misunderstandings and conflicts. Therefore, this section briefly reviews the values held by each generation in order to provide understanding of actions and reactions of the different generational mindsets—especially with respect to relational intimacy.

Regent University divinity students come from a wide variety of ages ranging from the early twenties through seventy years of age.\(^{36}\) It is interesting to note that 50 percent of the divinity school falls into the Boomer category—quite an older group. It is followed by those thirty-five to forty-four, which are part of the Xers and make up 28 percent of the population. Those aged sixty-five to seventy-five (the Builders) make up 1 percent of the population, and 4 percent of the students enrolled did not report their ages on the enrollment records. Since the nucleus of the Regent divinity community is made up of Boomers and Xers, these two generations are the focus of this discussion. Also included is

\(^{35}\) Rick Hicks and Kathy Hicks, *Boomers, Xers, and Other Strangers* (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 1999).

\(^{36}\) Patricia Mercier, enrollment manager Regent University, interview by author, Virginia Beach, VA, 2012.
some brief information on the Builder generation, since the majority of the professors were born within that time frame. The Millennials also are included, since they are very quickly coming of age and already entering the university.

The Builder generation (also known as Traditionalists, Survivor or GI Generation) was born before 1946. They did not desire to be unique; rather, they wanted to accomplish things together. Fitting in with the crowd was fine with them. The Builder generation can best be described as loyal. “They tend to believe strongly in institutionalism and not to question the establishment. This perspective tends to manifest in the belief that a leader should lead, and a follower should follow.” This can become very evident, as an instructor who is a Builder can hold this attitude: “I lecture and you take notes. Study my lecture and memorize the book if you want to pass the exam given on the last day of class.” Overall, 48 percent of the full-time divinity faculty and 1 percent of the student body are part of the Builder generation. This gap can be problematic for younger generations, academically and spiritually, since it is important for the newer generations to experience spirituality and not just absorb cognitive knowledge about it. Jesus allowed His disciples to experience Him; He did not just tell them about Himself and ask them to take notes. They walked with Him, saw miracles, and experienced His death and resurrection (Mark 3:1-5; Matt 3; Luke 24:50-53). Experiential learning greatly impacts these students.

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37 R. Hicks and K. Hicks, *Boomers, Xers, and Other Strangers*, 229.
38 Ibid., 239-240.
39 Ibid., 20.
Due to the explosive birthrate following World War II, the Baby Boomers became the largest generation in the history of the United States. They were born between 1946 and 1964. Roughly seventy-six million babies were born during this time period, thus making them a very impressive force. Due to sheer numbers, they have been and continue to be the most influential generation until this day with respect to questioning leadership, selfishness, and wanting self-gratification instantly. Believers in this generation have had to submit themselves to God asking for a great deal of transformation, since they were brought up during a time of permissiveness with few boundaries and with little church exposure. It was a time of great rebellion not only in the home but on college campuses.

About 43 percent of the full-time divinity faculty and 50 percent of the divinity student body are part of the Boomer generation. The Regent divinity instructors who are Boomers fall into this category of influence. Many Boomers are returning to school to further their education. With Boomer-to-Boomer teaching, and both desiring a hands-on approach, moving into experiencing God should be an easy transition with any course that focuses on developing the practice of intimacy with God. The impact can be powerful. Just the fact that Boomers are returning to school speaks of them wanting to better themselves. In the spiritual sense, a Boomer coming to divinity school expresses a hunger for God and to know more about Him.

40 Ibid., 243.

41 Ibid., 243-244.
Television was the greatest invention for the Boomers. It is believed that this invention alone was the reason for the rift between this new generation and the Builders, since they now were able to relate to a new set of reference points that were foreign to their parents.\textsuperscript{42} The Boomers began to question their parent’s values, establishments, and sought to fix the country they viewed as corrupt and broken; therefore, they had no desire to fly the flag but decided to burn it instead. The Baby Boomers also can be placed into two separate subgroups. Wade Clark Roof states, “The older boomers were ‘challengers,’ ready to take on the establishment,’ the younger ones were ‘calculators,’ intent upon setting priorities for what to go after in a world where you cannot have it all.”\textsuperscript{43} The best words to describe Boomers are “optimistic” and “competitive.”\textsuperscript{44} With so many of them competing for the same job, they had no choice but to become competitive. Boomers do not want to follow “chain of command”; instead, they seek to “change the command.”\textsuperscript{45}

Generation X is about half the size of the Boomer generation. The Xers were born between 1965 and 1980 and have been misunderstood by other generations. They are small in numbers and caught between the Boomers and the Millennials, two extremely large generations. They lack credibility with the previous generations, since the Gen-Xers’ way of thinking do not line up with many ideas held by Boomers and Builders. The Xers

\textsuperscript{42} Lancaster and Stillman, \textit{When Generations Collide}, 21.


\textsuperscript{44} Lancaster and Stillman, \textit{When Generation Collide}, 22.

\textsuperscript{45} Ibid.
are committed to diversity. They do not struggle with ethnic and cultural differences; they embrace them. They do not tolerate slurs and slangs about other ethnic groups. They also are committed to people and personal relationships, unlike the generation before them. They have a strong sense of family, since many received little nurturing as children, though their definition of family is somewhat different. “Their concept of family is not so much related to traditional legal concepts as it is to the level of emotional commitment and support.”

The Xers were known as the “latchkey kids,” and many had no mother waiting for them when they returned home from school. Instead, they arrived to a parentless house and entertained themselves with computer games and television, until their parents (if there were two parents) arrived home exhausted from a long day at the office. After working all day, their parent(s) had little energy to spend quality time with their children. Due to these difficulties, this generation became disillusioned and skeptical.

Not only do they feel abandoned by family, but they feel rejected in the business world as well. They went to college only to discover they were unable to get a good job, due to a weakened economy. By then, they had college loans and had to accept jobs that required no college and with little pay. They had no choice but to become independent,

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46 R. Hicks and K. Hicks, *Boomers, Xers, and Other Strangers*, 262-263.

47 Ibid., 265.

48 Ibid., 262.

49 Ibid.
so they started looking out for themselves.\textsuperscript{50} These challenges had a great impact on this generation. The Gen-Xers’ suicide rate is higher than any previous generations. “More than 5,000 Busters (Gen-Xers) commit suicide each year.”\textsuperscript{51}

The good found in this for Gen-Xers is the fact that they want to be in control of their priorities, and they have a strong concept of family.\textsuperscript{52} With such foundations already in place, spiritual disciplines can prove a welcome challenge for them. In their emotional desperation, many are extremely open to God working in their lives. Whereas the Builders respected the “chain of command” and the Boomers wanted “a change of command,” the Xers “self-command.”\textsuperscript{53} The Gen-Xers wanted to be in command of their own lives—not the office boss, not the country, only the Gen-Xer. This shows itself in the 9 percent of the divinity full-time faculty and 28 percent of the divinity student body who are Gen-Xers.

The Millennial generation encompasses those born after 1980. They say, “Don’t command—collaborate!”\textsuperscript{54} Millennials have been raised by Xer parents (highly communicative, participation-oriented parents), in which they have been part of everyday decision-making in the home. Millennials know how to stick up for themselves and how to collaborate without training on the job.\textsuperscript{55}

\textsuperscript{50} Ibid., 255.
\textsuperscript{51} Ibid., 260.
\textsuperscript{52} Ibid., 265.
\textsuperscript{53} Ibid., 254.
\textsuperscript{54} Lancaster and Stillman, \textit{When Generation Collide}, 31.
\textsuperscript{55} Ibid.
They are “growing up at a time of unprecedented prosperity—and unprecedented pressures.”\textsuperscript{56} Following the Gen-Xers, “they are a very positive generation with a new focus on teamwork, achievement, modesty, and good conduct. Millennials are more numerous, more affluent, better educated, and more ethnically diverse than previous generations” \textsuperscript{57} Lancaster and Stillman write: “Young people these days want to mix it up and continually blur the racial boundaries.”\textsuperscript{58} Racial boundaries are offensive to them and with good reason. The statistics show that one of five Millennials has at least one immigrant parent, and one in ten has at least one non-citizen parent.\textsuperscript{59} Since the younger generation is born of diversity, they belong to it. This can have a great impact on race and ethnicity problems that are present today. Instructors need to become accustomed and oriented to biracial changes in society, or opportunities will be missed to impart God’s Word to this rising group of young people.

There is now a common thread in this populous, explosive new generation that embodies many diversity challenges. They can become a generation of Christians that will bring about the much needed changes in the Church and in the world. This is in agreement with Regent’s belief structure. Robertson’s previous statement brings more understanding to this in that he founded the university “to provide passionate individuals with a place to

\textsuperscript{56} Ibid.


\textsuperscript{58} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{59} Ibid.
sharpen their skills and prepare them to help transform the world through Christian leadership. . . . Regent University is an academic environment where Christian leaders are taught to discern and respond to the times.”60 This is certainly the time for the divinity professors to follow through with the main focus of their teaching. The Book of Esther embodies this sense of urgency: “Yet who knows whether you have come to the kingdom for such a time as this?” (Esther 4:14).

The Millennials tend to pull what they deem as the best values and ideas from the previous generations. From the Builders, they have absorbed “the desire to work together for the benefit of others, take on big tasks, and face a future that is somewhat in question.”61 Seeing these needed areas manifest in the Church could change totally what the Church looks like. These traits were found in the Acts church (Acts 2:40-45) and resulted in a church explosion. From the Boomers, they take “their spirit of adventure and their desire to have fun in whatever they do.”62 The Bible talks about the joy of the Lord and to rejoice in all things (Ps 100:1; 27:6; Phil 4:4), illustrating the need for adventurous Christians in spirituality to venture into that “secret place of the Most High” (Ps 91:1). Millennial students are willing to hear God’s will for their lives.

From the Xers, Millennials take “their desire for media and the love of technology.”63 The world has changed, and technology is at the heart of it. Whether

60 Robertson, “Message from Our Founder and Chancellor.”
61 R. Hicks and K. Hicks, Boomers, Xers, and Other Strangers, 283.
62 Ibid.
63 Ibid.
professor or student, both need to stay abreast on the latest changes in this field to minister effectively. Learning can take place much more quickly, if one ventures to learn the latest technological opportunities that can be used in the university classroom to enhance learning.

Millennials are very tolerant and do not get uptight easily about some of the issues with which other generations have struggled. For example, they are tolerant of issues such as homosexuality and divorce and have developed the philosophy of “live and let live.”

With this new rising generation of Millennial students, professors need to prepare themselves regarding the best way to educate them. This means keeping in mind that such students may not relate to the learning styles and methods that have tended to work well with Builders, Boomers, or Xers. Millennials are very experiential and tend to shun receiving lectures. This is because they live and know the latest technology. Attention spans are shorter, and their minds move more quickly. They want to experience the teaching, not sit and take notes. They are all about “teach me but also allow me experience what you are teaching!”

Given the vast distinctions among the generations, it is natural for clashes to occur within the context of a classroom due to the way these groups view the world around them as well as how they view themselves. Lancaster and Stillman in When Generations Collide state that when the Builders were asked about training, they replied, “I learned it the hard way; you can, too.” The Boomers said, “Train ‘em too much and they’ll leave.” The Xers

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64 Ibid., 283-284.

65 Roof, A Generation of Seekers, 34-35.
turned it around and stated, “The more they learn, the more they stay.” The Millennials replied, “Continuous learning is a way of life.”66 They all see the same basic topic differently, and yet it is the same topic. A collision of worldviews (differences) may happen, but God can use these collisions to broaden one’s perspective. It can be both a blessing and educational to learn to accept and understand someone who thinks differently.

Jesus never criticized a culture or worldview. Even Paul, when visiting Athens, found a redemptive analogy in the midst of paganism (Act 17:23-24). He saw something in a foreign culture to which he could relate and explained the Gospel through this analogy. The key is to find a connection with every generation and build on that; but it only will work, if instructors have an open mind about the matter and are willing to make some changes in their own way of looking at things.

As teachers, we may have a tendency to view the students from our own generation’s perspective and, as a result, hinder the learning of students that do not share the same view. A willingness to learn new technology and making an extra effort to encourage each student in some way can bring positive results. A student’s generational views and values dictate how they learn and how they learn best. Taking an exam might work well for a Builder; but most likely it is not the best way to evaluate Xers, Boomers, or Millennials. Evaluating a professor’s style of teaching also can assist in making him or her aware of possible changes that might be considered.

66 Lancaster and Stillman, When Generation Collide, 77.
Howe and Strauss state that “older people should thrill at what today’s kids already are, and what they may become.” A good addition to that statement might be “and what they will become in the Lord.” God the loving Father can break through generational barriers, ethnic divisions, gender struggles, and even differences in worldview. Moving toward an intimate relationship with God is the starting point. As the students and teachers fall deeper in love with God, the diversity will become more of a blessing rather than a barrier.

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CHAPTER 2
THE NEED FOR A DEEPER RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD

This chapter addresses the importance of an intimacy with God among seminary students. Though Regent seminarians receive a great deal of knowledge through their courses, most do not receive guidance and teaching about drawing closer to God in an intimate relationship nor do they receive an opportunity to practice and experience it. The results from a seminary survey will be used to confirm this need for spiritual intimacy among seminarians. Also covered in this chapter will be observations of the present culture, its hunger for fulfillment, and how this impacts the seminarian.

Hunger for God with Seminarian: Pre-Course Assessment

The pre-course assessment was created for the purpose of establishing the need for the experiential course entitled “Intimacy with God: Practicing God’s Presence.” After discussing the importance of the pre-course assessment with Tom Schwanda and Gary
Sattler, both professors at Fuller Seminary,¹ I proceeded to speak with Mara Crabtree, head of the Spiritual Formation Department at Regent University, hoping to gain some input concerning the course assessment survey regarding what should be included as well as areas that were not needed. Together, we came up with the types of questions that we felt should be asked, making sure to include spiritual disciplines and heart-based questions that would require an emotional response from the student. Also included was a question about their friends. Other areas Crabtree and I discussed briefly were the course syllabus, setting an appointment with the dean of Academics about the possibility of teaching the course on campus for the Fall term, and her suggestion of topics that should be in such a course.²

All input then was reviewed and evaluated prayerfully before developing the assessment tool. In April 2005 it was administered to 122 Regent University master’s level students of diverse ages, gender, ethnicity, and religious affiliations. The pre-course assessment consisted of two pages of questions. The questions either could be answered with simple, short answers or could be expounded upon should the student desire to do so. The questions and student responses are presented and analyzed below.

**Responses to the Pre-Course Assessment**

Overall, the purpose of the pre-course assessment was to ascertain the students’ input regarding whether or not there was a need for offering an experiential course called

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¹ Tom Schwanda and Gary Sattler, professors at Fuller Theological Seminary, interviews by author, Pasadena, CA, 2005.

² Mara Crabtree, head of the Spiritual Formation Department at Regent University, interview by author, Virginia Beach, VA, 2005.
“Intimacy with God: Practicing the Presence of God.” There were total of ten questions. Overall, the responses proved that students were hungry for more of God and justified the need for such a course.

Question #1: Student Responses (Q1)

The first question on the pre-course assessment was this: “Do you hunger and thirst for the deeper things of God? Please explain. What does it feel like?” The purpose of this specific inquiry was to ascertain whether students had a true hunger for God. If the answer to question Q1 was “no,” then the rest of the survey would have proved fruitless. The hunger for intimacy needed to be established. Of the 122 students surveyed, 112 communicated a desire to know God more deeply. The remaining others did not give a “no” response; rather, they either left the question blank or made mention that in the past they desired more of God but do not anymore. Many admitted that this bothered them but stated that they are unsure what to do about it.

There was a variety of responses in regards to the second part of this question: “What does it feel like to hunger and thirst for the deeper things of God?” Some students used descriptive responses which reflect their desire to stay close in proximity with Him. Other responses addressed the negative feelings students might have towards God or towards themselves. Such answers included “I am dissatisfied with my level of intimacy;” “I see a level of growth, but there is a lack of time for sincere seeking;” “I always have a misunderstanding to what is a true relationship with the Father;” “Academics have taken me away from my relationship with God. My prayer life has decreased significantly.” With these negative responses, the central motif seemed to be
frustration. Apparently, this frustration stemmed from the desire to know intimately that God is there. However, the way to get to that place was not clear to those responding. Essentially, their answers cried out for direction.

There were other responses indicating that the students were looking for personal and/or spiritual fulfillment. It was clear that they wanted to grow in their intimate relationship with God. They stated, “I desire for the gifts to be manifested in my life as a validation of God’s presence;” “I want to be fully equipped to serve God;” “I need to be firmly grounded in Christ and to have the power of the Holy Spirit manifested in my life;” “I would like to have spiritual experiences.” Their hunger seemed to amplify as they pondered this question. Their responses also revealed a yearning for more of God and His direction, hearing His voice, being led by Him, and the like. John Wesley, when asked what a true Christian is, said, “This true Christian has the strongest love for God. Knowing God as the fountain of all good, he has a firm confidence in Him. He has a confidence which neither pleasure nor pain, life nor death, can shake.”

Survey respondents painted a portrait of yearning for this: to hear His voice clearly, to know God’s direction, and to have God’s gifts working in their lives (James 4:8; Psalm 145:18). Survey respondents were just waiting to experience it.

In the survey, students continued to pour out their deepest thoughts about their desires and what they wanted in their relationship with the Lord. The deep desires of the students’ hearts very often were repeated in the assessment. However, here are some that

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were common among the group: “I desire God when I realize I have moved away from Him. I enjoy the search;” “I desire to walk in His fullness;” “I desire to have total surrender in my life;” “I desire to do nothing else but go on prolonged fasts, pray, pray more, and worship more;” “a strong desire to grow closer to Him.” These students wanted to follow hard after God but needed some guidance. A. W. Tozer states, “We pursue God because, and only because, He has first put an urge within us that spurs us to the pursuit.”

In essence, Tozer is saying that pursuit of God all begins with God’s pursuit of us. This was good news for the hungry Regent respondents.

Some students approached the question by describing what they presently were experiencing in their lives. Here is an example:

I have a love for God’s Word; it is more will for me than feelings. I want to bridge the gap between God and my daily life; a longing that cannot be satisfied; a desire coming from deep from within; all of my thoughts are geared to Him; a deep yearning; can never get enough of Him; even when I feel close, I hunger for more; it consumes me; longing and yearning deep inside.

Such students described a deep hunger that when filled seems to cause them to hunger more after the Lord. They longed to feel consumed by God. These experiences were most difficult to put into words, and yet these occurrences have happened to them.

This reflects what Mike Bickle explains: how David’s unrelenting passion caused him to search out and understand the emotions of God. Essentially, this is what set David apart as a man after God’s heart.5 Like David, these students wanted to experience God

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5 Mike Bickle, After God’s Own Heart (Lake Mary, FL: Charisma House, 2004), 2.
from the deepest depths of their being. Students were conscious that not only are believers to love God with all of their heart, mind, soul, and strength (with their holistic self) but they are to experience Him, not only with their mind but also with their heart—the seat of their emotions.

There were other students who related the deepness of God to ministry. Such students realize that in order to be used by God, they must know Him intimately. Some of the most powerful ministers are those who spend hours in prayer every day. Heidi Baker is one of them. She has witnessed over one hundred resurrections from the dead and has prayed for the dead herself.⁶ She says that believers are to be “poor in spirit,” as preached in Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount, and goes on to state, “I believe Jesus meant that poor in spirit is a posturing of the heart where one is wholly given, fully yielded, completely desperate, and totally dependent on God alone.”⁷ She has seen miracle after miracle in Mozambique where she and her husband currently minister. Intimacy with God is the key to seeing these miracles happen.

**Question #2: Student Responses (Q2)**

The second question on the pre-course assessment asked, “What hinders you most often from growing closer to God?” The purpose of this specific inquiry was to discover what was holding the students back from having an intimate relationship with God so that the course could implement some teaching on this topic. The student responses reveal that

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⁷ Ibid.
perhaps professors form part of the problem encountered in this area. If this is true, then perhaps they can be a part of the solution by helping to remedy some of these hindrances in students’ lives. One major problem seemed to be time issues. There were just too many things to do and not enough time to do them all and to spend time with God. There were many different reasons for why there was not enough time for God, and the students had their own personal list. Of the 122 students, sixty-three of them (76 percent) viewed their lack of intimate time with God as due to time-related issues. Students seem to find it easy to start doing the less important things first; and though this gives a sense of accomplishment, at the end of the day the urgent things have received little or no attention. This affects a growing relationship of intimacy. Without time, a relationship will be shallow at best.

Worldliness also was mentioned on the list of hindrances by fifteen of the surveyed students (18 percent), who admitted struggling with this issue. The greatest challenges mentioned by students were fleshly temptations, such as pornography and television, and other areas where their minds become distracted away from God and His ways. Additionally, modern conveniences and money also were cited as worldly obstacles.

Worldliness often leads to sin, and sin leads to broken relationships (James 4:4-5). Sin was a major issue with twenty-five students surveyed (30 percent). There were nine students who admitted they were self-focused instead of God-focused, while six students mentioned that habitual sin was a major hindrance in their relationship with God. Pride was an admitted stronghold for five of the students, followed by selfishness and self-reliance for four students. Close-mindedness, stubbornness, cynicism, self-righteousness,
bitterness, lack of forgiveness, listening to gossip, and vanity all were listed as impediments to intimacy from various students as well.

The Bible teaches that sin separates people from God; and though believers have been forgiven, they daily choose whether to engage in sin. Usually after sin, there is a tendency to hide from God in the sense of not wanting to spend time with Him due to guilt and shame, as seen with Adam and Eve (Gen 3: 6-13). Charles Finney, when addressing James 1:22—“But be doers of the word, and not hearers only”—said, “True Christianity consists in obedience.” Staying away from those things that distract from God and being obedient to the Lord is needed for intimacy with Him.

Students also shared painful experiences and unresolved pain as hindrances. These included a sense of unworthiness, lack of self confidence, self-condemnation, difficulty with intimate relationships, disillusionment, personal issues, loneliness, hopelessness, feelings of guilt, not thinking they measured up to God’s standards, and not being able to relate to God as a loving Father. It needs to be noted that seven students surveyed (8 percent) did not like themselves and felt that they were the problem hindering a close relationship with God. Pain and suffering was listed by 4 percent of the students as the reason for not being close to Him.

Sometimes these kinds of issues are much more difficult to deal with, because they have deep roots that often go back into one’s childhood. Sandra Wilson says, “When Jesus spoke about causing a child to stumble, I believe that He was addressing spiritual

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issues, I also believe, however, that we can make a broader application. The word translated ‘stumble’ pictures how parents and other adults cause children to trip and fall over obstacles of false teaching placed in the child’s past.9 Children believe what their parents say and take these beliefs into adulthood. God desires to heal these memories that have molded His people in early years. In cases like this, healing will be needed in order for such students to draw closer to God, since they probably at some level do not believe they are acceptable to Him.

Deeper spiritual issues surfaced with seven of the students (8 percent). This ranged from a lack of desire to be close to God, lack of feeling God’s presence, not being able to comprehend how to commune with an unseen King, taking God for granted, feeling uncomfortable being alone with God, all the way to questioning the voice of God. One student remarked at not being able to enjoy being with God. Other students mentioned difficulty in focusing on God, while another commented that there was always the uncertainty whether God was a participator. These comments are alarming. They seem to be self-based: “I don’t desire. . . , I don’t feel. . . , I am uncomfortable. . . , I question. . . , I don’t enjoy. . . .” There seems to be little about God Himself or what He desires. Tozer states that this is how “Adam and Eve lost their purpose. They forgot who they were. They did not know who they were. They did not know where they were; they did not understand where they came from or what they were here for. They forgot the

9 Sandra Wilson, Hurt People Hurt People (Grand Rapids: MI: Discovery House Publishers, 2001), 81.
A person’s knowledge of these things is the basis for knowing the importance of seeking and knowing God. Perhaps, this is the problem with these students. Sometimes going back to the foundations of faith is needed before a movement toward intimacy is possible. One has to know who God is, before any level of intimacy with Him can be achieved.

Worry and fear affected ten of the students (12 percent). Listed responses included everyday concerns and doubts, general fear, worrying about how to pay the bills, fear of tomorrow, fear of God’s requirements, and unbelief. Fear is one of the main causes of an unproductive life, especially in the spirit. Worry often is based in fear, and fear is paralyzing; but Scripture is clear that God is not the author of fear rather the fount of power, love, and a sound mind (2 Tim 1:7). Fear is a normal human struggle, even for leaders. Timothy, for instance, struggled against fear as he pursued the ministry to which God had called him. The fact that appeared in survey responses is not unnerving, because understanding where fear comes from and knowing God in deep relationship will cause fear to dissipate.

A full fifteen of the students surveyed (31 percent) thought their relationship with God was poor due to a lack of spiritual disciplines. They perceived the following as major hindrances: very little time spent alone with God, lack of devotions, lack of spiritual discipline, little or no Bible study, not being totally committed to God, lack of fellowship, lack of service to God, not doing what God had instructed the student to do, lack of prayer, not posturing oneself to receive from God, not making God the priority,

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not reserving time to be with Him, never fasting, and lack of worship. The survey reveals how all of these areas are what causes growth in relationship; and without them, only a very shallow relationship at best will develop. Richard Foster addresses this issue and states, “Superficiality is the curse of our age. The doctrine of instant satisfaction is a primary spiritual problem. The desperate need of today is not for a greater number of intelligent people, or gifted people, but for deep people.”

Intimacy requires depth in the Spirit. Without posturing oneself before God, this intimacy cannot be achieved. Psalms 42:7 states, “Deep calls unto deep at the noise of Your waterfalls; All Your waves and billows have gone over me.” The depth of God calls unto the depth of our heart, but there needs to be that depth. This comes from being in God’s presence through prayer, His Word, fasting, and so on.

According to Watchman Nee, “Only a call from the depths can provoke a response from the depths. Nothing shallow can ever touch the depths, nor can anything superficial touch the inward parts. Only the deep will respond to the deep.”

Survey respondents either have learned through their earlier education or intuitively sense that God calls His people to a relationship of depth and that without that depth there only can be a superficial relationship and nothing more. It will take commitment to change, a decision to overcome and release the weights that tie Christians down. Paul understood this process and wrote to those whom he discipled from afar:

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Not that I have already attained, or am already perfected; but I press on, that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me. Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. (Phil 3:12-14)

There was a determination in Paul to “do whatever it takes” to strive for intimacy with God. It is not that the disciplines are difficult, but as Foster states, “The primary requirement is a longing after God.”13 Perhaps, this is where the glitch occurs. The longing has to be there, before the commitment can take place. People usually cannot commit fully to something over the long term, if they do not believe it to be important.

Question #3: Student Responses (Q3)

The third inquiry on the pre-course assessment involved an emotional response concerning intimacy. It read as follows:

Here are some biblical images that you might relate to when you think about your relationship with God. Which themes resonate with your life and experience with God? Feel free to add your own comments—positive or negative. Do you hunger and thirst for the deeper things of God? Please explain. What does it feel like?

The purpose of this specific inquiry was to ascertain whether the students saw the connection between emotions and intimacy and, if so, how they experience it. Ultimately, this question revealed how the student experiences God.

The results were not surprising as far as the positive images were concerned, but the negative images proved otherwise in that there appeared to be some emotional areas that need healing in the students’ lives as well as spiritual problems that have developed.

13 Foster, Celebration of Discipline, 2.
There is also some inaccurate theology noted about the need for a “works” mentality.

Figures 1 and 2 illustrate the positive versus negative images that students shared.

![Bar chart](image)

**Figure 1. Positive Images of Intimacy Experiences**

The desire for intimacy was the highest score, which is very encouraging, followed by longing for the Lord. Other descriptive words were chosen by the students: desire, passion, always desiring more, acceptance, feeling His presence, delight, desiring to praise God beyond the norm, speaking in tongues, feelings of being lifted up, and using their gifts. The students clearly understood the emotional connection with intimacy.

The highest negative was not doing enough for God. This reveals that these students may give credence to a works-mentality theology. This is a very high number and caused concern.
The rest of these results raised questions about the need for unresolved emotional and spiritual issues with these students. These areas of concern can block a student from moving into an intimate relationship with God, as grace is such an importance factor.

**Question #4: Student Responses (Q4)**

The fourth question on the pre-course assessment was this one: “What are the most needed disciplines in growing more intimate with God?” The purpose of this specific inquiry was to ascertain how the students view spiritual disciplines and which ones they considered most important. Some students skipped over the question completely, probably due to their lack of understanding of how to become more intimate
with God. Most of the responses are listed below, with the exception of those that have no bearing on the creation of this course.

There were a variety of comments from the students surveyed. Prayer, silence, and meditation scored highest and were the most essential disciplines according to the students. There were forty students who mentioned Bible study; eight of those mentioned a quiet time with the Lord, and one mentioned the importance of lectio divina. An additional seventeen stated the need for praise and worship, while twelve students mentioned the necessity of meditation along with the response of prayer in general. There were nine students who thought fasting was of the utmost importance, and eight put the highest value on fellowship. Finally, two students added a comment about listening prayer, and one stressed waiting on God. This reveals that students gave these areas a great deal of thought and are concerned about their relationship growth with God. A hunger for God exists.

**Question #5: Student Responses (Q5)**

The fifth question on the pre-course assessment was this one: “Have you personally experienced the presence of God? If so, how?” Q5 sought to discover whether they were already moving in intimacy with the Lord in an experiential way. This was important to know, since intimacy with God involves the emotions as does the course “Intimacy with God: Practicing the Presence of God.”

There were 110 students who answered “yes” to this question, while another answered “no,” and the remaining eleven left the question blank. It needs to be noted that some of the students with “yes” responses assumed that experiencing God’s presence
meant other things that were not necessarily experiencing God’s presence. The question may have been misunderstood.

Overall, there was a wide variety of responses. Here is how some of the students defined and described feeling the presence of God: “I was alone and in a church service;” “When I am praying for impossible issues in my life;” “through worship and through His word;” “When I was at the Brownsville revival services;” “in nature;” “When I was slain in the Spirit;” “I experience God during deep times of intercession;” “I have dreams and visions—nothing like it;” “Goose bumps; feels like a warmth all over me;” “I see visions and have ecstatic experiences;” “I feel overcome with love and emotion for God and in God;” “Sometimes I cry and sometimes I laugh;” “I physically feel waves of warmth;” “I sense a sweet love especially when I sing;” “His presence is where I feel at home and at rest in His arms.” Other students stated: “I experience Him by faith but do not have the feelings;” “It’s like a power falling over me; I sense a feeling of belonging; it’s a light weight on my shoulder; “It’s a purging sensation;” “Feels like electricity going through my body.” These responses overwhelmingly reveal that there is connection between emotionally experiencing God’s presence and physically experiencing it as well.

Question #6: Student Responses (Q6)

This question had two parts to it. First, Q6 addressed the student; then, the student was asked to apply the same question to friends. The first part of Q6 asked, “Do you feel a need for a deeper experience with God?” The purpose of this specific inquiry was to ascertain how the students viewed having an experience with God and whether or not they felt it was important in their relationship with God. Of 122 students, 96 percent (118
respondents) answered “yes,” 2 percent (two respondents) answered “no,” and 2 percent (two respondents) gave no response. The vast majority saw a need and thought it was important to have an experiential relationship with God.

The second part of Q6 asked, “Do you feel your friends have a need to experience God in a deeper way? Again, the majority 97 percent (119 students) responded with a “yes,” and 2 percent (two students) answered with “no.” Just one student responded with “not sure.” The responses to the first part were essentially identical to the second. Therefore, not only did the students feel they need a deeper experience with God but they felt their friends do as well.

Question #7: Student Responses (Q7)

The seventh question asked, “Would you and your friends benefit from a course that would aid you in deepening your love for God and opening you to experience God’s presence in a deeper way?” This inquiry sought to discover how they felt about a course on this topic, whether they believed such a course should be in the academic program, or if they felt it should be addressed on an individual level or in church. This was important, because the need for such a course would be decided with this question. Overall, it was evident that the students thought that a course about intimacy with God was needed in a seminary. There were 111 “yes” responses (93 percent of the total assessed group), five “no” responses (4 percent), and three “not sure” responses (3 percent).

Being teachable is needed, and most people need help in learning a particular topic. This also includes growing in relationship with God. It is important to learn from other people: their successes and their mistakes, their knowledge on a topic, and being
guided by them. This aspect of community is needed especially in this area of growth—in particular, a place to safely practice what is learned and to be gently corrected when necessary, a place of encouragement, and a place of continued learning and accountability for one’s spiritual growth. Roberts Liardon states that failures that take place in the lives of men and women “will attempt to take place again.”14 There is no need to repeat a mistake, if a student can learn how not to make the mistake in the first place. The course discussed in this project seeks to address all of these concerns.

Question #8 (Q8)

The eighth question asked, “What topics would you like to see included in a course titled ‘Growing Deeper in Love with God’ or ‘Intimacy with God’ that would be important to you?” Q8 sought to uncover what the students saw as needs to be addressed in such a course. This question was important, because knowing how a student views spiritual growth would greatly affect the material to be included in such a course. In light of generational differences, students’ input proved valuable and most welcoming.

The responses stemmed from academic perspectives, individual faith practices, and general thoughts about community. They can be classified as follows: Bible study, devotional reading, Hebrew information, historical learning, and general barriers; personal calling, devotion to God, disciplines, discussion requests, experiential learning, faith, fasting, fear, hearing God’s voice, grace, healing, intimacy, journaling, knowing God, love, obedience, effects of walking in the Spirit, personal, prayer, and self-denial;

fellowship, forgiveness, helping others, discipleship, spiritual gifts, spiritual mentoring, leadership, seeking God, spiritual warfare, suffering/trials, surrender, and worship. All of these areas are important in one’s growth in relationship with God and were taken into account when writing the material for the course. The students understood what was needed and what they wanted to learn in such a class.

Question #9 (Q9)

The ninth and final question asked, “Would you be interested in signing up for a course that could be both instrumental and experiential in drawing you into a deeper relationship with God? Why?” The purpose of Q9 was to see if the students would actually sign up for a course on intimacy with God. Overall, it informed how receptive Regent students might be to the practical aspects of a potential class offering them help in growing and deepening relationship with Him. Before giving the assessment, it was anticipated that there was a possibility of 50 percent positive responses, due to the core course requirements. Students have few electives, so they have to be very wise in choosing them. The end results showed that 84 percent of the students that were assessed desired for this course to be offered. The response results are below.

The first part of Q9 asked, “Would you be interested in signing up for a course that could be both instrumental and experiential in drawing you into a deeper relationship with God?” The positive majority response was at 84 percent (ninety-six students), while 13 percent (fifteen students) said “no.” There were four students (3 percent) that were unsure. The students were very receptive to this possibility. Since the vast majority said
that they would be interested in taking such a course, this was the deciding factor for the academic dean in allowing it to be added to the schedule for Fall 2005.

**The Need Established**

After the assessment was given to all 122 students, the answers were tallied and categorized into groups. A pattern began to emerge which was consistent with the vast majority of students assessed. In the end, 96 percent of the surveyed students had a desire for an intimate relationship with God, and 84 percent agreed that this course should be offered. It was unmistakably clear that a need for such a course had been established and that each student should be given an opportunity to register for it. The administration agreed. Therefore, permission was given to begin the course-writing process.

This particular assessment revealed a side of the students that the seminary administration has failed to see: students’ strong desire for a deeper love relationship with their creator and their desire to experience God inside and outside the classroom. The results of this assessment were unanticipated and took the divinity school’s administration by surprise, as was mentioned by the previous administrative dean. He had no idea that the students felt this way about their spirituality. This reaction was one of concern that spiritual needs were not being addressed, and he started looking forward to the end results of my teaching this course.¹⁵

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¹⁵ Randall Panell, interview by author, Virginia Beach, VA, April 2005.
PART TWO

THEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL ANALYSIS
CHAPTER 3

INTIMACY WITH GOD

This chapter sets forth the biblical foundation for the strategy contained in this project and employs examples from the Old and New Testaments. Additionally, it will define and establish the concept of intimacy—specifically, intimacy with God—through a scriptural lens. Special emphasis will be given to John, the beloved disciple, and the possible reasons why he was given this descriptive name. His love relationship with Jesus appears to be of exceptional depth when compared to references regarding Jesus and His other disciples.

God’s Pursuit throughout Scripture

John Bevere states, “It is a fact, God wants to draw near to us even more than we desire to draw near to Him!”¹ God yearns for His people. The Book of James speaks in reference to God’s yearning: “Or do you think that the Scripture says in vain, ‘The Spirit who dwells in us yearns jealously’” (James 4:5). The Amplified Bible reveals a deeper meaning to this verse: “Or do you suppose that the Scripture is speaking to no purpose that says, The Spirit Whom He has caused to dwell in us yearns over us and He yearns for the

Spirit [to be welcome] with a jealous love?’” These perspectives show how much God desires an intimate relationship with His creation, corporately and individually.

Intimacy can be translated as “to know,” coming from the words “God’s knowledge.” In Hebrew, this can mean “acts of care, help, and succor” (Job 31:6; Ps 1:6; 50:11; 73:11; 103:13-14; 144:3; Nah 1:7). Being known by God indicates that His followers are His chosen ones (Jer 1:5; Hos 5:3; Amos 3:2). God wants to know humankind, and He pursues people due to His love for them. This is evident throughout the Bible, as this chapter will show. Starting in Genesis, God’s love is revealed clearly as well as His desire to pursue humankind. He also desires that His creation love Him not due to obligation, but because they hunger to be close to Him, to pursue His presence, and to share in the gift of His love. When St. Bernard was asked why God should be loved, he answered, “The reason for our loving God is God. . . . He surely merits much from us. He gave Himself to us, unworthy as we were: what better gift could He have given than Himself?”

God pursues His creation, even when individuals and nations are in sin and rebellion against Him. In the Garden of Eden after the fall, God makes provision for the first man and woman by killing an animal and thereby clothing the now exposed humans of His “very good” creation (Gen 3:21). Christians are no different. Often Christ followers

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hear, “Where are you?” (Gen 3:9), and they find themselves making excuses or hiding their heads in shame. However, like the prodigal’s father, God waits with arms opened wide for the return of His children. Though Samson had been lured by fleshly desire and had fallen away from God, before he died he cried out to God for help (Judg 18:28). Jacob, another Old Testament example, was given a new name by God to replace the old one. He was to be called “Israel,” meaning “Prince with God” (Gen 32:22-10). This replaced the old name “Jacob,” which meant “supplanter.” Both of these men had an intimate encounter with God, which changed them forever.

God pursues His creation, because He desires intimacy with it as a whole and with its individual components. He takes no pleasure in casual relationships that look to Him only to meet their temporal needs. This is emphasized in Revelation 3:14-16, when God addresses the Laodician church. He tells them that they are neither cold nor hot but lukewarm, and due to this He is going to spit them out of His mouth. This is because God is a jealous God (Exod 34:14) and will not compete with the idols in the world: the lust of the eyes, the lust of the flesh, and the pride of life. He is passionate and serious about His relationship with humankind. He then states, “Those whom I love, I rebuke and discipline. So be earnest and repent. Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with him and he with me” (Rev 3:19-20). Even after He rebukes those in the Laodician church concerning their lukewarm-ness, which He despises, God continues to pursue them and invites them into fellowship. God seeks out the children of His creation as a result of His deep love for each of them (cf. Gen 3:8-9; Song of Sol 2: 8-14; Acts 26:12-18).
One cannot know intimacy without first knowing love—not superficial love, but *agape* love. *Agape* love is defined as unconditional love. This is described in 1 Corinthians 13: “Love suffers long and is kind; love does not envy; love does not parade itself, is not puffed up; does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not provoked, thinks no evil; does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth; bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.” This implies an unconditional aspect to the relationship, in which there is perseverance, longsuffering, and a willingness to stay and help resolve the difficult issues that can arise in intimate relationship. The well-known description of this unconditional love is shown in John 3:16-17, which reads: “God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him will not perish but have everlasting life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him.” The death of Jesus on the cross was a perfect example of His unconditional love for His creation. This act reveals that *agape* love is more than simple words or feeling. In fact, it demonstrates how real love is willing to be sacrificial. For this reason, Jesus states, “Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one’s life for his friends” (John 15:13). This is God’s intimate love in action.

**Old Testament Intimacy**

Due to God’s deep love for His creation, and in His pursuit of it, throughout the Old Testament God established covenants with His people. In Hebrew, the word *beriyth* defines
covenant as a pact (Gen 17:17; Jer 34:18). God’s covenant with humanity consisted of an alliance of friendship (Ps 25:14) and a divine constitution with pledges (Gen 9:9-17). God’s agape love can be seen in each of these covenants: the Edenic Covenant, the Adamic Covenant, the Noadic Covenant, the Abrahamic Covenant, the Mosaic Covenant, and the Davidic Covenant. Through these covenants, it was God’s desire to draw His creation back into an intimate relationship with Him.

The history of God’s intimate love begins with the Edenic and Adamic Covenants with the first man and woman. Adam and Eve knew God intimately (Gen 1:26-30). They walked and talked with God in the cool of the day (Gen 3:8). There was no sin to block the union and communion they had with Him. However, they rebelled against God and lost their intimate fellowship with their Creator (Gen 3:22). This proved a stunning loss due to the fact that they had known perfection: no sickness, no heartache, no sin, nothing but intimacy with God. After their sin, God says to Eve, “I will greatly multiply your sorrow and your conception; In pain you shall bring forth children; Your desire shall be for your husband, And he shall rule over you.” To Adam, God proclaims the following:

Because you have heeded the voice of your wife, and have eaten from the tree of which I commanded you, saying, “You shall not eat of it”: Cursed is the ground for your sake; In toil you shall eat of it all the days of your life. Both thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you, And you shall eat the herb of the field. In the sweat of your face you shall eat bread till you return to the ground, For out of it you were taken; For dust you are, And to dust you shall return.

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Adam and Eve knew the richness of God’s intimacy; but due to their disobedience, they lost it. “Historic Jewish writings tell of the depression Adam suffered after being driven from the garden. The weight of it was almost unbearable.”\(^7\) Having walked and talked with God in perfect fellowship and then having it taken away, due to a decision to sin, can hardly be described. Adam and Eve no longer dwelled in the ease of God’s glory.

Adam and Eve suffered an unspeakable loss.\(^8\) Nevertheless, Enoch, Adam’s fourth-generation great grandson, walked with God and desired intimacy with Him (Gen 5:24). Given the trauma caused to humanity as a result of expulsion from Eden, it is likely he knew about Adam and Eve and their experience in the Garden of Eden. It is possible that a curiosity surfaced concerning what it would have been like to totally walk with God. However, one thing is evident: Enoch had a deep longing to know God intimately and to walk with Him. Genesis 5:22-23 states, “Enoch walked with God three hundred years, and had sons and daughters. So all the days of Enoch were three hundred and sixty-five years.” This implies that Enoch spent time with his Creator, engaged in conversation, and in general experienced an Eden-like intimacy with God despite the fallen state of creation. God and Enoch had such an intimate relationship, that God did not allow him to suffer a physical death. “By faith Enoch was taken away so that he did not see death, ‘and was not found, because God had taken him;’ for before he was taken he had this testimony, that he pleased God,” states Bevere. “He (Enoch) had touched the

\(^7\) Bevere, *Drawing Near*, 11.

\(^8\) Ibid., 12.
longing in God’s heart, an intimate relationship with Him, the way He longs for us.”\(^9\) Enoch’s desire to know God in this intimate way resulted in living in this intimacy.

Noah also had this longing for God, loved God, and drew close to Him in fellowship. Genesis 6:9 states, “Noah was a just man, perfect in his generations. Noah walked with God.” When God gave Noah specific directions concerning the ark, his family, and the animals, the Bible says that Noah did all that God commanded him (Gen 6:22). Before the flood, humankind either obeyed God or refused to believe and follow Him. Kevin J. Connor and Kern Malmin state that “beginning with Cain and Abel two seed lines developed until the days of Noah; the ungodly (Gen 4) and the godly (Gen 5).”\(^{10}\) Cain’s rejection of the covenant sacrifice eventually led to the corruption of the entire human race.\(^{11}\) Humankind had totally failed to keep the covenant, and this demanded God’s judgment (Gen 6:1-13; Matt 24:37-39). “The judgment for breaking the Edenic covenant was death and expulsion from Eden while the judgment for breaking the Adamic covenant was death by a universal flood.”\(^{12}\) Still, there was one man who “found grace in the eyes of the Lord” (Gen 6:8). Noah lived among sinful humankind: intermarriage, great wickedness, evil imaginations and desires, corruption, and violence; and yet, Noah kept the Adamic Covenant (Gen 6:8-9; 7:1). After the flood, God instituted

\(^9\) Ibid., 13.

\(^{10}\) Connor and Malmin, *The Covenants*, 22.

\(^{11}\) Ibid.

\(^{12}\) Ibid.
another covenant with humankind through Noah and his sons, called the Noadic Covenant, due to Noah’s longing to walk with God and in pursuit of Him.

Abraham is another example of one desiring to know God. Little is known about Abraham’s earlier history, but God’s pursuit of him is clear. God calls him out of a sinful city to walk with Him. In Genesis 12:1, God tells him to leave his country, family, and his father’s house and to go to a land that God will show him. Establishing the Abrahamic Covenant, God says, “I will make you a great nation; I will bless you and make your name great; And you shall be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and I will curse him who curses you; And in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed” (Gen 12:2-3). Abraham obeyed and left. To follow such a difficult request required trust, obedience, faith, and a desire to follow God in an intimate way. In Genesis 17:1 the Lord again appears to Abraham and says, ‘I am Almighty God; walk before Me and be blameless.’” God continues to pursue him, because of His desire for the intimacy of His creation. God continues, “‘I will make My covenant between Me and you, and will multiply you exceedingly.’ Then Abram fell on his face, and God talked with him, saying: ‘As for Me, behold, My covenant is with you, and you shall be a father of many nations.’” (Gen 17: 2-4). God changes Abraham’s name at this point. “No longer shall your name be called Abram, but your name shall be Abraham; for I have made you a father of many nations” (Gen 17:4-5). Not only is this change an intimate connection that can be seen between God and Abraham; but it also was connected to the Abrahamic Covenant that was about to take place, which would affect the world and the world’s relationship with God.
God’s desire for intimacy with His creation also can be found in the ministry of Moses. Through Moses, God freed the Israelites from the bondage of the Egyptians. He opened the Red Sea (Exod 14: 21-23). He sent them food when they were hungry (Exod 16:35). He disciplined them, when needed (Exod 32). Despite all of this, they did not have a loving relationship with God. Moses had an intimate connection with the Lord, but the people did not. For this reason, God established the covenant with Moses on behalf of Israel (Exod 24:7-8; Deut 5:1-5; 1 Kings 8:9, 21; John 1:17; Rom 5:12-14), in order to draw His people unto Himself. The Ten Commandments were part of the covenant establishing human relationship with God: no other gods before Him, no graven image to be made or worshipped, no taking the name of the Lord in vain, and keeping the Sabbath day holy to the Lord. The Ten Commandments also took into account people’s relationship with other people: honor father and mother, no murder, no adultery, no stealing, no lying, and no coveting.

However, the people were unable to keep the Law due to their inherited sin nature passed down from the fall (Rom 5:12, 14). As a result, God designed a tabernacle, because He wanted to reveal Himself to His people and live among them. Exodus 25:8 states, “And let them make Me a sanctuary, that I may dwell among them.” Again in Exodus 29:46-47 God says, “And they shall know that I am the Lord their God, who brought them up out of the land of Egypt, that I may dwell among them. I am the Lord their God.” From the start, God has wanted to dwell among those He loves; and now, it takes the form of the Tabernacle, demonstrating tangibly all revelation and knowledge of
Since God desires intimacy, then it seems revelation of Him must be taught to those He loves. One such revelation was that God is a holy God and cannot tolerate sin.

In the Davidic Covenant, there was mutual pursuit: God pursued David, and David pursued God. David wanted to know and love God deeply. The Davidic Psalms portray a man after God’s own heart (1 Sam 13:14) and illustrate how David ran hard after the Lord. He voiced his love for God in Psalm 18. It begins: “I will love You, O Lord, my strength. The Lord is my rock and my fortress and my deliverer; My God, my strength, in whom I will trust” (Ps 18:1-2). He continues later in the same Psalm, “For You will light my lamp; The Lord my God will enlighten my darkness. For by You I can run against a troop, by my God I can leap over a wall. As for God, His way is perfect; The word of the Lord is proven; He is a shield to all who trust in Him” (Ps 18:28-30). This psalm is a good example of the depth of David’s love and his knowledge of God. This Scripture reveals that David’s God had been proven in his life. He truly knew the God of the covenant. David also knew the Shepherd of the flock, as he writes in Psalm 23: The Lord is David’s shepherd; He leads him; He restores him; David knows no fear because he knows God; God comforts him; because of God, David’s cup runs over; He will know goodness and mercy because he knows God.

In the Middle Eastern world of David’s day, the watch-care of God was pictured in a shepherd-sheep relationship (Isa 40:11). As a shepherd in his younger life, David would have spent many days and nights in solitude while tending his father’s sheep (1

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Sam 16:11). It is possible that much of David’s spiritual growth and his intimate relationship with God started during these times of solitude, quietness, and songs to the Lord in the lonely dark night hours.

While meditative and abiding in strong trust of God, David was still just a human being, made mistakes, and sinned against God on occasion. However, the intimate connection was not severed between him and God. This can be seen when David and Bathsheba’s child (birthed in adultery) was dying; David fasted and prayed earnestly. Scripture states:

David therefore pleaded with God for the child, and David fasted and went in and lay all night on the ground. . . . Then on the seventh day it came to pass that the child died. . . . So David arose from the ground, washed and anointed himself, and changed his clothes; and he went into the house of the Lord and worshiped (2 Sam12:16, 18a, 20).

David knew that God might heal the child and did all he could to plead his case before God. When the answer was “no,” David did not become angry with the Lord. As far as Scripture reveals, he accepted the answer and never mentioned it to God again. David did not question God’s ways. To worship God after such a tragic event, knowing God had the power to heal this child but decided not to do so, takes an intimate knowledge of who God is. Intimate knowledge and love bring maturity. This only can happen when a person knows the heart of God.

Though David was a sinner, God still called David a man after his own heart. David embodies a follower of God who engaged in deep intimacy with Him. Consequently, David
had a heart that reflected “the very heart, emotions, and personality of God.” Bickle states, “What set David apart as a man after God’s own heart was his unrelenting passion to search out and understand the emotions of God.” David desired to know God completely. He passionately hungered to know Him on an emotional level. He was a lovesick worshipper, who found the secret place of the Most High (Psalm 91:1), that intimate level where He was part of God and God was part of Him: a uniting of God’s spirit with the person’s spirit. Guyon describes this as a “deep union with God.” She expresses confidence that people’s spirits can deeply touch and be united with God’s Spirit while they live in their earthly body.

Ellen L. Goreh in 1883 describes how she views this secret place in a poem, which later became In the Secret of His Presence, a well-known hymn:

In the secret of his presence
How my soul delights to hide!
Oh, how previous are the lessons
Which I learn at Jesus side!
Earthly cares can never bother,
Neither trials lay me low;
From when Satan comes to vex me,
To the secret place I go!

The secret place of God is an intimate place with God. One can hide there, away from the troubles of life, away from all that tries to separate one from God. In Psalm 32:7 David

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14 Bickle, After God’s Own Heart, 2.
15 Ibid.
says, “You are my hiding place; You shall preserve me from trouble; You shall surround me with songs of deliverance.”

Similarly, in the Song of Songs the Shulamite girl found this union with God in that place: “The king has brought me into his chambers” (Song of Sol 1:4). In that place, God teaches. One learns of Him and comes to know Him like David knew God. No matter what is happening around such individuals, they can retreat to the secret place where the world cannot touch them.

David confided in God and spoke of his deepest fears but in the context of his love for God. For example, in Psalm 3, he cries out, “Lord, how they have increased who trouble me! Many are they who rise up against me. Many are they who say of me, ‘There is no help for him in God.’” David feared his enemies, and as king he would have had those who wished to overthrow him. He feared his son, Absalom, who was trying to make himself king at any expense to his father (2 Sam 15:13-14). However, he did not lose focus on who his protector was and how much God loved him. David knew to whom to run when in trouble. He knew how to worship in the darkest of hours and how to ask for God’s help and direction, as seen in Psalm 5:7-8: “But as for me, I will come into Your house in the multitude of Your mercy; In fear of You I will worship toward Your holy temple. Lead me, O Lord, in Your righteousness because of my enemies; Make Your way straight before my face.”

David not only worshipped God in the dark hours, but worship was his way of life. He knew that God must be worshipped, and in Psalm 8 David’s admiration and thankful heart are explosive. “O Lord, our Lord, How excellent is Your name in all the
earth. Who have set Your glory above the heavens! When I consider Your heavens, the work of Your fingers, The moon and the stars, which You have ordained, What is man that You are mindful of him” (Ps 8:1, 3-4). Intimacy with God unleashes an awe of God, specifically of who He is and what He has done. One steps back, like David, and begins to wonder why God took notice of humankind.

God desires intimate relationship with His people. He pursues, loves, protects, and searches for those with a heart after Him. This is seen throughout the Old Testament beginning with Adam and Eve, who knew union with God and then lost this divine connection due to sin. Their descendant, Enoch, found that intimacy and never experienced human death as a result (cf. Heb 11:5). Likewise, others followed this pattern of yearning to know God at this deep level; yet, it does not stop at the close of the Old Testament. This intimacy continues to be revealed throughout the remainder of the Bible. In fact, this Old Testament intimacy continues on through the person of Jesus.

**New Testament Intimacy**

The birth of Jesus instituted the New Covenant and was sealed thirty-three years later with His death on the cross when He said, “It is finished” (John 19:30). Concerning the New Covenant, Connor and Malmin state, “It became the fulfillment of all previous covenants, fulfilling and abolishing in itself their temporal elements and making possible their everlasting elements.”\(^{18}\) With his blood that had to be shed to redeem humankind,

\(^{18}\) Connor and Malmin, *The Covenants*, 69.
Jesus paid the price for humans to have eternal intimacy with God. This was God’s greatest gift of intimate love to the world. The Bible states, “Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one’s life for his friends” (John 15:13).

Jesus demonstrated through His death on the cross the true definition of *agape* love. This intimacy not only takes place between God and a person, but John 15:13 states that intimacy is also about other people. Jesus stated in Luke 10:27, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength, and with all your mind, and your neighbor as yourself.” Intimacy is not only vertical intimacy, but now a horizontal aspect has been included and emphasized.

God’s amazing love can be seen as He orchestrates two of the most loving events in history. This story begins with a divine appointment. Gabriel appears to Zacharias, a priest of God in the temple, as he burning incense unto the Lord, and delivers the good news about his and Elizabeth’s future son: John the Baptist (Luke 1:5-19). This couple had waited all of their childbearing years to conceive a child, which never took place. Despite disappointment and unfulfilled desire, they were both “righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless” (Luke 1:6-7). Barrenness carried a stigma back in that time period, since a woman was considered cursed of God when she could not bear children (Exod 23:26); yet, God had a plan that was unfolding in the lives of this elderly couple. Elizabeth conceived just as God had said. Not only was her reproach taken away (no longer considered cursed) (Luke 1:25), but her son would be the forerunner of the Christ, the Messiah, the Son of God. John would prepare the way for the salvation of humanity. Approximately six months later, Mary is visited by Gabriel and
given a divine message that would change the world forever (Luke 1:26-38). She is told about the Son that she will conceive. Mary inquired how this could happen, since she had not known a man. Gabriel tenderly tells her that she will conceive by the Holy Spirit. Mary responds, “Behold the maidservant of the Lord! Let it be to me according to your word” (Luke 1:38). In nine months, Jesus will be born—God’s gift of love to the world.

He is born without any fanfare. Lowly shepherds received a message from an angel and the heavenly hosts in the fields outside the city. After the angels departed, the shepherds left for Bethlehem to see what had been told to him. “And they came with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the Babe lying in a manger. Now when they had seen Him, they made widely known the saying which was told them concerning this Child. And all those who heard it marveled at those things which were told them by the shepherds” (Luke 2:16-18). The wise men have been made aware of this event through the alignment of the stars. They travel a great distance to see this new king and to offer gifts to Jesus and his family (Luke 1-2). This love gift is already affecting people; His love is already spreading.

Intimate agape love continues throughout the New Testament. At one point, Jesus illustrates this love when a lawyer approaches Him:

And behold, a certain lawyer stood up and tested Him, saying, “Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?” He said to him, “What is written in the law? What is your reading of it?” So he answered and said, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength, and with all your mind, and your neighbor as yourself.” And He said to him, “You have answered rightly; do this and you will live.” But he, wanting to justify himself, said to Jesus, “And who is my neighbor” (Luke 10:25-29)?
This lawyer was testing Jesus and perhaps trying to put him in an awkward position, where the lawyer would have a case against Him. This is not known, but this event does appear similar to the actions of the religious leaders when questioning Jesus.

Jesus does not answer this question directly. He further elucidates the concept of “neighbor” by sharing about the unconditional love demonstrated by the Parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:30-36). According to the story, seeing the man hurt on the roadside, the priest crossed the road to avoid having to deal with him, followed by a Levite who looked at the situation and also decided to cross the road and ignore the hurt man. The Samaritan was moved with compassion and did all he could to help him, including paying all of his medical expenses. Jesus then asks the lawyer, “So which of these three do you think was neighbor to him who fell among the thieves?” (Luke 10:36). The lawyer had no other choice but to say, “He who showed mercy on him” (Luke 10:37). An interesting observation is the fact that he did not say “the Samaritan” but instead said, “He who showed mercy on him.” Jesus allowed the lawyer to respond to his own question. This situation gave Jesus the opportunity to begin dealing with horizontally intimate relational problems as well as prejudice, pride, and other issues. In this story He used a Samaritan man since the Samaritans were despised people who were the result of intermarriage between Jews and Assyrians, a hated people. Jesus knew that to love one’s neighbor meant accepting people no matter their origin. Jesus reinforced this truth throughout His ministry.

When individuals love God with all of their heart, mind, soul, and strength, this more easily leads to loving neighbors and even enemies. Jesus stated, “Love your enemies, do good, and lend, hoping for nothing in return; and your reward will be great,
and you will be sons of the Most High. For He is kind to the unthankful and evil” (Luke 6:35). Jesus loved those who despised Him, even those who nailed Him to the cross (Luke 23:34). He expects those who follow Him to do the same, though it is not easy to love someone who is unlovable. Although the Jews had the Law and their rituals (Rom 7:13-25), these things never could produce the intimate relationship that Jesus offered.

In this way, intimate love is living love, and it is not possible to know or live such love without intimately knowing God. Nevertheless, this intimate love for God needs to translate to humankind, whether friend or enemy. First Corinthians 13 talks about “living love” in relation to others:

Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I have become sounding brass or a clanging cymbal. And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, but have not love, it profits me nothing.

Having gifts, doing good things for people, sacrificing one’s life is likened unto a clanging cymbal (very annoying) when the motive is not agape love. Living unconditional love is required. First John 4:20 states that “if someone says, ‘I love God,’ and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God whom he has not seen?”

Agape is living love; it is also perfect love. It is intentional and a choice. It will be difficult and sacrificial at times, but it will last. Scripture speaks of God taking notice of such love for others. “For God is not unjust to forget your work and labor of love which you have shown toward His name, in that you have ministered to the saints, and do
minister (Heb 6:10). God requires that we not only love Him intimately, but that we love others intimately as well. One cannot love God if they do not love one another (John 4:20). John 4:12 offers the following instruction:

If we love one another, God abides in us, and His love has been perfected in us. Love never fails. But whether there are prophecies, they will fail; whether there are tongues, they will cease; whether there is knowledge, it will vanish away. For we know in part and we prophesy in part. But when that which is perfect has come, then that which is in part will be done away.

All gifts, even knowledge, will one day cease to exist and will fail; these gifts are only temporary to help God’s people until the return of Christ. When He has come, the gifts will not be needed anymore. Everything will be clear, and the mirror that we see through dimly will be taken away. However, love (real love) will last forever. Colossians 3:14 adds this:

But above all these things put on love, which is the bond of perfection. When I was a child, I spoke as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child; but when I became a man, I put away childish things. For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part, but then I shall know just as I also am known.

Growing up in the Spirit is not easy, but the goal is becoming mature in Christ. Maturing means patterning beliefs and ways of living after Jesus’ example, which was living love. This requires an intimate relationship with God. It can happen no other way. The closer one is to God, the more that individual will know of Him and become like Him. Becoming like God means becoming united with Him in that intimate connection as well as becoming united with other believers (John 17:23). The Bible states, “God is love, and he who abides in love abides in God, and God in him” (1 John 4:16).

Jesus personally modeled true intimacy with God to teach those who walked with Him. From the very start of their relationship with Jesus, the chosen Twelve moved to a
new level of transformation. They physically walked with God for three years and partook of His love (cf. John 13:5-17, 23), wisdom (cf. Luke 9:1; Matt 10:5), miracles (cf. John 2:1-11; Matt 14:29; Luke 9:10-16; John 11:17-40), and His emotions through His Son (Luke 19:41). Jesus cried (John 11:35), became angry (Mark 3:5), loved (John 11:5), and gave Himself (John 3:16). His love was revealed in all that He did. He taught His disciples about everyday life, living it as a lover of God. Intimacy is not just expressed in prayer, but in everything a person does, including one’s emotions.

However, this intimacy was not just for the twelve disciples; it was for everyone who wanted to become a Christ follower (cf. John 3:1-21; Luke 18:18-23). John G. Lake states that “the simplest soul can touch God and live in the very presence of God and know His power.”19 All those who came to Jesus were touched by this intimate love (John 4:1-38; John 4: 39-42; Mark 5:1-20; Luke 8:40-54). Jesus never rejected anyone who wanted to know Him. This applied throughout history as well as today.

God knew how many people would come to Him after the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost, and He wanted them to know Him intimately. Therefore, before His ascension, Jesus gave the disciples specific directions. “And being assembled together with them, He commanded them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the Promise of the Father, ‘which,’ He said, ‘you have heard from Me; for John truly baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from

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now’” (Acts 1:4-6). On the Day of Pentecost God’s plan began to unfold. They would need this power to move forward. Acts 2:4 states:

> When the Day of Pentecost had fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. Then there appeared to them divided tongues, as of fire, and one sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.

This uproar caused multitudes to come to the place where the 120 were gathered as they begin to hear the preaching of the Gospel in their own tongue; and after Peter had preached, over three thousand became believers (Acts 2:6-12; 2:41). The need for spiritual growth instantly had become a challenge. These believers were taught very quickly about the practice of intimacy and were mentored by the disciples. This involved continuing Jesus’ tradition of fellowship (Acts 2:46), in the breaking of bread (Acts 2:46), and in prayer (Acts 2:47). As a result, they saw many miracles, recorded in Acts 2:43. The Christ followers even shared their possessions, making sure to provide for all of the people’s needs (Acts 2:44).

This exemplifies how they experienced intimate fellowship with God but also intimate fellowship with one another. Acts 2:46-47 states that “they ate their food with gladness and simplicity of heart, praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved.” The change in these people is proof of what Jesus can do in a person’s life quite quickly. Instantly, a horizontal intimacy developed to the degree that others outside the Church took notice and wanted to be a part of it. There was much favor among all of the people, and the Church began to grow daily.
This unity of intimate fellowship with God and one another seems to be the formula for God’s blessing, joy, favor, and church growth.

**John: The Beloved Disciple’s Relationship with Jesus**

In the New Testament, there was one disciple who experienced profound intimacy with Jesus. He seemed to have a deeper revelation into the depth of love that Jesus wanted to give and to receive from His followers. Even though John is thought to be the youngest disciple, he appears to be more spiritually mature than some of the others. He was most likely one of John the Baptist’s followers; and if this is the case, he was mentored by the greatest prophet that ever lived (cf. Matt 11:11).

In many ways, as one of the twelve disciples, John stood apart from the other eleven. He was not like Peter who stood up on the Day of Pentecost and preached to the multitude (Acts 2:14-40). He did not shine in a crowd, as Beth Moore affirms: “John experienced many long years when others stood in the limelight.” The Bible does not say whether this bothered him. Rather, John’s primary relational marker was his intense desire to please God. When Jesus called him, he left his net and his father (Mark 1:20). John had left all to be with the one He loved so dearly. From the very beginning, John follows Jesus without questioning Him or even doubting who He was. His desire to please Jesus and to be close to Him is noted throughout the Gospels. This can be seen in those tender interchanges, such as when he laid his head on Jesus’ breast in an innocent affection (John 13:23; 19:26-27). Much like David, John had a heart for God, and his relationship went

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beyond doing things for God. He wanted to know the emotions of Jesus and wanted to be as close to Him as possible, emotionally as well as physically. Guyon might view this as spiritual union with God, when one’s spirit is united with God’s Spirit.²¹ God looks for and honors those who pursue Him with all of their heart. Second Chronicles 19:9 states, “For the eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show Himself strong on behalf of those whose heart is perfect to Him.” When one hungers after God, they are filled, as was the beloved disciple. From John’s writings one can gain an intimate and personal perspective of both Jesus and of a beloved disciple.²² It is as if John takes the other Gospel accounts of Jesus the Messiah and writes: “You’ve heard what Jesus did, now let me show you His passionate love.” He had tapped into the heart of His Lover. John’s walk with Christ can be identified with that of the Shulamite girl in the Song of Songs where she states, “He brought me to the banqueting house, And his banner over me was love. Sustain me with cakes of raisins, Refresh me with apples, For I am lovesick” (Song of Sol 2:4-5). There is no doubt that John, like the Shulamite, was also a lovesick worshipper.

Intimacy requires quality time; and since John was a part of Jesus’ inner circle, this gave him more time with Him, to study, observe, and to intimately connect with Him. For example, John was a part of Jesus’ inner circle and was present at the transfiguration (Mark 9:2-10), at Jairus’ daughter’s resurrection (Mark 5:35-43), and at other inner-circle ministry times. Still, there was so much more to John. Moore brings this out when she says, “Yes,

²¹ Jeanne Guyon, Union with God (Jacksonville, FL: The Seedsowers, 1999), 1.
²² Moore, The Beloved Disciple, 1.
Christ did use John to cast out demons, heal the sick, and spread the good news through the word of mouth. But somewhere along the way God built a man to whom He could entrust some of the most profound words ever recorded on parchment.”23 Such words included these: “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made was made. In Him was life, and the life was the light of men. And the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it” (John 1:1-5).

Additionally, there is the Book of Revelation. In order for God to use John in this way, John would have had to know Jesus intimately, perceive His voice clearly, and be moved profoundly by His Spirit. This kind of intimacy takes time, necessitates proof, requires discipline, and involves a person desperate for Jesus.

According to Scripture, Jesus never told the other disciples about why Judas betrayed Him; but when John wrote his Gospel, He knew the reason (John 13:2). This would have not been given in a casual conversation; rather, it would have entailed a difficult discussion with someone Jesus felt could be trusted and would understand the pain He was going through. This depth of relationship was seen again at the foot of the cross during Jesus’ crucifixion (John 19:26-27). As Jesus’ brother, James by birthright should have been given the care of his mother Mary; but instead, Jesus chooses John. F. W. Buckler states, “As the firstborn of Mary, He had both the authority and responsibility, which would have devolved on her second son James. This automatic devolution was

23 Ibid., 125.
apparently undesirable, so Our Lord used the authority He possessed as a dying criminal to commit her to the care of one whom He could trust—the Beloved Disciple.”

John’s deep relationship with Christ is apparent in Jesus’ actions. Just being at the cross put John in a dangerous situation, and he could have been arrested for being one of Jesus’ followers; however, his devotion to his Lord was stronger than any fear he might have had.

From this, Christ followers seeking intimacy learn that an intimate connection with Jesus often carries a cost. Even earlier, John stayed close to Jesus and went into the palace with Him while Jesus was being “tried” (John18: 15). The apparent danger never seemed to detour John from staying close to the One he loved so dearly. Alan B. Culpepper says, “John remained nearby Jesus whether his leader was on the Mount of Transfiguration or in the depth of Gethsemane’s suffering,” emphasizing how “John clung to Jesus when He was raised from the dead, and he clung to Jesus when he became the dead.”

There was no separating John from his Lord. With this intimacy came a revelation from God that would affect humanity until the return of Jesus Christ.

God gave John the revelation that would become the last book of the New Testament, the capstone of Scripture (Rev 1:1). “The title of the book describes the content and purpose of John’s writing. The word ‘Revelation’ means “to take the cover off,” from the Greek word apokalupsis” (KJV). This served to unveil the glory of Jesus Christ and

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25 Ibid., 70.

of the things to come. To be given such a revelation of God required someone walking with God and loving Him with all of the heart, mind, soul, and strength (Luke 10:27). This is someone who has walked with God (similar to Adam and Eve, Enoch, and Noah) and who is trustworthy, proven, and has counted the cost of being a true follower of Jesus Christ.

Culpepper sums up the life of John. He states:

The Beloved Disciple emerges in the Fourth Gospel as the disciple closest to Jesus—the one who reclined on the breast of Jesus at the Last Supper, the one to whom Jesus gave his mother at his death (John 19:26-27), the first of the disciples to reach the empty tomb, the first to believe in the resurrection, and the first of the disciples to recognize the risen Lord at the miraculous catch of fish in Galilee.27

The above description illustrates well this intimate connection between the Lord and this beloved follower. John clung to Jesus in loving desperation for more of Him. He was not satisfied just to know about the Lord; he wanted to truly know the Lord. This is seen through his relationship with Him, his actions, and even his reactions. John had an intense love for the Lord that would prove to grow only stronger for the remainder of John’s earthly life. In essence, he modeled the intimacy that God desires from His people.

Both the Old and New Testament confirm that God is a God of intimacy who desires intimacy from His people. This has never changed throughout Scripture. John the beloved disciple, the one who Jesus loved, stands out as just one example for all of God’s people to follow.

27 Alan B. Culpepper, John: The Son of Zebedee, the Life of a Legend (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress Press, 2000), 57.
CHAPTER 4
HISTORICAL ANALYSIS

This chapter addresses the historical side of intimacy with God, as viewed by the desert mothers and fathers, St. Bernard, Guyon, and others. This area of study brings clarity through the continuation of intimacy found in historical Christian men and women. The past offers a sense of the future. According to Urban T. Holmes, “To be historical means that by virtue of our reflection on the past we are aware that as humans we live within a flow of time in a finite world in which the one constant is change.”¹ Christ followers change, whether transforming into God’s image or regressing back to the old self. History teaches that time progresses, and it cannot be stopped. Holmes says, “Humanity always hears the Word of God within humanity’s historical context.”² He asks this question: “How has Christian humanity throughout its history understood what it is to seek God and to know Him?”³ This answer is like seeing God face to face in that it

² Ibid.
³ Ibid., 3.
cannot be put into words; therefore, this section will be an overview as best as words can relate to elucidating an intimate relationship with God.

Though this section will attempt to describe the intimate experiences of people of the past, it will not be enough. There always will be a desire to know more; and yet, the only way to know more is personal discovery. A heart seeking for more of the Lord touches the heart of God. It leads to an individual revival and even can lead to an outpouring of God upon a community. Clearer understanding of the spiritual receptivity before the historical revivals occurred is important to know, because the past speaks into the present.

**Saints from the Past**

The desert fathers and mothers have added much to the understanding of intimate love for God. They were given to prayer, fasting, solitude, meditation on Scripture, rejecting worldly desires for Godly desires, simplicity, and others. Holmes states, “It was a life of continual meditation upon Scriptures and a time of strenuous training in order that one might ascend the ladder of perfection by the grace of God.”

4 They wanted to become as much like the Lord as possible. They disciplined themselves to quiet the inner self, because they desperately wanted to hear a word from God. They guarded against things that did not feed their spirits and that pulled them away from the path of God. According to Evagrios Ponticus (d. 399) *acedia*, “devil of the noonday sun,” was the greatest enemy of spirituality. It means boredom, apathy, listlessness, or lack of care. It

4 Ibid., 30.
includes the inability to train and to remain disciplined.\textsuperscript{5} Many early Christians retired into the desert to move toward perfection and to rid themselves from \textit{acedia}. They wanted to be molded into \textit{imageo deo}, the image of Christ.

By example, these believers have illustrated how to grow in friendship with God and eschew being friends with the world. They overcame the cares of this world, the deceitfulness of riches, and the desires for other things entering in that can hinder one’s walk with God (Mark 4:19). They lived daily with the Lord and grew in intimate relationship with Him. They walked out Jesus’ words in John 17:16: “They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world.”

When one thinks of a desert one might think of death, since verdant life is scarce in desert places and constantly threatened by drought. One’s heart can be confronted there more easily; there is no place to hide. This is why deep encounters often take place in desert places. This was true of these early committed believers. By choice many moved to places as far away from civilization as possible, while others simply stayed on the edge of town. Some lived alone, while others opted for a monastic-type community.\textsuperscript{6} They lived very plain lives unto God: refraining from marriage or having children and requiring only basic necessities such as a sheepskin blanket, a little food, and crude shelters such as a


\textsuperscript{6} Tom Schwanda, interview by author, Fort Wayne, IN, 2012.
cave or hut. Their clothing was unadorned and served only to cover the body. These people were from various backgrounds, mixed ages, and both genders. Their primary purpose was to understand solitude and how to wait on the Lord and hear from Him.

The main desire for these desert dwellers was prayer, communing with their God. Though it may sound a bit odd in this century, the desert fathers and mothers were content with their way of life and sought as much time alone with God as possible. Many preferred not to visit with outsiders, since this interrupted their time with the Lord. Nevertheless, people would travel for miles seeking advice, counsel, and miracles. By the end of the fourth century, there were tens of thousands of desert dwellers. Many people simply wanted to have a close relationship with God; but society and the Church were moving towards worldliness, which caused others to leave everything behind and seek desert locations to be with God. By 356 AD, there were so many men and women living in the desert that it was described as “a city” by Athanasius.

In his eighteenth-century magnum opus, Edward Gibbon expounds on how Palladius estimated that there were more women in the deserts than men at a ratio of

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8 Ibid.


about two to one; however, the stories of the men are heard most. Laura Swan offers a more detailed account of the desert mothers and their drive for intimacy with the Lord. Before becoming desert mothers, women held leadership in their Christian groups and churches. They were called to leadership and served well in this capacity. Women oversaw the Eucharist. “Sharing in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus was deeply experiential” for these women. They experienced Christ as they oversaw the Lord’s Supper. Whether it was in serving the communion, evangelizing, or in the works of mercy, fulfilling God’s Word was of the utmost importance and being “one” in Christ was a priority. Swan says, “Although never lived out perfectly, oneness in Christ was a deeply held value.” Women held leadership roles such as being the leader of a synagogue, deacon, presbyter, and honorable woman bishop.

However, after Christianity became the official religion in Rome, women’s roles started to change. “Social mores required that women remain in the home and out of the public sphere.” This would have a psychological impact on women, and could be compared to a woman being emotionally abused, where all of her freedoms are being


14 Swan, The Forgotten Desert Mothers, 6.

15 Ibid.


17 Swan, The Forgotten Desert Mothers, 7.
taken from her. Eventually, women were forced from public leadership all together. However, in the church community, women remained in leadership, preaching and teaching; and they also could be an ascetic, meaning one who denies self and lives with minimal material comforts for the sake of simplicity helping to draw one closer to the Lord. These women also participated in the prophetic and healing ministries.\textsuperscript{18}

The desert women were passionate about their faith and wanted an intimate relationship with Christ at any cost.\textsuperscript{19} They prayed several times a day.\textsuperscript{20} Many became intense prayer intercessors. Swan says, “Fasting, voluntary poverty and deprivations silence, and deep prayer became a way of living a continuous martyrdom once the persecutions ended.”\textsuperscript{21} Their intensity to become one with Christ grew. Also, they wanted to become one in community as well, which later became a monastic movement. “Desert spirituality is characterized by the pursuit of abundant spirituality—simplicity grounded in the possession of little—and the abundance of God’s presence. Yearning for complete union with God, desert ascetics sought to remove all obstacles to the deepening of this relationship.”\textsuperscript{22} These ascetics wanted everything “ungodly” to be removed from their

\begin{itemize}
\item\textsuperscript{18} Ibid.
\item\textsuperscript{19} Ibid., 8.
\item\textsuperscript{20} Ibid.
\item\textsuperscript{21} Ibid.
\item\textsuperscript{22} Ibid., 21.
\end{itemize}
lives, so these distractions would not hinder “their deepening relationship;” in essence, they wanted “actively to cultivate a burning love for God.”

The desert mothers were compassionate women and accepted all people as if they were Jesus Himself. Swan writes: “The aim of this desert spirituality was an honest and intimate relationship with the Beloved.” Prayer for the desert mothers was difficult, because they needed to learn the language of heaven. “For the ascetic, prayer was not merely the speaking of words. It was the heart yearning for God, reaching out in hopeful openness to being touched by God. Prayer was the Holy Spirit breathing through the inner spirit of the ascetic and returning to God with yearnings of intimacy.”

Silence and listening also played major roles in this desert spirituality. Silence was “pregnant with the presence of the Divine, the womb where the word grew.” Silence helped the desert mothers to cultivate and deepen their passionate love for God, because it provided the atmosphere of true and authentic communication with God. Listening was looked at as prayer. Their hearts were engaged in intense listening. They were listening for their Beloved’s voice.

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23 Ibid.
24 Ibid., 22.
25 Ibid.
26 Ibid., 27.
27 Ibid., 28.
28 Ibid., 29.
Bernard of Clairvaux

Bernard of Clairvaux (1090-1153), or simply known as St. Bernard, was a man who intimately loved the Lord. He did not just see intimate love as an experience but believed that Christians should work hard and use discipline in order to intensify that love and to grow in it. He believed that “love” was not only a noun but a verb. He explained love in reference to the triune God, mentioning how God made humankind in His own likeness so that His people would have the characteristic of all three Persons of the Godhead.29

This perspective lends itself to understanding why people can feel empty when they have little or no intimate connection with God. By nature of the Creator, a person has an innate drive to find God. Whether a Christian or not, every human being is made in God’s image, and this aspect of the creation (person) yearns for the Creator. There is something within that is lacking, until God is asked to fill that space. Without this, there is a sense of emptiness and the person wanders around looking for other things to fill the void. People try to stuff it with money, friends, things, and even other religions; but it is a spiritual space, only filled by Jesus Christ. This can be compared to the human body having not only a desire to breathe; rather desperately, the lungs demand it. Likewise, the spirit of a person demands a relationship with the Lord, if it is to be satisfied and at peace.

When the spirit is at peace, then it cries out for times with God where the human spirit joins God’s Spirit. The psalmist describes this as “the secret place of the Most High.” Psalm 91:1 states, “He who dwells in the secret place of the Most High, shall

abide under the shadow of the Almighty.” There is a secret spot that an image bearer—human beings made in God’s image—desires to visit; and image bearers know something is missing until they return to that place. It is a place they desire to visit often. Additionally, the psalmist cries out, “As the deer pants for the water brooks, So pants my soul for You, O God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God” (Ps 42:1-2). There is a thirst in the hearts of those who love God with all of their heart, mind, soul, and strength. That innate place yearns to be filled with the living waters, time and time again. Psalm 63:1 makes reference to this thirst: “Early will I seek You; My soul thirsts for You; My flesh longs for You in a dry and thirsty land Where there is no water [emphasis mine].” This living water is only found in that secret place, where the Bridegroom pours into those image bearers who seek Him.

When explaining the origin of love, St. Bernard states, “For it (love) comes from a noble family. Indeed, its birth is of God. There it is born, there it is nourished, and there it grows in its development. There it is a true citizen and not a foreigner (Eph. 2:19). For love is given by God alone, and love continues to exist in Him. Love is due to no one else but to God and for God.”30 True love, God’s love, only can be given by the source of that love: God. St. Bernard explains that this love comes from a noble family of which God’s people are a part. Ephesians 2:19 states, “Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God.” In this way, God’s followers form this noble lineage.

30 Ibid., 64.
St. Bernard speaks about the folly in true love, what some might call insanity. “Listen to the holy insanity of the apostle! He says, ‘If we are out of our mind, it is for God; if we are sober, it is for your sakes’” (cf. 2 Cor 5:13). Here he speaks about forgiveness, being drunk in the Spirit, and abandoning all for Christ. He even goes to extreme of martyrs being tortured for their faith. The world is unable to comprehend this kind of love. Intimate love is willing to leave all for Christ. The desert fathers and mothers are proof of this kind of abandoning love. Martyrdom is another example of the willingness to give up one’s life for Jesus Christ. Jesus’ apostles, including Paul, are proof of this intimate love.

St. Bernard believed that holy love and intimacy with God demands order to progress in love. He states, “This is the stage when the one whose loves pushes forward and labors in hard work.” Without a plan to follow, the goal most likely never materializes. Christian disciplines assist the followers of Jesus, making them pliable to be formed into God’s image as they grow closer to Him. This thought is illustrated in 1 Corinthians 9:24-25:

Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may obtain it. And everyone who competes for the prize is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a perishable crown, but we for an imperishable crown. Therefore I run thus: not with uncertainty. Thus I fight: not as one who beats the air.

31 Ibid., 67.
32 Ibid., 69.
Here the apostle Paul compares the practice of pursing intimacy with God to the training and running of a race. Athletes train for months, even years, before competing in the official marathon. They have great hopes of winning and receiving the prize, but it takes hard work and a plan of action. It will not happen if the athlete lies on the sofa doing nothing. Christians must be willing to do whatever it takes to achieve an intimate relationship with the One they love.

St. Bernard goes on to point out how a person maintains order by being conscientious (Ps 119:20; Luke 16:10) and righteous (Ps 63:4-5; Rom 8:13; Eph 4:22-24). Eventually, order must become a habit in the lives of Jesus’ followers (2 Cor 3:18; 4:16), and this requires persistence (Song of Sol 5:1). From this order, “there is now born within the soul a love of holy poverty, the desire to be unknown, the horror of worldly distractions, the practice of prayer, and frequent psalmody.” St. Bernard believed in discipline in order to stay focused on one’s love of God. He had deep concerns about those who neglected God’s grace and cautioned against the dangers and damages that could result from such abuse. This is not God’s agape love, according to St. Bernard.

Jeanne Guyon

Guyon (1648-1717) uses very intimate language when talking about God’s love and intimacy with Him. She stresses union with God and how Christ possesses a person.

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33 Ibid., 72.
34 Ibid.
35 Ibid.
She states, “There are some who say that deep union with God cannot happen in this life. I am confident, however, that your spirit can deeply touch and be united with God’s Spirit while you live in this body.” She clearly states that this experience is not required for salvation, nor do believers have to have it. However, she does emphasize that believers’ spiritual lives are journeys toward Christ consuming them more completely.

According to Guyon, being possessed by Christ involves a surrendered life. She states, “Initial surrender to Jesus Christ comes long before you totally surrender to Him and know Him in His fullness.” When a person first accepts Christ, they do surrender to the Lord, but it is just the beginning. There is much more to come as God begins the transformation process. The more one knows God, the more surrender that will be required. Daily, Christ followers are being “crucified” with Christ (Gal 2:20). With each day, more of one’s sin nature can die as one surrenders it to the Lord. Growth is not a quick process, and God has much work to do. Believers should never hold anything back but should allow the heart of God to conquer them.

Guyon believes that complete union with God is the ultimate goal and final destination of intimacy. The inner urge to seek Him that God gives to believers helps people to move toward this union (cf. Deut 4:29). This is similar to St. Bernard’s statement about the emptiness people feel without this divine connection. Both believe

36 Guyon, Song of Songs, intro.
37 Ibid.
38 Ibid.
that being made in God’s image causes humankind to cry out for something that will fill the void and that, through Christ, God’s people can be reunited with the Lord.

Guyon parallels this thought using the example of a husband and wife. She states that a husband and wife never can unite completely, since they cannot totally merge into one person. She supports this with yet another example—two metals melted together can never become only one metal, since they have different properties—but according to Guyon, two glasses of water can mix completely in another glass. In fact, once mixed, they cannot be separated. In a similar vein, she says, “Your spirit is perfectly made to be united and transformed into God. You truly are made to be married to Him.”

God’s timetable and a Christian’s desire to be changed will determine the speed of this process. Paul states that “we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord” (2 Cor 3:18). Patience and allowing God’s Spirit to do His work is needed within; and it is the Spirit, not the person, that does the transforming. During this process, an individual grows closer to the Lord and the union of spirits that Guyon speaks about begins to take place. Jesus uses the concept of oneness: “Now I am no longer in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to You. Holy Father, keep through Your name those whom You have given Me, that they may be one as We are” (John 17:11). A uniting of the Christian’s spirit with God’s Spirit will result in a uniting of spirits with one another.

39 Ibid.
According to Guyon, deep union with God only can occur when people allow their nature to exist in God. This means one’s nature must be surrendered. When Christ followers can say, “Not my will, but Your will be done in my life,” then they have taken a much needed step to be united in spirit with their Father. She offers the example of a drop of water falling into a glass of wine. The water loses its form and character and becomes part of the wine, but in some way it stays distinct.\(^{40}\) Since water is already a part of the wine mix from grapes, or other fruits, then a drop of water naturally would become a part of that mix. This can be seen in the fact that humankind is created in the image of God. Believers are already made in His likeness; therefore when they are redeemed, they become part of Him. Still, they remain individuals who have free will to choose good or evil.

This desire for union with God can be seen with the Shulamite girl in the Song of Songs as she states, “Let Him kiss me with the kisses of His mouth” (Song of Sol 1:2). She (the Church) speaks of a deep union with her lover (Jesus), and only that can satisfy her. Only that will bring oneness into her life, with God and with those around her.

**Revival**

When God’s people have a deep yearning for a closer walk with God and to know Him in an intimate way—so much that they begin to pursue Him with all of their heart, mind, soul, and strength—then God hears and responds. First, He responds individually and then on a corporate level. This leads to an outpouring of God’s Spirit known as revival which saturates the Church with God. Revivals share commonalities, which can

\(^{40}\) Ibid.
be seen in past revivals such as the British Great Awakening of 1739. When Christians become hungry for God and begin to pursue Him desiring deep union with Him, God begins to fan the flames of holy change among them.

God’s revivals usually are fueled by human hearts crying out to their God, those who are desperately hungry for more of Him. “For all who are desperate (they want more than they currently have of God), God is ready to give spiritual insight beyond physical circumstances and beyond what physical eyes and ears can see and hear.” In Ephesians 1:18, Paul prayed that the eyes of the human heart be opened to understand what God has for His people. God loves to use desperate people who hate sin and want to see repentance in the land. According to Scripture, He always has intervened to keep His people on track. Jewish history demonstrates proof of this. The Old Testament reveals how time and time again God intervened to bring His people back to Him or how He performed a miracle to save their lives in some way (cf. Gen 45; Exod 14; Deut 30; 1 Chron. 6; Ezra 1-2; Neh 8). God must intervene for revival to occur, for the purpose of keeping the Church (His Bride) on course, for He is preparing her for the Marriage Feast of the Lamb, and according to Scripture, she must be made ready (Rev 19:6-8).

Each believer has a part in this preparation process. The passage in 2 Chronicles 7:14 describes certain responsibilities Christ followers have, if they want to see God’s people revived: “If My people who are called by My name will humble themselves, and pray and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven,

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and will forgive their sin and heal their land.” A Christian must be humbled, pray and seek God, and turn away from sin and return to God. The hymn written in 1922 by Helen H. Lemmel, *Turn Your Eyes Upon Jesus*, serves as a reminder:

Turn your eyes upon Jesus,
Look full in His wonderful face,
And the things of earth will grow strangely dim,
In the light of His glory and grace.\(^{42}\)

When people turn to Jesus, they see Him and not the things around them that tend to pull them away from their Lord. Robertson states in reference to this song:

I really can’t imagine a better definition of the term. Revival—whether personal or national—comes from turning our eyes upon Him. Beholding Him. Contemplating His holiness, beauty, and might. Gazing by faith at His wonderful face. Allowing Jesus, with His glory and grace, to invade our human condition. And in the light of God’s radiant presence, the allure of the world, with its pleasure and material possessions, begins to lose its grip on our lives.\(^{43}\)

As God’s people draw closer to Him, sin looks dirtier and distasteful. Even those things that are accepted as normal by surrounding society can bring conviction and cause authentic repentance. Then the Holy Spirit comes in and begins to convict the hearts of those who are crying out to Him. Job may have said this best: “I have heard of You by the hearing of the ear, But now my eye sees You. Therefore I abhor myself; And repent in dust and ashes” (Job 42:5-6). St. Augustine adds to this, “Thou hast created us for


Thyself, and our hearts are restless until they find rest in Thee.” When people “see” God, they see themselves as they are: sinners in the presence of a holy God. Isaiah spoke about this very thing as he stood in God’s presence: “Woe is me, for I am undone! Because I am a man of unclean lips, And I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; For my eyes have seen the King, The Lord of hosts” (Isa 6:5). Just as Isaiah’s lips were touched and cleansed by God, so God cleanses those who seek Him. There is great unrest within a human soul until this happens.

Revival begins with God’s refining fire entering the hearts of His children (Job 42:5-6). Then, the power of God descends on them (Acts 2:41-43). He fills them with great compassion and love for those who are lost (Acts 11:19). As a result, their hearts cry out for more of Him.

It is not long before revival spreads beyond the Church and into the marketplace, and God’s power begins to be felt everywhere. Outward signs always manifest when an inward work is taking place. Prostitutes, alcoholics, and sinners are delivered and often accept Christ in marvelous ways. Bars are closed, crime plunges downward overnight, theaters have little business, and other places of unrighteousness shut down. In a very short time, prayer meetings are full. People now are concerned about eternity and accepting God’s salvation.

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The British Great Awakening in 1739 exemplifies this revival process. Before the Great Awakening, the country and the Church were in a sorrowful state. J. Wesley succinctly describes this dynamic: “When the Church fails in her mission, the whole of society becomes corrupt.”[46] This was true in eighteen-century Britain. There was a rise of deism, declining Christian observances, extreme drunkenness leading to poverty, abuse, murder, robberies, rape, cock-fighting, mobs, and riots. The Church was considered corrupt, as was Parliament.[47] “There were no fewer than one hundred and sixty crimes for which a man, woman, or child could be hanged.”[48] There was so much crime that extreme measures had to be taken, including hanging even women and children for committing such offenses. According to Mathew Backholer, author of *Revival Fires and Awakenings*, archbishop Secker of Oxford stated “that an open and professed disregard to religion is become, through a variety of unhappy causes, the distinguishing character of the present age; that this evil is grown to a great height of the nation and is daily spreading through every part of it.”[49] Britain’s population had doubled, but there was little or no religious instruction provided.

God always provides at least one person who begins to intercede about the need for those in this area to return to God and His ways. God’s refining fire entered the heart


[48] Ibid., 30.

[49] Ibid.
of Charles Wesley, when he saw the great need in local churches and in the community.

In response, in 1728 he started the Holy Club at Oxford University, though his brother J. Wesley would become its leader.50 Speaking about the happenings in one of their meetings, J. Wesley writes:

About three in the morning, as we were continuing instant in prayer, the power of God came mightily upon us, insomuch that many cried out for exceeding joy, and many fell to the ground. As soon as we were recovered a little from that awe and amazement at the presence of His Majesty, we broke out with one voice, “We praise thee, O God, we acknowledge thee to be the Lord.”51

As these members were praying, the power of God descended upon them. The Spirit made Himself known as these men fell to the ground under the power of the God, which resulted in praise and worship to God. God was giving them a glimpse of what was to come.

George Whitefield also attended this meeting, stating that they had experienced a Pentecostal season “overwhelmed with the Divine Presence.”52 The British Great Awakening officially started on February 17, 1739. With great compassion and love for those who were lost, Whitefield began to preach. The first time there were two hundred attendees. The second time, there were two thousand. It was not unusual for twelve to fifteen thousand people to gather to hear the preaching of J. Wesley or Whitefield.53

50 Ibid.


52 Backholer, Revival Fires and Awakenings, 31.

53 Ibid.
During this revival many outward signs manifested as the power of God fell on them. These included violent shaking, falling down to the ground lifeless, people crying out, and demons being cast out of many.\(^{54}\) This is not unusual during a move of God, because God always shows Himself strong (2 Chron 16:9). E. Paxton Hood reminds the Church, “When the Bible has been brought face to face with the conscience of corrupt society, in every age it has shown itself to be that which it professes, and which its believers declare it to be—‘The great power of God.’”\(^{55}\) During the British Great Awakening, a quarter of Britain’s population converted to Jesus Christ. Towns and villages were transformed to the point that the entire character of the nation changed.\(^{56}\) Hood sums it up in his book: “There was a deeper upheaving of religious life. . . . A changed passed over the whole of English society.”\(^{57}\) When the Church pursues God desiring intimacy with Him for themselves and others, God comes in a mighty awakening. This not only gets the attention of the Church but those outside of the Church as well.

The revival process does not just happen this way in industrialized nations. It occurs with equal force and pursuit of God in less developed areas. According to Robertson, “In revivals that took place in the Belgian Congo and also in China, young children had visions of heaven. Some saw the Second Coming of Christ. Some, who had

\(^{54}\) Ibid., 34-36.


\(^{56}\) Ibid., 29.

\(^{57}\) Ibid., 222.
never been taught these things, saw the rapture of the church at the end times and believers being taken to heaven.”

God moves outside human reasoning during these revival times, in order to bring glory to Himself.

There are other examples as well. Backholer states that at one mission station, the missionaries thought that a physical hurricane was coming as they saw and heard the winds blowing through the area where they were located. Numerous shy native ladies began shouting praises to God. Others started shaking and collapsed on the floor, groaning and travailing in prayer as if they were birthing a baby. In other places witnesses to revival said they saw a holy light as in a vision, while still others would fall down before the Lord (slain in the spirit) jerking uncontrollably. Robertson references this revival as well as the United States frontier revival of the early nineteenth century, where “sinners entering prayer meetings fell to the ground where they lay for hours as the Holy Spirit brought their lives into conformity with His will.”

However, there are always skeptics and those who are quick to judge. Concerning this matter, Charles Haddon Spurgeon after witnessing the revival in London (1850-1860) states, “He [God] can bless us as He wills and He will bless us as He wills. Let us not dictate to God. Many a blessing has been lost by Christians not believing it to be a blessing.

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58 Robertson, Steps to Revival, 21.


60 Robertson, Steps to Revival, 22. One example of this is Cane Ridge: “From 20,000 to 30,000 persons of all ages, representing various cultures and economic levels traveled on foot and on horseback, many bringing wagons with tents and camping provisions in order to be a part of this move of God in Kentucky.” Cane Ridge Meeting House, http://www.caneridge.org/ (accessed July 4, 2012).
because it did not come in the particular shape which they had conceived to be proper and right.”

So often, God’s people do not consider that God does things His own way and bypasses people’s agenda and expectations. These manifestations that many struggle with often humble God’s people; perhaps, this is partly the reason for some of them.

As mentioned earlier, there are signs that can be recognized before and during a move of God: transformation and purification of God’s people begin taking root, the power of God descending on His people becomes a common occurrence, a new compassion for the lost and the oppressed is birthed, and a hunger for God increases. Robertson discusses six steps (the first five will be mentioned, with the sixth one being incorporated with the other five) to help a believer to understand this movement, before and during the revival time frame to see the scriptural basis for it. He uses 2 Chronicles 7:14 as the foundational Scripture for these steps. “If My people who are called by My name will humble themselves, and pray and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land.” The first step is humility.

Humility

Revival starts with a humble people; and without humility, revival cannot happen. This is a requirement according to Scripture, but it is also a choice: “If my people humble themselves” (2 Chron 7:14). “If” indicates there is a choice to make. Each time the word “humility” is mentioned in the Old Testament, it is praised (Prov 15:33). It is defined as

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“a spirit of lowliness which enables God to bring the blessing of advancement.”

Therefore, humble people mean those who will be blessed of God.

Humility does not come easy for fleshly humankind, as seen in the Garden of Eden. Thomas á Kempis says that “when a man humbles himself because of his faults, he readily becomes pleasing to others and reconciles himself to those he has offended” (2 Cor 7:6). In this case, God’s people have offended God, and they are called on to humble themselves before Him. If people love God with all that is within their heart, mind, soul, and strength, then they will humble themselves before the One they love so dearly. Humility cries out, “God be merciful to me a sinner” (Luke 18:13). If a heart is surrendered to God, God is faithful to expose this sin and will forgive readily.

Prayer

God’s people are not only called to humility but called to pray. When God’s people are close to the Lord, they want to pray. It is not something they are forced into, but they long to talk to the Lover of their souls. It is a time they look forward to, and often they find themselves praying throughout the day—no matter where they might be. Intimacy grows with time spent with the Lord. This maturing prayer life can evolve into revival prayer, where the heart aches for God to move mightily in the Church as well as in the community. Prayer is essential, before revival can be birthed: “if My people who are called by My name will humble themselves, and pray” (2 Chron 7:14). They must be

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desperate to see God move in their lives, in their country, across the world. It is when they hunger and thirst after righteousness, like an unquenchable fire, and the only thing that will quench that fire is God filling them. “More intimacy, more love for God, more love for people” is their cry to heaven.

Prayer is not to be taken lightly. Too often when Christians think of prayer, they think of boredom. This is sad. If the Church is serious about a revival, they will need to see the necessity for prayer. In order to pray, people must know to whom they are praying. Thomas H. Green states, “We cannot really love what we do not know.” Getting to know someone takes time, and this is no different with God. Serious prayer demands knowledge of the Recipient of that prayer, what He can do, and what He wants His people to do.

Backholer shares about revival prayer when he discusses the Irish Revival (1858-1860). The Rev. J. H. Moore of Conner was inspired by the news of the American revival, and so he encouraged his congregation to pray for it to happen there as well. “He preached and taught his congregation on the subject of revival and read accounts of past revivals; the idea of God coming down and touching the people finally gripped his congregation and it became a subject of serious prayer.” This revival started there and began to sweep the country. Revival fires soon flowed into Scotland. The Scots were reported as praying like never before. According to Backholer, in 1859 the Free Church of Scotland sent out a call to prayer. It instructed the following:

64 Thomas H. Green, When the Well Runs Dry (Notre Dame, IN: Ave Maria Press, 2002), 24.

65 Backholer, Revival Fires and Awakenings, 64.
These events which have recently taken place in America, in Wales, in Ireland, and to a small extent in Scotland, strikingly illustrates the Sovereign Power of the Holy Spirit and the efficacy of believing prayer and ought to encourage us to attempt great things from God, and they call upon all ministers and people of this church earnestly to pray that God may be graciously pleased to pour out His Holy Spirit abundantly upon our land that His work may be revived everywhere.66

The Scottish Church was serious about prayer and about revival. Backholer states, “People began to pray in churches, at home, in shops, and even in the University of Edinburgh.”67 These prayers were heard and acted on by God. Revival soon broke out in that place.

Backholer highlights Spurgeon, the “Prince of Preachers,” who witnessed hundreds coming to Christ during the English Revival (1859-1860) and the powerful prayer of the handful of people who attended his small church in 1854. As a result, revival started there. Over fourteen thousand new members joined his congregation during this time frame. Prayer, as Scripture states, changes things (1 Sam 1:15-19). According to revival history, as well as God’s Word, prayer is the catalyst for a new move of God, and intimacy is the catalyst for prayer.

Seeking God

Intimacy is not just about praying; it is about seeking the face of God. Seeking God adds another dimension to prayer. Christ followers need to pray (usually asking for something), but seeking God means asking for His presence (the manifestation of God). Psalm 27:8 states, “When You said, ‘Seek My face,’ My heart said to You, ‘Your face,
Lord I will seek.” Hungry believers desire to know God and stand in His presence (Ps 95:2). Indirectly, this can be associated with the times when Christians pray and seem to sense God’s presence right next to them. Some say they feel a chill, even goose bumps, or a warm feeling. Others’ hands begin to shake or manifest God’s presence in some other way.

Seeking God’s face requires more maturity in a Christian’s life. It can be considered the next step from prayer, and it requires patience and faith. Although one prays, one still desires more. Inwardly, such believers hunger to see God’s face and yearn to know Him even more intimately. There are times when God seems absent all together. Doubts may enter into the heart, but growth is happening within the follower. This can be compared to the Shulamite girl in Song of Songs 3:1-3. She is desperately seeking her Lover, His touch, His manifest presence, for this presence has been taken from her by choice of her Lover.

“Heart at night on my bed I sought him whom my soul loves: I sought him, but did not find him.” Guyon describes it this way: “You are discouraged at His long absence. It is time to seek Him inwardly during the night of faith. Nowhere, however, can you find Him. Still you continue to seek Him inwardly.” The Shulamite continues to seek Him, because she loves Him intimately.

Seeking requires perseverance as does seeking God about revival. Diane Hallam reminds Christians that earlier in Song of Solomon, the Shulamite refused to leave her comfort zone (Song of Sol 2:8,17) after her Lover pursued her and asked her to come with Him on the mountains (Song of Sol 2:10-14). She states, “Jesus hides His presence

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68 Guyon, Song of Songs, 39.
from the young Bride. He leaves her in the sense of her ability to discern, or feel His manifest presence.”

Desperately missing His presence causes her to go beyond her comfort zone to go and find Him, no matter what danger may be involved. “‘I will rise now,’ I said, ‘And go about the city; In the streets and in the squares I will seek the one I love. I sought him, but I did not find him. The watchmen who go about the city found me; I said, ‘Have you seen the one I love?’” (Song of Sol 3:2-3). When Christ followers seek God, they find Him, as did the Bride. She states, “Scarcely had I passed by them, when I found the one I love. I held him and would not let him go” (Song of Sol 3:4). God cannot be sought unless the goal is to find Him. Francis Frangipane states, “We have to come to realize the one great need of the church is to find God.”

For revival to occur, the Church needs to leave its comfort zone and seek the Beloved until they find Him. This is when revival begins. Guyon beautifully illustrates such intimacy as “a complete spiritual union; a real, permanent, and lasting experience of God’s nature. The kiss is the union of God’s spirit to your spirit.”

Repenting

No matter how close and how intimate Christ followers are with God, they still must face their sin nature. Consequently, repenting is a part of one’s daily spiritual life. A person must ask forgiveness of God, before forgiveness can be given (Matt 6:12). This is

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71 Guyon, Song of Songs, 1.
not only true individually but corporately as the Body of Christ. Again, 2 Chronicles states, “If My people who are called by My name will humble themselves, and pray and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways” (2 Chron 7:14). When God’s children turn from sin (their wicked ways), the path is cleared for an intimate relationship with Him; and with that, a revival can be birthed amongst God’s people.

Confession is a part of repentance and should not be overlooked. Willard speaks of this when stating, “Confession is a discipline that functions within the fellowship. In it we let trusted others know our deepest weaknesses and failures.” Confession allows for humility, being loved by others, and being transparent. There is no hiding or pretending, according to Willard. James 5:16 states, “Confess your trespasses to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much.” Here James connects healing with confession. Willard goes on to write: “We must accept the fact that unconfessed sin is a special kind of burden or obstruction in the psychological as well as the physical realities of the believer’s life. The discipline of confession and absolution removes that burden.” Sin even harms the person who does not confess it. Therefore, it is vital for the Church as a whole—and individual members within it—to deal with sin as it presents itself, so that God can move in the midst of His people.

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73 Ibid.
After Peter finished preaching on the Day of Pentecost, the Scripture says, “Now when they heard this, they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, ‘Men and brethren, what shall we do?’ Then Peter said to them, ‘Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins’” (Acts 2:37-38). The first thing these listeners had to do was to repent. This removes the sin obstacle since sinners cannot stand in the presence of a holy God without their sin being washed clean by the blood of Christ (1 John 1:7). Sin can be compared to fallow ground that is recorded in Hosea 10:12. Hosea tells God’s people to “break up your fallow ground, For it is time to seek the Lord, Till He comes and rains righteousness on you.” If the ground is not broken up, the seeds planted will not survive. This requires a willing heart and one of humility. God clearly states that sin be confessed individually and corporately.

Repentance is a gift from God given to those He loves. He waits patiently for individuals and the Church to repent, in order that He might come and revive them afresh, breathe life back into them. However, this is another area that humankind has a choice whether to repent or not. Without repentance, there can be no intimacy; without repentance there can be no revival.

Unity

Unity can be defined as being in an intimate, loving, caring relationship with others; and, it is ever so needed today. It calls for the willingness to submit personal differences to God and to stand with others in the name of God, in order to bring revival into the churches, which in turn affects Christians and non-Christians alike. Being of one accord is
needed for a revival to begin. Scripture never states a revival ever starting with one person alone. All of the historical revivals started with a group. Though an individual can have a personal awakening experience, a corporate revival always starts with a group of believers. The use of the plural should be noticed in this foundational Scripture: “If My people who are called by My name will humble themselves, and pray and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land” (2 Chron 7:2). Words such as “people,” “themselves,” “their” indicate this was not written for one person; it was written for a community of believers.

Matthew 18:20 speaks about unity and intimacy, not only with other believers but with God. “For where two or three are gathered together in My name, I am there in the midst of them.” The importance of being with other believers is emphasized here. Acts 2 states, “When the Day of Pentecost had fully come, they were all with one accord (together united) in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting.” This revival is the perfect example of the importance of unity. Jesus had told the disciples earlier that they were to wait for Him in Jerusalem. While they waited Acts 1:14 states, “These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication, with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with His brothers.” We see the unity factor once again.

Positive unity can be seen in Scripture as well as negative. The Day of Pentecost is an example of the positive, but then in the Old Testament there is the story of the building of the Tower of Babel. “But the Lord came down to see the city and the tower which the sons of men had built. And the Lord said, ‘Indeed the people are one and they
all have one language, and this is what they begin to do; now nothing that they propose to do will be withheld from them” (Gen 11:5-6). God was concerned about how the people had unified in the sense of coming together to do evil. God’s principles can work for good or evil and this is especially true of unity. Throughout the Gospels it can be observed how the Pharisees and Sadducees never were united, until they united with one another in order to have Jesus crucified (John 11: 45-53). Their unified effort paid off.

Satan does not want the Church to be unified, so he focuses on division in the Body of Christ. Unity is one of the main ingredients needed for revival, so it comes as no surprise that the attack comes in this area. There can be no intimacy with God with other believers within a church body when there is gossip, backbiting, jealousy, unforgiveness, and all of the other obstacles that the enemy likes to use to prevent the Church from becoming one unified Body. The Church, when unified, will be able to do the impossible according to Scripture (Gen 11:5-6). Petty differences must be set aside for this to happen—including small doctrinal differences, such as how a congregation baptizes people. There are missionaries (though not called so) who serve in a part of Saudi Arabia, where water is a scarce commodity. They never would attempt to baptize believers in a large tank of water, even though they are from a denomination who believes in immersion. They do not even sprinkle converts with water. They baptize converts using sand. Many may question the theology of these believers and possibly even chastise them for allowing this. This could

easily become a situation that divided the Body of Christ. However, guarding the unity of the Body of Christ means not allowing division among believers.

Intimacy from God and for God can be seen throughout Scripture. God pursues people who seek to love Him with all of their heart, mind, soul, and strength. This pursuit paves the way to intimacy, which was desired and sought after by the saints from the past. The desert fathers and mothers often retreated to desert places to seek God and His presence in order to fill a void in their lives that could only be filled by this deep intimacy. When groups of believers engage in such pursuit of God, this can lead to revival. Revivals result from the hunger in the human heart for more of God and a desire to return to Him. This is what God desires from His people today.
CHAPTER 5
DEVELOPING INTIMACY

It is vital that students begin developing an intimate relationship with God. Since worship reaches the heart of God, it is important they know the true meaning of worship. There is also a need for students to be trained in the spiritual disciplines—including meditation, prayer, fasting, Bible study, and solitude. These will be addressed in this chapter as well as the importance of establishing community. Not only is personal intimacy important but communal intimacy is also essential, according to Scripture. Finally, there is a need for students to be accountable to a spiritual mentor or coach within the community, since it is easy to stray in one’s spiritual walk.

Worship as Seen in Scripture

Trying to define worship is most difficult, as it encompasses so many areas referenced in Scripture. Some see it as an experience. Bob Sorge states, “Real worship defies definition; it can only be experienced.”\(^1\) Others see it as an act owed to God. The word “worship” is interpreted as “to attribute worth.” God’s people are to ascribe to Him

\(^1\) Bob Sorge, *Exploring Worship* (Grandview, MO: Oasis House, 2001), 65.
this supreme worth. \(^2\) Worship is due to Him, as shown in Psalm 96:7 and Revelation 5:12. David Peterson asks this question concerning worship: “Is it to be identified with a special sense of the presence of God, or with some kind of religious ecstasy or with expressions of deep humiliation before God?” \(^3\) It is easy to become too feeling-oriented and lose sight of the fact that worship is all about God and not about feelings or an experience. Sorge sees worship as “communion with God experienced by His loved ones.” \(^4\) Having a deep closeness with the Lord is a part of worship, a communion that God desires to have with His children. As believers worship Him, they connect with Him in this time of communion.

Tozer states that worship is the whole purpose of humankind, and “that biblically designed purpose is that we might worship God and enjoy Him forever. Apart from that, man has no other purpose; and the short of that, man wanders in a spiritual disorientation taking him further from finding his created purpose.” \(^5\) Essentially, it is humankind’s destiny. Human beings are to worship Him while here on earth and into eternity. Tozer goes on to say, “We cannot worship God as we will; our worship must always conform to God’s pleasure. God does not accept just any kind of worship. He accepts worship only when it is pure and when it flows from a heart under the afflatus of the Holy Spirit.” \(^6\) Worship is

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\(^3\) Ibid., 16.


\(^6\) Ibid., 53.
genuine; it does not originate from a selfish, self-serving heart. Rather, it comes from a heart flowing with passion for God. True worship is birthed from love.

Human beings were created to worship God. Isaiah 43:7 says this includes “everyone who is called by My [God’s] name, Whom I have created for My glory.”

Humankind was created for the glory of God. It is easy to forget that purpose is not about personal desires, or other areas that people focus on. Worship requires focusing on God. Through Isaiah, God states, “This people I have formed for Myself; They shall declare My praise” (Isa 43:21). Having a relationship with God is required, because worship involves giving and receiving. It involves communion and fellowship.7 Worship should be the first priority in a Christian’s life. King David writes: “One thing I have desired of the Lord, that will I seek: That I may dwell in the house of the Lord All the days of my life, To behold the beauty of the Lord, And to inquire in His temple (Ps 27:4). His cry can be heard easily in this verse. David longs for intimacy with God and a chance to worship his heavenly Father.8

There is great purpose in worship, or the devil would not have wanted it so desperately for himself. Since he hungered for God’s creation to worship him, he even tried to get Jesus to worship him. “And he [Satan] said to Him, ‘All these things I will give You if You will fall down and worship me’” (Matt 4:9). Jesus knew exactly how to handle this attack. “Then Jesus said to him, ‘Away with you, Satan! For it is written, ‘You shall worship the Lord your God, and Him only you shall serve’” (Matt 4:10). Just as Jesus was wise to

7 Sorge, Exploring Worship, 67.
8 Rory Nolan, Worship on Earth as it is in Heaven (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2011), 26.
the devil’s tactics, God’s people are to follow His example. Appealing to the flesh is the enemy’s expertise. It is the unprepared follower who can fall into this trap. Remembering how God is the center of all worship helps to keep Christians away from this temptation.

Worship grows Christians in their relationship with God for two reasons. First, all honor is due Him. Second, “worship has the power to change and transform us.”9 Schwanda explains how worship can be likened unto a time-release capsule of medication. There is no immediate effect, but over time a person will begin to observe changes that begin taking place. In Luke 9:28-36, as Jesus—the true worshipper—is worshipping and praying, His face begins to change and His clothes begin to dazzle. Schwanda states that “the Scripture does not specifically tell us of any inner, deeper change that Jesus experiences, but we may safely assume that this also takes place.”10 This is a critical time in Jesus’ life. His journey to Jerusalem awaits Him, as does the cross. The words of encouragement He received from God must have refreshed Him and prepared Him for what was to come.11 Just as Jesus changed in the midst of worship, Christ followers do as well.

According to Schwanda, it is important for genuine worshippers to seek to honor and listen to the Lord. God told the disciples in Luke 9:35 to listen to Jesus. Listening requires attentiveness to His voice. He adds that God was in control on the Mount of Transfiguration, not Peter. People like to be in control, and worship is no different. True

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10 Ibid., 12.

11 Ibid.
worship is God-controlled. It is the time when God’s people come into God’s presence, where all attention is focused on Him giving Him honor and waiting to hear His voice.

It is interesting that during this precious moment on the Mount of Transfiguration, Peter decides he wants to build shelters for Jesus, Elijah, and Moses. Instead of enjoying the moment in the presence of God, and worshipping Him, Peter focuses on doing something. However, focusing on doing can lead to distractions. Distractions try to invade an individual’s worship times, especially in the church. It is vital to remember that the believer is a human being (being in God’s presence) and not a human “doing” (works mentality).

Mary and Martha show another example of being with God as opposed to doing for God. Luke 10:40 states, “But Martha was distracted with much serving, and she approached Him and said, ‘Lord, do You not care that my sister has left me to serve alone? Therefore tell her to help me.’” Working for God can become a major distraction from true worship. Jesus immediately responds to Martha. “Martha, Martha, you are worried and troubled about many things. But one thing is needed, and Mary has chosen that good part, which will not be taken away from her” (Luke 10:41). Sometimes people can feel unaccomplished, if they are not doing something all the time; yet God calls His people away from the doing in order to be with Him, listening to and enjoying Him—just as Mary chose to do.

Worship does not just occur on an individual level; it happens corporately as well. There is a great deal of Scripture illustrating corporate worship. During the time of Moses, God created a design for a physical structure to be built called the Tabernacle of Moses in order for His people to be able to worship Him corporately. After it was completed, Scripture states, “All the people saw the pillar of cloud standing at the
tabernacle door, and all the people rose and worshiped, each man in his tent door” (Exod 33:10). One only can imagine what a sight this must have been. The people witnessed a physical cloud at the door to the tabernacle and recognizing what it was, they began to worship God. This cloud was not a new manifestation for them, as they saw it as Moses was leading them in the wilderness—a fire by night and a cloud by day (Exod 13:21). However, this cloud was much closer. By the virtue of their worship, they recognized it to mean God’s presence was there among them. God’s presence was a catalyst that brought about corporate worship designed to minister unto the Lord. Corporate and individual worship are the lifeline for a relationship with God. Scripture offers another beautiful illustration of worship in the assembly in 2 Chronicles 5:6-7:

Also King Solomon, and all the congregation of Israel who were assembled with him before the ark, were sacrificing sheep and oxen that could not be counted or numbered for multitude. Then the priests brought in the ark of the covenant of the Lord to its place, into the inner sanctuary of the temple, to the Most Holy Place, under the wings of the cherubim.

A great display of love for God was demonstrated as the community of God’s people, led by Solomon, sacrificed such a multitude of animals unto the Lord, that they could not be counted. After this display of worship by the congregation, then the Ark of the Covenant (God’s presence) was brought into the inner sanctuary of the temple. In this way, worship precedes God’s presence and even ushers it into the assembly. This worship continues in the following verses:

Indeed it came to pass, when the trumpeters and singers were as one, to make one sound to be heard in praising and thanking the Lord, and when they lifted up their voice with the trumpets and cymbals and instruments of music, and praised the Lord, saying: “For He is good, For His mercy endures forever,” that the house, the house of the Lord, was filled with a cloud, so that the priests could not
continue ministering because of the cloud; for the glory of the Lord filled the house of God. (2 Chron5:13-14)

The first note of unity is mentioned here during this congregational worship. When those leading the worship were in one accord, things started to happen. Instead of many different sounds, it states that there was “one sound,” and for one reason: praising God in thanksgiving. At that point, God’s presence was made manifest among the people, so much that the priest could not even continue to minister. God was moving in their midst.

What happened next resulted from a God who was pleased with the unity of the community, their praise and worship, and their love for Him:

When Solomon had finished praying, fire came down from heaven and consumed the burnt offering and the sacrifices; and the glory of the Lord filled the temple. And the priests could not enter the house of the Lord, because the glory of the Lord had filled the Lord house. When all the children of Israel saw how the fire came down, and the glory of the Lord on the temple, they bowed their faces to the ground on the pavement, and worshiped and praised the Lord, saying: “For He is good, For His mercy endures forever.” (2 Chron 7:1-3)

God actively accepted their sacrifices of worship and made this known in the grandest way. The people’s response was to offer more worship: more praise, more love for their God. God’s movement among His people brings them into a deeper intimacy with Him and with one another. When they see His power, His glory, and how small they are in comparison to their God, there surfaces humility as a reminder of the awesome God they serve. Such transformation can be seen as a result of worship, which brings forth more transformation as one loves and adores God.

Worship was a part of everyday Old Testament life. The Bible states, “‘Here is Rebekah before you; take her and go, and let her be your master’s son’s wife, as the Lord
has spoken.’ And it came to pass, when Abraham’s servant heard their words, that he worshiped the Lord, *bowing himself* to the earth” (Gen 24:51-52). Worship was not only something the leadership did. Worship was a part of the individuals in the community, including the servants. They knew God and desired to worship Him. Worship was not just a Sabbath act of love to God; rather, it was a part of one’s daily life.

The Old Testament affirms that followers of God should worship even in times of great pain and suffering. Worship is not something that only happens in the congregation of God’s people. It can happen in the darkest hour of a person’s life, and yet God’s sovereignty is affirmed regardless of the circumstances.\textsuperscript{12} Such an example is found in the life of Abraham. “And Abraham said to his young men, ‘Stay here with the donkey; the lad and I will go yonder and worship, and we will come back to you’” (Gen 22:5). Abraham learned that worshiping God can sometimes come at a great cost. In this case, he was aware, as he was about to sacrifice his son Isaac. This act of worshipful obedience to God was going to cost him his son’s life unless God intervened.

Job, under excruciating circumstances, worshiped God. “Then Job arose, tore his robe, and shaved his head; and he fell to the ground and worshiped” (Job 1:20a). Worship is not about feelings. It is about obedience. It is seen here with Job. At the lowest point of his life, after the greatest of tragedies, he did not complain to God but instead chose to fall down and worship Him. Being able to worship God in such incredibly sad and

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\textsuperscript{12} Sorge, *Exploring Worship*, 71.
painful circumstances requires a close relationship with Him, being able to understand that God’s ways are perfect though difficult to comprehend (Hos 14:9; Isa 55:8-9).

After David found out that Bathsheba’s child had died, he worshiped God. “So David arose from the ground, washed and anointed himself, and changed his clothes; and he went into the house of the Lord and worshiped” (2 Sam 12:20). It takes a mature relationship to worship God after events like these. The psalmist knew this truth well when he said, “Deep calls unto deep in the roar of the waterfalls” (Ps 42:7). “Worship is the deep within us calling out to the deep in God.”

Worship is owed to God. It is not based on feelings but on one’s love for the Lord. It is a part of being a Christ follower. In 1 Chronicles 16:29, it states, “Give to the Lord the glory due His name. Bring an offering and come before Him. Oh, worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness.” God’s people owe all of themselves to God, including their worship.

Worship continues into the New Testament. The wise men came from afar to worship a king they knew of only by the signs in the sky (Matt 2:1-2). They traveled a great distance for one reason: “For we have seen His star in the East and have come to worship Him” (Matt 2:2b). These travelers came to worship a God they did not know. Although not Jewish, these wise men recognized the King had been born and came to give Him what was owed Him: their worship.

Worship also was found in the marketplace when Jesus walked the earth in bodily form. People in the streets came to worship Him, always receiving a healing. “And

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13 Ibid., 73.
behold, a leper came and worshiped Him, saying, ‘Lord, if You are willing, You can make me clean’” (Matt 8:2). Jesus was willing and healed him. Worship appears to open up the miraculous.

Even the Gentiles, recognized that He was worthy of worship. For example, a Gentile woman came to Jesus, worshipped Him, and then asked Him for deliverance for her daughter. “But He answered and said, ‘I was not sent except to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. ‘Then she came and worshiped Him, saying, ‘Lord, help me!’ ‘It is not good to take the children’s bread and throw it to the little dogs’’” (Matt 15:22-28). Even though it appears Jesus first refused her request, somehow His mind was changed—possibly by her faith and worship. He then encouraged her and proceeded to heal her daughter. God’s heart was touched, when she worshipped Him. Worshipping God opens up the possibility for miracles to occur, even changing the heart of God.

Mark 5 reveals that even the demons worship Jesus Christ. It is stated in Scripture that everyone will worship Him at some point (Phil 2:9-11); but here, the demonic man can be seen running to the Lord, and the first thing mentioned about him is that he worshipped Him. “And always, night and day, he was in the mountains and in the tombs, crying out and cutting himself with stones. When he saw Jesus from afar, he ran and worshiped Him” (Mark 5:5-7). Even demons have to worship Jesus, but there was also a part of this man that recognized who He was; even though he was controlled by the demonic, that part of Him knew that Jesus was worthy of his worship.

God does not change (Mal 3:6), and His desire for true worship has not changed either. He seeks a people today who also will worship Him in spirit and in truth. He wants
people to recognize who He is, One who is worthy of worship. In the process, God draws them to Himself; and the connection, the intimacy, between God and humanity intensifies. Ernest B. Gentile, speaking of worship, adds, “It encourages a heightened activity of the Holy Spirit as believers give greater glory to God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.”

As seen throughout Scripture, worship opens the doors for a greater revelation of God and for Him to move among His people. People today want to see a church that functions like the Acts church. This only can happen when people worship in spirit and in truth.

In the Book of Revelation, worship can be seen reaching beyond the confines of the earth and into heaven around the throne of God. Revelation 7:11 states, “All the angels stood around the throne and the elders and the four living creatures, and fell on their faces before the throne and worshiped God.” Worship is now seen in this new dimension. Such prophetic worship is birthed from an intimate relationship with God. The prophetic that is talked about here is that which reveals Jesus. Revelation 19:10b talks about the spirit of prophesy, which is the testimony of Jesus. “And I fell at his feet to worship him. But he said to me, ‘Worship God! For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.’”

Prophetic worship might entail singing a certain song or speaking forth a Scripture, but it always means being open to the Lord’s leading. It cannot be controlled by a leader. Matt Redman explains:

Playing or singing prophetically is like walking on a tight rope; sometimes all I have is a line in my head and I think “OK then, here we go.” The thing about walking a tight rope is that you mustn’t look down. In the same way stepping out

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into the prophetic you must keep looking straight ahead towards God. Keep focusing on the Lord, focusing towards Jesus.\(^{15}\)

This is the place one will find God orchestrating the music, the instruments, the voices, as long as the worshippers keep their eyes on the One who is worthy to receive it.

**Spiritual Disciplines**

In order for Christians to grow, mature, and establish an intimate connection with God, there is a need to posture themselves to receive from the Lord. For example, if believers never have times of solitude, then hearing God’s voice becomes difficult. This is not to say He cannot speak in the loudness of life; but the precious moments of quietude, when all focus is on Him, invites God to have a private time with His child. Here is where spiritual disciplines contribute to growing an intimate relationship with God. Brother Lawrence states, “We must continuously walk in God’s Spirit, since in the spirit-life not to advance is to fall back.”\(^{16}\) Falling back can never be an option, if intimacy is the goal.

**Prayer**

Prayer is the vital link to one’s faith, because it connects believers to Jesus Christ. Foster states, “Of all the Spiritual Disciplines prayer is the most central because it ushers us into perpetual communion with the Father.”\(^{17}\) It is a Christian’s conversation and


\(^{17}\) Foster, *Celebration of Discipline*, 33.
connection with Him. Prayer is touching God in spirit and in truth. Like all disciplines, it takes time and practice to develop an intimate prayer life with the Lord. The disciples knew the importance of spending this time with God. Acts 3:1 states, “Now Peter and John went up together to the temple at the hour of prayer, the ninth hour.” These disciples had a preplanned time to meet with God. They had disciplined themselves to pray daily.

Prayer is intimacy, talking and hearing from God Almighty. It is a time of cleansing. Christ followers learn to sit at the Master’s feet. It is prayer that “brings us into the deepest and highest work of the human spirit.”  

If intimacy with God is what Christians desire, then prayer must be a part of their lives. Guyon says that “prayer can help you attain perfection, because it will keep you in the presence of God.”  

Being in God’s presence renews believers, tunes their ears to His voice and to receive that peace that the mind is unable to comprehend (Phil 4:7). Those who do not pray are missing a wonderful connection to their heavenly Father, because prayer is communication and without it there can be no deep relationship with the Lord.

Guyon adds that there is only one requirement that must be followed for successful prayer. “You must learn to pray from your heart and not your head.” Prayer from the heart cannot be interrupted with reason, according to Guyon. This is because “when you have enjoyed God and the sweetness of His love, however, you will find it

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18 Ibid.
20 Ibid. 15.
impossible to set your affections on anything other than Him.” Prayer must go beyond reason; if not, intimacy cannot be achieved. Connecting with God’s emotions is the key, and this happens on a heart level.

Prayer affects other areas of life. Martin Luther states that if a believer fears and honors God in his work and keeps God’s commandment not to wrong anyone—nor try to steal, defraud, or cheat—then such thoughts and such faith transform work into prayer and become a sacrifice of praise. God created humankind to work faithfully as unto the Lord. This finds its confirmation in Scripture concerning praying without ceasing (1 Thess 5:17).

Jesus was the perfect example of prayer. He often found a quiet place to go to seek communion with His Father, especially after a busy day. Matthew 14:23 says that after He had sent the multitudes away, He went up on the mountain by Himself to pray and when evening came that He was still there alone. Being in solitude with God is needed. Distractions can be the greatest enemy to successful prayer. Purposely, one has to leave the distractions to find a place alone with the Lord. In doing so, powerful prayer can result.

Prayer is the way to defeat the devil (James 4:7), to get the lost saved (Luke 18:13), to acquire wisdom (James 1:5), to receive restoration (James 5:16-20), to receive strength (Jude 20), to get laborers out into the mission field (Matt 9:38), to see the sick healed (James 5:13-15), and to accomplish the impossible (Mark 11:23-24). Prayer is the lifeline to having an intimate relationship to God, and from intimacy comes the power of

21 Ibid.

God. Before going out to minister, Jesus’ disciples had built a strong and intimate relationship with Him. They knew Him and that all things were possible through faith in Him. Therefore, when they went out to minister, miracles happened (Mark 6:7-120).

Prayer is not optional, if believers desire an intimate relationship with God with signs and wonders following. It is necessary.

Fasting

Fasting is probably one of the least practiced of all disciplines. It denies the self, and the self aggressively fights against it. Just the thought of fasting can make one hungry. However, when God’s people respond to the call to fast, it fulfills a great need. In doing so, they ask God to crucify their flesh in this area of their spiritual lives. Bickle states, “I discovered that fasting is a powerful spiritual tool that can turbo-charge our journey into the depths of God’s presence.”23 At a 2006 conference at the International House of Prayer in Kansas City, Missouri, Bickle shared about when he first started fasting on a regular basis. It was drudgery until he began to recognize the changes that were taking place within him and that prayers were being answered. Also, he could hear God’s voice more clearly, as fasting clears the mind and opens the spirit more deeply in reception of spiritual things (Deut 13:4; Luke 4:2; Esther 4:16). He started fasting a half day, then went to one day, and now he fasts two to three days every week.24 His

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relationship with God increased intensely, and today he teaches at the International House of Prayer (worldwide) on fasting and prayer and the power behind these disciplines. Others now are beginning to see this overlooked and disregarded discipline in their own lives and are starting to practice it on a regular basis.

One cannot deny that fasting is biblical, for in Scripture Jesus speaks specifically to this topic. He said, “Then they will fast” (Matt 9:15). He was referring to those who followed Him at that time, but He also referred to all people who would follow Him in the future. Fasting is a higher level of prayer and brings intensity to it. At one point Jesus fasted and prayed for forty days and nights. The results of His fast were displayed in His ministry that would come. Wesley preached on fasting quite often and said, “The man who never fasts is no more in the way to heaven than the man who never prays.”

Other powerful Christians like John Knox, Luther, and John Calvin fasted regularly. Acts 10:30 states that Cornelius, a Gentile, was fasting for four days and at the ninth hour of that particular day saw a man who stood before him in bright clothing and gave him instructions to call for Paul. Acts 14:22-24 says that Paul and Barnabas prayed over the new churches and elders with fasting and prayer. Throughout the Old Testament, this discipline also is recorded as a part of daily life (2 Sam 12:23; Isa 58:3, 6; Ps 25:13; 109:24; Jer 36:6).

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Fasting refines one’s spiritual ears; it brings the power of God into a believer’s life and opens the door for faith to believe. “Prayer and fasting sharpen your senses so that when you ask you expect to receive.”

Fasting should not be an option for Christ followers in their desired intimacy with God. It is fasting that will cause the desire in one’s heart to explode into desperation for more of the Lord. Bickle states, “As you feast on the beauty realm of God and you become impatient for more of His presence, just salt the feast with fasting. Fasting is a divine catalyst that increases your capacity to receive more of the spirit.”

This discipline opens the door for more of God, and it should be an integral part of a Christ follower’s walk with the Lord.

The Word of God and Meditation

One who desires intimacy should be a devoted student of the logos, the Word of God, for studying the living Word transforms the mind. Guyon states, “Oh, you who desire a deeper walk with God, come, enter into His presence through His Word.”

God’s Word is the way to God’s heart. A Christ follower should have a daily schedule of reading Scripture and meditate on it as well. This involves thinking about it, ruminating on it, and soaking in its content. Meditation introduces believers to the inner life and opens them to hear from the Lord. Guyon’s definition of meditation includes taking a small portion of Scripture and reading only a small section of it before moving on. This means drawing the


28 Bickle, *After God’s Own Heart*, 132.

fullest from its meaning, thinking about it, relating it to other Scriptures, memorizing it, then proceeding to another portion of Scripture, and doing the same. 30

Essentially, meditating and reading God’s Word is not about quantity but about quality. Chewing on smaller pieces will make for easier swallowing which causes one to grow in maturity. Meditating and ruminating on the precious Word of God is essential. Meditation uses smaller passages of Scripture in order to achieve the maximum benefit from it. M. Robert Mulholland suggests Christians change the way they view reading. Readers always should stay focused on what God is saying to them as they read, listening for God to speak “in and through, around and within, over and behind and out front of everything you read.” 31 He also suggests that people respond with their heart and spirit rather than just the intellect. This is because the Word says that believers should love God with all of their heart, mind, soul, and strength.

Praying the Word is another important part of reading, meditating, and praying. Michael Casey says that “it is the atmosphere of prayer that penetrates every aspect of holy reading that makes it distinctive.” 32 This ancient art of meditating on the Word is called lectio divina, which originated in Benedictine monasteries as a way to read ecclesial texts. 33 Casey states that it is a technique of prayer as well as a guide to reading God’s Word. “It is a

30 Ibid., 17.
33 Ibid., vii.
means of descending to the level of the heart and of finding God.”34 Prayer is the result of *lectio divina* (holy reading). In other words, reading Scripture and meditating on it lead to praying the Word. At its best, these three disciplines are combined into one: When praying, individuals have the opportunity to agree with God’s Word. In this agreement, faith can arise richly within a person’s innermost being. Frangipane calls this “God talking to God.”35

Without posturing oneself before the Lord, spiritual intimacy is not possible. Building intimate relationship is a process, and it takes practice and time. As time is spent in prayer, fasting, reading, and meditating on Scripture, spiritual growth is guaranteed.

**Communal Intimacy and Accountability**

From the very beginning, God ordained community. He states in Genesis 2:18, “It is not good that man should be alone; I will make him a helper comparable to him.”

Adam responds, “This is now bone of my bones And flesh of my flesh; She shall be called Woman, Because she was taken out of Man” (Gen 2:23). Paul M. Pettit says that these two passages underscore the universal human need for connectiveness.36 There is a part of every human being that cries out for other human beings. There is a desire to be connected with humanity on some level. Marsha M. Wilfong suggests that humans are complete only when they exist in community.37

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34 Ibid., vi.
In Hebrew, the noun *edah* means community, assembly, company. It refers “to a group of people as a whole, not as a society at large, but as a whole cohesive community, sharing a common identity acting in concert.” This is important because a community of believers is likened unto a body that must have the same purpose, the same goals, and the same Lord. In Exodus 12:3, 6, 19, and 47—at the first Passover on the eve of the Exodus—Israel is referred to the first time as *edah*. This was the “decisive event that transformed the descendants of Abraham into the people of God.” In this context *edah* does not refer to the Israelite community as a whole but instead is limited to where Israel gathers in one location to act in concert as the united people of God, as can be seen in Joshua 18:1. This also can be seen in 1 Kings 8:5 and 12:20 as well as 2 Chronicles 5:6.

In the New Testament the Greek word *koinonia* is used, which means a community or fellowship. According to Pettit, this term embodies the ideals of Christian community like no other. It refers to life, fellowship, and close mutual relationship (cf. Acts 2:42; 1 Cor 1:9; 2 Cor 8:4; 13:14; Gal 2:9; Phil 2:1; 1 John 1:3, 6-7) as well as participation and sharing in common (cf. 1 Cor 10:16; Phil 1:5; 3:10; 6); partnership (2 Cor 6:14); and contribution, gifts, sharing of material goods (Rom 15:26; 2 Cor 9:13; Heb 13:16).

“Christian community is based not on what its members have in common in the world but

39 Ibid., 78.
40 Ibid., 79.
41 Ibid.
42 Ibid., 83.
on what they share in Christ.” This includes a mutual faith, a common salvation, drinking from the same Spirit, believers participating with one another in Christ, sharing in His sufferings as well as the suffering of other believers, and sharing the return of Christ together. There is an intimate connection within a true community of believers.

Within a community there is wisdom. Pettit asserts that “an individual will grow wise by participating in a close-knit community of wise people.” Joining in and following wise people makes one wise, which is noted in Proverbs 13:20a: “He who walks with wise men will be wise.” It is good wisdom to be around those who can impart their wisdom to others. Community also refines believers. “As iron sharpens iron, so a man sharpens the countenance of his friend” (Prov 27:17). Submitting oneself for improvement is wise, if transformation is the individual’s goal. In order to be sharpened by the community, it is important to have accountability within the community—essentially, those that will care for another’s spiritual growth.

Community provides this accountability. Believers are not only accountable to God but also are accountable to one another. Deuteronomy 4:23 states, “Take heed to yourselves, lest you forget the covenant of the Lord your God which He made with you, and make for yourselves a carved image in the form of anything which the Lord your God has forbidden you.” The plural imperative should be noted here. According to Pettit, in the

43 Ibid., 80.
44 Ibid.
45 Ibid.
Decalogue Moses uses singular imperatives, but here he changes to a plural form. Also, in Deuteronomy 11:16 the plural form is used again. “Take heed to yourselves, lest your heart be deceived, and you turn aside and serve other gods and worship them.” Looking after one another can help to ensure that community members do not stray from the ways of God. According to Pettit, a good way to build community and accountability is to “covenant with a Christian friend or member of a small group to serve as accountability partners.”

Community also provides support. Christians need other Christians; and a big mistake often made is trying to go at things alone, as seen in Ecclesiastes 4:9-12. God’s people were not made to be alone. They were made to be in fellowship with one another. This is a safety net that God has designed to protect His people from stumbling and to be overtaken by the enemy of their souls.

The New Testament uses “one another” to refer to community in the experiential and positional aspect. This comes as an exhortation to love one another (John 13:34), be devoted to one another (Rom 12:10a), have mutual concern for one another (1 Cor 12:25), serve one another (Gal 5:13), carry the burdens of one another (Gal 6:2), and honor one another (Rom 12:10b). This means that caring lovingly for one another is needed in a Christian community of believers.

Additionally, Scripture exhorts believers to encourage one another (1 Thess 4:18), be patient with one another (Eph 4:2), be kind and compassionate to one another (Eph 4:32a), confess sins to one another (James 5:16), forgive one another (Eph 4:32b), show

46 Ibid., 84.
hospitality to one another (1 Pet 4:9), accept one another (Rom 15:7), warmly greet one another (Rom 16:16), submit to one another (Eph 5:21), and treat one another more important than oneself (Phil 2:3). Positionally and experientially, believers are called to be involved in one another’s lives—not just by words but by their actions to other members of the community. This calls for humility, kindness, and loving others like oneself. No one is better than anyone else.

Furthermore, it is important to instruct and exhort one another (Rom 15:14); speak to one another in psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs (Eph 5:19), spur one another on to love and good works (Heb 10:24), wait for one another in worship (1 Cor 11:33), live in harmony and unity with one another (Rom 12:16), show humility toward one another (1 Pet 5:5), pursue what is good for one another (1 Thess 5:15), build up one another (Rom 14:19), and follow Jesus’ example of washing the feet of one another (John 13:14). This is vital, because there needs to be bonding within the community with close emotional ties.\(^47\)

Jesus deeply desired that all of His followers come together as one Body, in true intimacy with God, and with one another. In John 17:11 Jesus prays to the Father asking that His death will unite all believers as one: “Now I am no longer in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to You. Holy Father, keep through Your name those whom You have given Me, that they may be one as We are.” Jesus prayed for oneness among believers, just like that which He shared with the Father.

\(^{47}\) Ibid., 92-93.
Reference to communal intimacy can be observed throughout the New Testament. For instance, the expression “personal Savior” is not seen throughout Scripture. In reference to Jesus, Paul says “our Lord,” meaning “the Lord of the group.”\(^{48}\) Paul refers to “our Lord” over fifty-three times in his writings.\(^{49}\) He refers to “my Lord” only once in Philippians 3:8. According to Joseph H. Hellerman, “Paul’s driving passion was to establish spiritually vibrant, relationally healthy communities of believers in strategic urban settings throughout the Roman Empire.”\(^{50}\) There was a love of community in the first-century Church. Wilkie Au states, “To belong to the church is to be part of a community of people who believe in the resurrection of Jesus. It is to experience being gathered together into one body bound together by the Lord’s love.”\(^{51}\) Being in the Body of Christ reflects the love of God, and in turn this love is felt by all community members. It is God’s love that binds His people together in one accord.

The Church community is the Bride of Christ, corporately as well as individually. The Song of Solomon talks about this in very intimate terms and likens it to a marriage. God chose the marriage language to depict the relationship between the Church and Jesus. Throughout Scripture the bridal paradigm can be seen. In the Old Testament, Israel is considered the Bride (cf. Gen 24; Isa 54:5-6; 62:5b; Jer 2:2; Hos 2:16-20; Ezek 16:18-14).


\(^{49}\) Ibid.

\(^{50}\) Ibid.

In the New Testament, the Bride of Christ is the Church (cf. Matt 22:1; 25:1; John 3:29; 2 Cor 11:2; Eph 5:23-25; 31-32; Rev 19:7-9; 21). There are many reasons for the church community, but one of the main purposes is for spiritual growth to take place individually and as a group. According to Hellerman, “Spiritual formation occurs primarily in the context of community.”\(^{52}\) He shares that those who stay connected with other believers in the local church grow in self-understanding, and they mature in their relationship with God and other believers. “Long-term interpersonal relationships are the crucible of genuine progress in the Christian life.”\(^{53}\) Fellowshipping with other believers on a consistent basis helps mature those in the Body of Christ. It can be messy at times with conflict and discord; but if one is determined and makes a commitment to it, there will be spiritual growth. This would explain why Jesus, from the beginning of His ministry, formed a tight-knit community of followers (cf. Matt 12:49; 15:32; 26:36).

Hellerman states that Western culture has difficulty staying connected and growing together in community. He labels this “radical individualism.” In radical individualism, a person is more important than the collective group. He notes that “our culture has powerfully socialized us to believe that personal happiness and fulfillment should take precedence over the connections we have with others in both families and our church.”\(^{54}\) This was not the case with the early church community. To embrace the

\(^{52}\) Hellerman, *When the Church was a Family*, 1.

\(^{53}\) Ibid.

\(^{54}\) Ibid., 4.
Gospel was to enter into community. Robert J. Banks states, “A person cannot have one without the other.” Paul used the term *ekklesia*, which means “church.” Used over sixty times in his letters, this was Paul’s word for referring to the new communities that he had planted (1 Thess 1:1; 5:26-27; 2 Thess 1:1).

Jesus established this model of *agape* love with His disciples through the greatest of all commandments: “And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength” (Mark 12:30). This Scripture encompasses intimacy with God in its fullest meaning. This leaves nothing out. He is asking to be the first love of the holistic individual. Following this statement, Jesus likened the second commandment to the first. “And the second, like it, is this: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ There is no other commandment greater than these” (Mark 12:31). Essentially, there is nothing greater than loving God and the *ekklesia*.

However, one must love God intimately before being capable of loving one’s community. This communion is epitomized in the Lord’s Supper, when “believers meet together to meet with God” (1 Cor 10:16). In a sense, He modeled this and instructed those who followed Him to do the same. Within this model of love, Jesus served as a mentor for His disciples.

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56 Ibid.
57 Ibid., 29-30.
Jesus laid the foundation for how to be a spiritual leader and mentor of others. He encountered spiritual warfare, which can be seen directly following His baptism when He was led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted (Luke 4:1-13). This warfare intensified during His ministry, which can be seen in Judas’ betrayal (John 18:5); Peter’s denial (John 13:38); the constant conflict with the Pharisees, Sadducees, and Scribes (Matt 12:14); and the crucifixion (Matt 27:31), to name but a few. Even the Son of God had to do battle with the enemy, but Jesus was victorious because He knew how to battle against him. He modeled this plan for His followers, as shown throughout Scripture.

Likewise, when God’s people begin to seek a closer relationship with God, spiritual warfare also will intensify. This is understandable, since the enemy hates the very thought of intimacy between a Christ follower and God. After all, the Bible states that the devil “does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy (John 10:10). This includes trying to steal away this precious intimacy with God as well as intimacy with other believers in community. Acts 8:1 mentions a great persecution that came against the Church. He always has tried to destroy the plan of God and the relationship between God and His people. Ephesians 6:12 explains why: “For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.”

Although the enemy is active and powerful, Christ followers can interrupt his plan by heeding Scripture. For this reason, 1 Peter 5:8 offers this caution: “Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour”; and Ephesians 6:13 instructs, “Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that
you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.” If Christ followers do not prepare, they leave themselves open for attack; and if attacked, they must know how to fight back in order to preserve and protect their intimacy with God. Dean Sherman states that “every good soldier goes into battle well prepared. Not only is he appropriately armed to defeat his enemy, but he knows what to expect when he arrives on the battlefield.” If a soldier in the army goes out on the battlefield and just stands there doing nothing, though he has a machine gun in his hand and grenades on his belt most likely he will become a fatality. The same is true in the spiritual battles Christians fight.

Ephesians 6: 13-18 continues:

Stand therefore, having girded your waist with truth, having put on the breastplate of righteousness, and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace; above all, taking the shield of faith with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God; praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints.

This is the battle plan for fighting spiritual warfare, but followers will need to decide to use it or not. Jesus said, “Behold, I give you the authority to trample on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy, and nothing shall by any means hurt you” (Luke 10:19). Believers have been given authority over the devil, but this authority is worthless unless it is put into action. In community, believers can help one another to use their God-given authority and can support one another in their preservation and protection of intimacy with God.

Randy Frazee says, “We were designed by God physically, emotionally, and spiritually to require community for our health.” Due to this design, choosing community is not an option. It was ordained by God since the foundations of the world. Intimacy cannot happen outside of koinonia. If God’s people desire this intimacy, then bonding with the Body of believers is essential.

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60 Randy Frazee, _The Connecting Church_ (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2001), 32.
PART THREE

RESOURCES FOR GUIDING STUDENTS INTO AN INTIMATE RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD
CHAPTER 6
THE ROLE OF THE INSTRUCTOR AND COURSE DESIGN

The role of the instructor and the preparations needed in order to teach “Intimacy with God: Practicing the Presence of God” at the master’s level will be discussed in this chapter. The instructor must be not only a model of intimacy that students will look to for answers but also a teacher, a mentor, and a designated prayer intercessor for those enrolled in the course. Since this course deals with growing in one’s intimacy with Christ, it will attract spiritual warfare. Therefore, the instructor must be willing to wage a good fight on behalf of the students. In order to teach a course like this, the instructor must be well prepared. Before the first day of class much prayer and fasting already should have taken place and should continue throughout the teaching term. A time of retreat is recommended, before the class begins, in order to hear clearly from the Lord.

The lesson plan and the lecture material to be used in this course, as piloted at Regent University, are presented in this chapter. There were a total of fourteen in-class lessons with one additional lesson that was taught at the three-day spiritual retreat. Lectures 2 and 3 will be presented in this chapter for illustrative purposes. The original syllabus can be viewed in the appendix of this paper.
Modeling Intimacy

It is understood that professors who teach this course will need to be models for the lessons they plan to teach. In this case, they should be in a close relationship with God and be able to guide the students into a relationship with Him. Prayer should be demonstrated in the everyday life of the instructor—whether praying in private, with a group, or with a student and/or the class as a whole. Prayer needs to define the professor’s life, because it is foundational in one’s communication with God, and students tend to observe professors closely. This will help students feel that they can approach their professor with prayer needs and concerns. For this reason, the instructor needs to be open to requests for prayer and remain willing to invest time when called upon to do so.

Being knowledgeable in the Bible is essential, especially in the areas of the course material. Instructors should have a disciplined time of prayer, meditation, and Bible memorization. Also, fasting should be a regular part of their life. According to the Word, professors should strive to demonstrate a simple life, especially since this is one of the most pressing areas in today’s culture. Times of solitude also are needed in order to hear from the Lord, not only about the students but about their own lives.

The students should be able to observe that the professor is submitted to God-given authority, whether this is the dean and administration of the university or the leadership of the church. If this is not happening, then the student will lose confidence in the professor; and the truths being taught will not be received, since the professor is not following the truths in Scripture personally.
Professors should demonstrate a life of service—whether in the university, the church, or in the market place. This could mean ministering outside the walls of the university in some way, whether working with the Union Mission,\(^1\) a local orphanage, with the poor, or other service areas. It even could mean tutoring students, outside mentoring, or assisting in a homeless shelter. The list can go on. If the students see the professor ministering in these ways, they, too, may be motivated to do the same.

Worship should be evident not only in cooperate worship but in everyday life. Living worship each day is another observable action that should be at work in professors’ lives. Seeing how worship operates occurs when the professor has an unexpected event happen in the classroom, such as the AV equipment failing to work or being asked to cover another professor’s class during lunch break, and so on. The students also will notice whether professors attend chapel or not. Students do observe their professors to see if their actions speak louder than their words.

**Teacher, Mentor, and Intercessor**

In this course, it can be easy to lose focus. Attentiveness is needed when teaching the course material so that one aspect of the course which may garner more interest or attention does not cause the professor to lose track of the allotted time. Since there are time constraints, following the specific daily outline is essential—with care taken against preparing too much material for a single session.

In order to teach well, professors need to prepare well in study and especially in prayer. It is suggested they arrive early for class in order to pray for students individually, remembering that God has placed them in their care for a specific amount of time. This should not be taken lightly, because professors are responsible before God to be led by Him in every area of preparation—especially in study and seeking God’s will for each student.

In most seminary classes, mentoring is not required; but in this course, it is essential since the material is very personal, convicting, and God will move deeply in the students’ hearts. There will be times when the professor will need to spend time with individuals, using certain cautions in order to maintain the ethical standards set up by the institution as well as avoiding situations that might result in temptation and sin. It is suggested that mentoring sessions take place on campus, but this can be adjusted carefully depending on the situation. The instructor also should take caution in not allowing the mentoring relationship to become one of close friendship. Without this boundary, the student may come to expect special favors when it comes to grading or other situations that may arise within the class setting. The professional boundary must remain intact for both student and instructor.

Being a prayer intercessor for the students cannot be stressed enough. There should be daily time spent interceding over students’ lives, asking God how to pray and for what to pray on their behalf. The student will encounter more intense spiritual warfare during this course. Areas of attack come often in the form of family problems, keeping priorities in order including time with the Lord, and outside temptations. As discovered
during the pilot phase, the attacks can come within the class as well as from the outside. It stands to reason that the enemy will not sit still while students are drawing closer to the God he despises (cf. Psalm 91).

**Spiritual Preparation**

Preparing spiritually is probably the most important area for teaching this course. It is a most difficult course to teach due to the warfare that will be encountered. Keeping prayer at the forefront, meditating on the Word, fasting regularly, and asking others to intercede on the instructor’s behalf are other areas that need to be safeguarded. Staying in community with a local church or a small group also is suggested. These community members can keep an instructor in prayer, especially when special needs arise. They also will serve as accountability partners for instructors to help them stay focused on the preparation process and the needs of the students, including transformation. They also serve as encouragers and someone to talk to outside the university setting.

The instructors for this course need to examine their personal lives regularly, in order that they may be certain they are free and clear of sin that may have entered their lives perhaps without their even realizing it. They must stay in close communication with God, so that He can point these areas out to them. If not heeded, then sin can open the door for the enemy to begin destroying the seeds that are being sown in the lives of the students. It is suggested that each professor teaching this course go through Neil T.
Anderson’s *Steps to Freedom in Christ* before each term, which can walk them through areas where sin may be found.\(^2\)

**Experiential Learning**

This experiential course, “Intimacy with God: Practicing the Presence of God,” was piloted in September 2005 and was completed in December of the same year. It was a fifteen-week class meeting once a week for three hours, which lent itself for practice of the topics as they were studied. This section will deal with how experiential learning was applied through worship, spiritual disciplines, accountability, and community relationship. A teaching plan also will be presented, demonstrating how these different areas fit into a routine teaching schedule. It is possible to teach experientially without losing any academic requirements.

In this context, the experiential aspect involves students not only learning academic information but being given opportunity to practice it within a guided environment, where mistakes can be made without embarrassment and immediate assistance can be given. It allows for more creativity on the part of students, since they are allowed to become more actively involved. The class begins with worship. Also, informal lectures are given that remain open to questions and responses, followed by participation within the confines of the classroom or areas in close proximity.

Following the second lecture, during the pilot phase, the students were given opportunity to experience what they had learned. For example, after an informal lecture on *lectio divina*, the students were given one verse of Scripture. Each went to a personal area of the classroom or nearby room to begin to meditate on this verse as well as following the lecture directions concerning their time with the verse. The most difficult part for students is letting God control the verse instead of their controlling what they think it says. Professors need to watch this aspect closely as they sit in with each student for short periods of time, making suggestions or answering questions the student might have about the process. Having their journal with them, they may wish to note what God says to them concerning this given passage. At the end of this session, all students met together as a class to share what God spoke to them concerning this selected passage.

The experiential part of each lesson generally focused on the Song of Solomon that was studied during that day’s lesson, since the students already were familiar with it. It was an excellent way of reinforcing the teaching. This time also was used for practicing prophetic worship as a community group.¹ This involved prophetic worship that accompanied the weekly lecture, discussion, and practice involving the focus of the lesson. At the end of this prophetic worship experience, students were asked to come back together and share their successes, and/or any difficulties they may have encountered during their practice time with the rest of the class. Ways on how to improve this

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¹ For more information on prophetic worship, see Chapter 5.
particular discipline as well as how to encourage students to continue practicing it during their personal quiet times were discussed.

There were times when the experiential aspect of the class took place outside the classroom. One time, a student attended a soaking prayer service at a local church. Most never had attended such a gathering and did not know what it was. They were ecstatic. Another time, I arranged a foot-washing session. Most students left the class that day humbled, in quiet praise, and tearful. It was probably one of the best sessions and one they always will remember, in terms of what God did in their hearts that day. All aspects of the experiential parts of the course are designed for students to grow closer to the Lord.

**Worship**

The format for general worship was quite simple, varying slightly from week to week. Each student was invited to participate in the pre-class prayer held an hour before class. This prayer time prepared hearts for what was to come during the worship, the teaching, and the experiential aspect of the lesson. Pre-class prayer also made for an easy transition into the regular worship time. Usually worship started with a praise song—sometimes sung, sometimes used in a meditative way, but always for the purpose of seeking God’s presence. This could be a familiar praise song, hymn, a song that was birthed in pre-class prayer, or some quiet music that opened the students’ hearts to the moving of God.

Posturing to receive from God was crucial; therefore, flexibility (time and schedule) was essential. Allowing God the time He needed to move in the hearts of the
students was of top priority. During this period it was not unusual for students to use their God-given gifting to edify the other students. This is spoken of in 1 Corinthians 12:7-11:

Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good. To one there is given through the Spirit the message of wisdom, to another the message of knowledge by means of the same Spirit, to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by that one Spirit, to another miraculous powers, to another prophecy, to another distinguishing between spirits, to another speaking in different kinds of tongues, and to still another the interpretation of tongues. All these are the work of one and the same Spirit, and he gives them to each one, just as he determines.

Times of worship always proved to be a time of great expectation, whether by a prophetic word coming forth, a word of knowledge, word of wisdom, and the like. Some students became very active during this time. Though there was apprehension by some, even these students remained open for God to use them. As the semester progressed, they became more comfortable in stepping out in the area of their own gifting. As with any training, during this time the professor needs to be ready to give guidance should things become disorderly, being careful not to embarrass the students but to encourage them to continue stepping out in faith. The students were reassured that making a mistake was permissible.

Previous lessons were implemented into the worship sessions. For example, if the class previously had studied *lectio divina*, then the class might shift into this experience following the worship time. During the pilot phase we easily moved into Christian meditation, contemplative prayer, or another discipline already taught that needed additional practice. This allowed the students another opportunity to experience the teaching as well as to become more sensitive to God’s voice. Listening and moving by the
Spirit was essential. A student usually was asked to close the worship time in prayer, giving each one yet another opportunity to be used by God.

**Accountability**

The students were assigned a Scripture passage to memorize each week. Following the worship time, each of them recited the passage to their accountability partner. If the student was not able to recite the Scripture, then the accountability partner would call the student a day or two later to hear the passage recited by phone. This served as a beautiful way to establish accountability among peers as well as giving me as instructor time to assist with any pressing issues that might surface among the students during the worship time.

This method also encouraged community building among the students. This resulted in peer relationships moving into friendship love. As the instructor, my ultimate desire was for each student to experience friendship love as well as build towards *agape* love. As the semester progressed, this biblical truth started to unfold. All that was needed for the maturing process was opportunity and willing hearts.

**Teaching Presentation**

Following the time of accountability, the first section of the lecture material was presented. These teachings were offered in the form of brief lectures and discussions. This

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4 Footnoting all of the material used in the lectures would have been impractical. Each lesson is a contribution of many combined resources in what I believe represents the subject matter accurately. Direct quotations are footnoted in the lessons themselves, but all other resources have been included in the appendix as part of the reading list mentioned in the syllabus and are contained within this paper’s Bibliography.
design allowed students the opportunity to ask questions and give input. This was essential for this type of course, since misunderstandings and misinterpretations may go undetected unless there is student feedback. After a short break, the second lecture was presented using the same lecture-and-discussion format. This falls in line with Jane Vella, a teaching expert who believes in dialoguing with students and stresses the importance of it in the learning process. She states that “the basic assumption is that all learners come with experience and basic perceptions of the world based on that experience and all deserve respect as subjects of a learning dialogue.”5 She goes on to say that these assumptions should be respected. Students’ contributions are important in the teaching process and greatly add to the learning of the topic.

There were fifteen lessons in this semester-long course that covered a variety of spiritual formation topics. The goal of each lesson was to lead students into a new maturity in God, deepening their hunger and desperation for Him. The Song of Solomon was the guiding force for all lecture material.6 The first lecture introduces the various interpretations of the Song of Songs, followed by a lecture on the Bridal Paradigm. A short lesson on lectio divina also is included. Each remaining lecture covers a teaching on the Song of Solomon followed by a practical lesson in spiritual formation. After the last


6 Week 1 covers a great deal of administrative work: reviewing the syllabus, introductions of the professor and students, textbook information, and the like.
lecture, the students were asked to move into the experiential aspect of the lesson in a structured way. However, a flexible format was maintained closely by me, as the instructor.

Table 1. Lesson Overview for “Intimacy with God: Practicing the Presence of God”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lesson No.</th>
<th>Topic</th>
</tr>
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</table>
| 1          | Loving God with ALL of your heart  
             The Bridal Paradigm: Introduction to the Song of Solomon  
             The Cry for Intimacy (Song of Solomon 1:1-4) |
| 2          | Loving God with ALL of your soul  
             The Tenderhearted Shepherd (Song of Solomon 1:5-11) |
| 3          | Loving God with ALL of your mind  
             The Affectionate Father (Song of Solomon 1:12-17) |
| 4          | Loving God with ALL of your strength  
             The Lily of the Valley (Song of Solomon 2:1-7) |
| 5          | Introduction to Prophetic Worship  
             The Sovereign King (Song of Solomon 2:8-17) |
| 6          | Lectio Divina  
             The Safe Savior (Song of Solomon 3:1-11) |
| 7          | The Dark Night of the Soul  
             The Mature Church (Song of Solomon 4:1-5) |
| 8          | The Importance of Encouragement  
             The Ravished Heart of God (Song of Solomon 4:8-5:1) |
| 9          | The Jewish Betrothal Customs  
             The Suffering Servant (Song of Solomon 5:2-7) |
| 10         | Time to Die: Brokenness  
             The Majestic God (Song of Solomon 5:8-6:3) |
| 11         | The Need for a Church Community  
             The Bridegroom Praises His Bride (Song of Solomon 6:4-10) |
| 12         | Fasting  
             The Persecuted, Vindicated Bride (Song of Solomon 6:11-7:9a) |
| 13         | Time Alone with God (Prayer, Meditation…)  
             The Mature Bride (Song of Solomon 7:9b-13) |
| 14         | Discernment  
             The Bridal Seal (Song of Solomon 8:1-7) |
| 15         | Servanthood (Washing of Feet)  
             The Bride’s Final Intercession (Song of Solomon 8:8-14) |

The central theme of passion and desperation for God permeates every lesson of this course. Moving towards true intimacy between the person and God is the powerful
focal point of every teaching. The Song of Solomon study ushers in sub-themes, but all of these lessons serve to bring the student into a deeper and more intimate relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ—that is, truly “knowing” God. Loving God with all of the heart, soul, mind, and strength is woven into every week’s session. Other themes include spiritual disciplines: *lectio divina*, fasting, Christian meditation, prophetic worship, Scripture memory, contemplative prayer, and fellowshipping in community. The purpose of these themes in the course is to promote guided spiritual growth in the lives of the students that can be measured. This structure is needed in order for the course not to be so loose that goals stand the chance of being lost in the experiential learning format. Therefore, it is necessary to constantly maintain a balance. Following this format, the students are only able to learn basic truths for a growing relationship with God but become able to apply (practice) these truths in the classroom and in their own personal lives as well as in community.

Other teaching is included as well, such as learning how to deal with mistakes and weaknesses. It is difficult for students to approach these areas individually yet even harder to open up and discuss them with someone else. Taking care to nurture the student’s devotional life is stressed throughout the course and followed up by the student’s spiritual director (mentor). For this reason, being active in a local church is required for students in this course. Occasional discussions serve to remind them of the importance of attending and participating in the ministry of the local community. The discussions also keep the professor up to date regarding the student’s participation.
Biblical discussions also take place in connection with the Song of Solomon teachings. Themes include understanding what the beauty of the Lord really means, what is meant by “gazing on Jesus,” how Christ followers are a holy people, and learning to lean on Jesus. These are just a few of the topics that are detailed. Overall these teachings and discussions serve to open the heart for a more intimate relationship with the Lord.

The spirit of fear also is addressed in much detail, as part of the teaching on spiritual warfare. This is a much needed topic in this class and can have a lasting impact on students, their family, and their church community. This teaching opens much needed conversation on this topic and targets how to deal with demonic principalities.

**Community Relationship**

It was necessary to have more of a community aspect added to this course, because intimate community flows from an intimate relationship with God. Consequently, community building was one of the main goals of this course and could not be viewed as secondary. Each aspect of the class in some way contributed to that goal. Students were given opportunities to bond with other students not only through the teaching, discussion, and experiential learning but through the course’s two other community-building components: the weekly breaking of bread and a 2½-day retreat.

Students each had an accountability partner in the class, to whom they were responsible to recite their required memory Scripture weekly. The students also worshiped together, not facing the front of the room but moving around to pray and speak
Scriptures over other students. This spiritual aspect acted as a bonding agent in many ways. Informal lectures led to questions and responses not only for the professor but among the students as well. Everyone listened to what the other students were saying and responded accordingly. At times, I served as the facilitator instead of the main spokesperson. After the second and last lecture sessions, the students moved on to the experiential learning hour.

There were times the experiential was practiced individually; and at other times the group came together for practice, which was the case of prophetic worship. After the experiential time, the students shared what God did during their time of practicing the new learning for that day, their successes and what they believed to be their failures. This often became a period of encouragement. Frequent tears were normal for this time, as emotions often were released. It almost resembled a group counseling session. After this session had ended, the course usually closed with student-led prayer and the class headed to a local restaurant for a time of fellowship and community building. Having fun together as community proved a valuable opportunity for bonding together. There were no requirements for this time, other than to enjoy the company of the group. Bob Briner and Ray Prichard state, “Food can be a great catalyst for building relationships and for teaching.” The students looked forward to this meal together every week and grew quite

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close to one another through these times of eating together. “The Gospels reveal how often food and drink is the backdrop for so many of Jesus’ most powerful and important lessons.”\(^8\) Even after the resurrection Jesus appeared to the disciples and cooked breakfast for them (John 21:11-13). Briner and Pritchard add that “nothing breaks down barriers like sharing a Coke and a hamburger or a quick breakfast together.”\(^9\) This proved extremely successful; students often would reveal to me and to other members of the class how much they looked forward to this time of table fellowship and the fact that they never had experienced this in other classes.

Another important part of the course was the 2½-day class retreat. This was another factor that played a major role in bringing these students into a close-knit horizontal relationship. The students were not only moving into a more intimate relationship with God; but they were discovering a deeper love for one another as well through nature, eating three meals a day together, sharing rooms with one another, having group devotions every day, and other times of fellowshipping. There was even a bonfire that was nicknamed “bonding-fire,” which proved prophetic. There was also conflict at times, but as a group these conflicts were worked out. Afterwards, the group became closer because of them. Even though there was a very basic retreat outline that the students were to follow, it was flexible at the same time.

\(^8\) Ibid.

\(^9\) Ibid., 51.
CHAPTER 7
IMPLEMENTATION AND ASSESSMENT

The lessons learned from teaching this course during the pilot phase and the new revisions will be addressed in this chapter as well as the results from the midterm and final assessment. Both assessments will be presented together, when an identical question has been asked. This will allow for a clearer view of the course, “Intimacy with God: Practicing the Presence of God,” from the students’ point of view at midterm as well as at the end of the semester. Additional questions were added on the final evaluation, which contributed to more in-depth feedback about the course in hopes of improving it in the future.

Lessons Learned and Revisions

For the most part, the basic design of the course felt comfortable but there are some areas that need adjustment. The syllabus is in need of revision, and the amount of material must be decreased. There are also some directions in the extended syllabus that require a more concise explanation.

Throughout the semester, “loopholes” were discovered by my challenging students who used these professorial oversights to their advantage. For instance, one student decided that he did not want to attend the regular retreat, because he wanted to go on this
required retreat elsewhere. The syllabus stated that if students could not attend the class retreat for extreme reasons, they could choose another place to meet this requirement. As a result, these oversights needed to be corrected. Additionally, there is also an overabundance of material which is not realistic for a fifteen-week course. At least one hour of the three-hour teaching session is carefully guarded for the use of experiential learning; therefore, the amount of material has to be reexamined and reduced to fit in the two-hour timeframe. Lastly, there are changes throughout the course that need adjusting such as adding two pre-class assignments into Blackboard. This will help cut back on class teaching time. The syllabus also included material deletions and substitutions for some of the textbooks in order to improve the course reading for next time.

Spiritual insights also were gained throughout the semester. It is important to look back and see what God has revealed about this particular course: the successes, the mistakes, and how to improve it in the future. This holds true in the academic sense, but it is even more important from a spiritual perspective. There is more of a need to understand the spiritual warfare involved when teaching this course. Though warfare was considered from the beginning, it still proved to be more intense than expected; and more preparation was definitely needed, before and during the course. All of these adjustments will be addressed throughout this chapter, paving the way for a revised version of “Intimacy with God: Practicing the Presence of God” that should prove more efficient.
Syllabus

In order to maintain clear expectations among the students, it is important to have a detailed syllabus with concise directions. For the most part, the syllabus fared well, though my challenging students found one inconsistency and used it to their advantage. However, this brought up the need for more precise explanations in the syllabus, and these areas have been corrected along with some other changes which will be described below.

Prerequisites

Despite the strong support from the administration, there was a low student enrollment, due to the scheduling of core courses during the same time slot. As a result, I decided against interviewing students before allowing them to register for this course. This proved to be a mistake. A certain maturity level is needed for several reasons. Due to the warfare aspect, the student needs to have at least a basic understanding of it. Also, a student new to the things of God may not be ready for a course like this one, since the course delves right into major theological areas that are found in the Song of Solomon. Deeper personal issues are discussed, and a more mature form of worship is introduced, which might prove difficult for someone who does not have some experience in these areas already. Overlooking this aspect would be an enormous mistake, because the less mature students can become overwhelmed; and, as a result, the course could prove to be a bad experience for them. This also would hold the other students back since much more
detailed information would have to be given by the professor, information the other students already know.

I have added three prerequisites that will be mandatory when this course is offered again. First, the “Spiritual Formation 1” course will be required, since it is an introduction into Christian spirituality. Second, each student who wishes to take this course must be interviewed by the instructor. This will ensure that the student knows what this course will involve as well as to give the professor an option of whether to allow the student to register for the course. Finally, the student must be a member in good standing at a local church. A note from the student’s pastor will be needed before a student will be allowed to register. This is to prevent any misunderstandings about the need for community relationship concerning the local church.

Resources

Course material that students can relate to is essential for this course. After using the materials for the first time, a slight change has been made in light of student-expressed critiques of these materials. Some material was received well while substitutions were needed for others that were not well liked by the students.

All of the students enjoyed Bickle’s *After God’s Own Heart* as well as *The Bride*, the allegory on the Song of Solomon by Rhonda Calhoun.\(^1\) These books will remain, while

others will need to be replaced. This is necessary because the students revealed that they were of little help to their growth in the Lord. As a result, I have eliminated The Book of Psalms: A New Translation According to the Traditional Hebrew Text,\(^2\) Marjorie J. Thompson’s Soul Feast,\(^3\) Richard Peace’s book entitled Spiritual Journaling,\(^4\) and The Bride of Christ manual by Calhoun. Noting the needs of these students, I have replaced the deleted books with Planted by Robert Gay in order to focus more on the need for local church community.\(^5\) This speaks about the importance of the church body and how God uses it to mature believers. There are an alarming number of seminary students who do not attend church. They assume that taking classes “about God” is enough and for the most part stay home on Sunday morning either to relax or to do homework. This was verified by two of six students in my class, who did not have a church home.

In addition, two other books will be added. The first is Idols of the Heart by Elyse Fitzpatrick, which speaks about strongholds in the lives of the believer and how to be set free from them.\(^6\) The other book is Breaking Christian Curses by Dennis Crammer.\(^7\)

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\(^3\) Marjorie J. Thompson, Soul Feast (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, Press, 2005).


\(^7\) Dennis Crammer, Breaking Christian Curses (Cedar Rapids, IA: Arrow Publications, 1997).
These are added for the purpose of preparing students in the area of spiritual warfare and for examining their hearts for areas that need addressing.

Changes to Course Assignments

There is always room for improvement, and this course is no different. After teaching a pilot version of “Intimacy with God: Practicing the Presence of God” a need for revision was noted. This section will address those changes in the individual assignments as well as the 2½-day retreat. It also will define each graded assignment and discuss the reason for the changes made to them.

The weekly reading and reflection assignment called for a written reflection on the assigned readings. Academically, this paper would indicate if the student understood what was read, and it also helped the professor to pick up on any spiritual problems that the student might be experiencing. These assignments were good assessment tools. The only improvement needed would be in the area of clarification; therefore, some general reminders of needed citation and noting the differences between a reflection paper and a report will be implemented.

Class participation is also graded in this class. This includes prayer, worship, and overall class discussions. Participation is expected in order to enhance student growth with the Lord. The discussions, though academic, promote spiritual learning when applied to prayer and worship—the experiential aspects leading to a deeper relationship with God.
An oral book reflection from a book the student selected early in the term is shared with the class. These respond to selected questions, such as “How has this book made a difference in your life?” or “How did God speak to you while reading the material?” This requires pondering and listening for God to speak to them while reading the book material. The oral reflection assignment was successful; but in the future it will be given at the retreat instead of in class, due to time restraints in the classroom.

The students and I spent a 2½-day weekend retreat together. This was an experiential assignment complete with an academic “Retreat Reflection Paper.” This deliberate time of setting oneself away from everyday life and responsibilities is needed, especially for those who seek an intimate relationship with God. This retreat was designed so students could experience an intimate time with the Lord outside the university in a natural environment. It encouraged a time of stillness, prayer, and quiet reflection so participants could practice the presence of God. During this time students were asked to keep a journal close by to record their thoughts, feelings, experiences, and what God was saying to them. Spiritual growth and intimacy were the goal. The reflection paper was a simple paper reflecting on their retreat experience.

This was a valuable assignment; but again, some adjustments needed to be made. The students suggested having a less structured schedule and would have liked more time alone and with their retreat partner. That will be a definite consideration during the next course. Also, having a guest speaker on Saturday morning would be another good addition to the retreat schedule. Another important change would include having another
professor or assistant come along to do the behind-the-scenes work, so that I can give the Lord and the students my undivided attention.

The “Research and Reflection Paper” in part was to fulfill academic requirements set by the university, but it was flexible enough to add the reflective area of spiritual growth as well. The students had twenty-three topics from which to choose. These included fasting and intimacy, contemplative prayer, defining true worship, the need for spiritual direction, and the like. Students were asked to select a subject from the list which they thought was lacking most in their life. The assignment was a good one, but the pilot course revealed that students needed more clarity about basic writing concerns such the need for a Turabian title page, table of contents, and bibliography. Though this was in the syllabus, it needs to be discussed in the classroom as well. Three new topics have been added to the list from which students can choose: “How God Uses the Local Church in Drawing Us Closer to Him,” “Defining ‘ALL’ in the First and Greatest Commandment,” and “The Need for a Lovesick Church.” These changes will be instituted for the sake of better academic writing as well as adding the church topics in hopes of encouraging the students of the need to participate in church community.

The last assignment was an exciting one. Again, the students were able to choose from several options. These encompassed designing a two-day spiritual retreat, a four-week study on one of the disciplines, a sacred book reading journey, composing music for prophetic worship, and/or writing a short book of psalms/poems of praise. This format was a very experiential one, thus giving students a choice on how they wished to express
themselves for a graded course assignment. This purposed to help the student to reflect and experience God in an academic, yet intimate, activity. This was the most successful assignment; but again additional clarification has been added, mainly concerning the sacred reading text assignment. Students are reminded to balance their contributions as well as to include the necessary bibliographic information.

The Assessment Tool and Results

This section will address the results from the midterm and final assessments as well as the purpose for each assessment question. The four main areas that were evaluated included me as the instructor, the course topics, the students’ personal experience with “Intimacy with God: Practicing the presence of God,” and the students’ experience of community during the course. The evaluations took place midterm and at the end of the term in December 2005.

Evaluating the Professor

The first question on the midterm and final evaluation asked, “Is the professor passionate about the subject matter?” The purpose of this specific enquiry was to discover how the student viewed the personal investment of the professor in teaching. Students rarely are passionate, unless the teacher is passionate first. The midterm results proved that five of six students responded with “over and above,” with one response as “all of the time.” The final evaluation showed that all six students stated “over and above.” These results confirm that the students definitely sensed my passion for the
subject matter. Even the two students that struggled with other issues in the class could still sense my excitement. Midterm and final evaluations indicate that all students agreed that passion was not lacking.

The second inquiry on the evaluations asked the student, “Do you sense that the professor cares about you inside and outside of the classroom?” The purpose of this specific inquiry was to ascertain whether the student believed that the professor’s concern for the student’s spirituality ended when the student leaves the classroom. Since many topics covered in this course may require outside mentoring, this question would reinforce if the professor was available outside of class. The midterm evaluation reported four students responding with “over and above,” with two “all of the time” responses. The final response stated three “over and above,” one “all of the time,” one “most of the time,” and one “none of the time.” All six students at midterm agreed that they felt cared about in class as well as outside of class. By the end of the semester some issues had surfaced with two particular students; and though I went out of my way to assist them, the negative emotions seemed impossible to overcome.

The third inquiry on the evaluations asked, “Is the professor prepared for each lesson?” It is important for students to know that their professor is prepared to teach them. Professors cannot expect their students to be prepared for class, if they are not. The midterm results stated five responses “over and above” and one response “all of the time.” The final evaluation showed all six responses as “over and above.” This indicates that the professor was prepared for teaching each week’s lesson.
The fourth question was this one: “Does the professor encourage student participation?” In any classroom situation, especially in an experiential one such as this, students should be encouraged to be participators and not just observers. They should have the freedom to ask questions when they may be confused or inquisitive and be able to share a life experience, if it applies to the teaching and will further the learning of the other students. The midterm evaluation shows four responses stating “over and above,” with one “all of the time” response, and one “most of the time.” The final evaluation states four “over and above,” one “most of the time,” and one “sometimes.” Though four of six students from this class agreed that the professor always encouraged participation “over and above,” the two challenging students scored this question lower on the scale.

The fifth question asked, “When appropriate, did the professor give you the freedom within the context of the classroom to use your gifting(s)?” First Corinthians 12:7-11 states that God gives gifts to His people. One of the purposes for this course was to encourage students to step into the areas of their gifting, in order to edify others through the gifts that God had imparted to them, with this being a part of the community goal. Midterm evaluations indicated two students with “over and above” responses, with two noting “all of the time” and one response as “none of the time.” The final evaluation was similar with four stating “over and above,” one stating “sometimes,” and one stating “none of the time.” Most students felt the assurance that they could openly use their gifts to edify the class as a whole. The two challenging students did not feel this openness,
probably due to the fact that on many occasions I needed to step in when they were using a “gift” in an attempt to control the class.

Additional Questions Added to the Final Evaluation

The sixth question on the final evaluation asked, “Does the professor’s teaching evidence a good grasp of and expertise in the course subject matter?” It was important to know how the students viewed this question. Students should feel secure in knowing that the person who is instructing them is competent and has a strong grasp of the subject matter. There were three responses stating “over and above” and one stating “all of the time.” Two stated “most of the time.” The same two students agree that I was qualified “most of the time” but at times was not.

The final evaluation’s seventh question asked, “Does the professor evaluate students’ work fairly and does she grade fairly?” This may sound like a very simple thing, but in the eyes of the student it is an extremely important topic. At times, the professor has to go the extra mile to assure the students that their work is not only important but is being graded fairly. Sometimes this might take an additional comment added to their assignment or even a personal phone call to help the student understand why they received a certain grade. The students in this course all agreed that assignments were graded fairly.

The eighth question asked, “Is the professor able to introduce, explain and teach material that is new to the class?” A competent teacher is able to present a totally new
concept and explain it in such a way that the students are able to understand and experience what is being taught. This was essential for this course due to the experiential aspect. There were three “over and above” responses, one “all of the time” response, one “most of the time” response, and one “sometimes” response. Four students totally agreed that I was able to impart information clearly; once again, the two challenging students again scored lower on this question.

**Course Topics**

This set of questions purposed to examine the course closely, making sure the materials contributed to the growth of students and brought them into new levels of intimacy with God. While the appendix contains a more elaborate analysis of student responses, this section offers a brief summary of the questions posed and conclusions about student feedback. There were five questions in total.

The first question on the midterm evaluation about course topics essentially asked, “If this course was redesigned, what elements would you keep in the course?” It is essential to know what is positive in the eyes of the students as well as to see if they were in agreement about the same areas of the course. A successful topic can be identified if several of the students agreed on a specific element. All students agreed on two of the texts used, and all but one agreed on another text (discussed earlier in this chapter). They also mentioned they enjoyed the Scripture memory, worship, table fellowship, journaling, as well as finding a spiritual director. This reveals the students’ spiritual needs were met
in these areas, especially concerning accountability and spiritual direction. Most had never heard of having a spiritual mentor to whom they would be accountable.

The second part of this question asked, “What element would you remove from the course?” After fifteen weeks of classes, it was also important to know what students thought were the “unimportant things” in the course. Students, for the most part, are very honest about answering these types of questions. Their responses were needed in order to improve the course, though it proved a bit painful for me as the professor. Other than some of the books I thought were valuable, they did not want to see anything else removed. This reveals that overall the students were happy with the teaching, the teaching style, and the academic and experiential aspects of this course.

The next question on the midterm and final evaluation for the students asked, “So far, what has been your most significant practical experience with the Lord due to taking this course?” Since this is an experiential class, it was of utmost importance to know how it has affected the students in the practical areas of their lives. Finding out has offered a true indication if the students are growing in intimacy with God. Overall journaling was mentioned often along with prophetic worship, Scripture memory, and being able to go much deeper with the Lord while taking the course. This revealed that students enjoyed these practical ways of growing closer to God, and several never had heard of some of them.

Another question asked was this: “How would you rate this course?” Since students used three elective credits to take this course, not to mention the tuition amount, the answer to this question revealed the value of the course as seen through their eyes and
whether the students’ needs and expectations were met. Overall, almost of the students gave the course an “excellent” response, followed by “above average” (with one “fair” response), illustrating that most students were satisfied and it was worth the investment that they had made.

An important question then was asked: “Which topic(s) in this course contributed the most to your drawing closer to the Lord?” Knowing which topics had the greatest impact on the students’ spiritual walk was essential. This not only helped to evaluate the course and its success but was also useful when revising this course for future teaching, as mentioned earlier in this chapter. Students clearly stated which topics proved most helpful in drawing them closer to the Lord. This helped to guide what now stays in the curriculum, what needed adjusting, and what needed to be eliminated altogether.

**About the Student**

This set of questions purposed to examine the students’ thoughts and feelings concerning what they had experienced throughout the course and if they felt any personal changes were taking place. Like assessment of course topics, these questions sought free responses from the students. While the appendix contains a more elaborate analysis of student’s answers, this section offers a brief summary of the questions posed and conclusions about student feedback.

There were ten questions in total. First, the students were asked to do this: “Name 1 to 2 changes and amendments that you have seen in your life as a result of taking this
course.” It was important for them to sense a need for change in their lives, if the course accomplished its goals. The responses were inspiring, because God was beginning to move deeply in their lives, and covered everything from more time spent memorizing Scripture to practicing *lectio divina* and prophetic worship. Just about every topic from the course was mentioned.

They also were asked, “What 2 areas of the course have you enjoyed the most, even though it may have come by stretching and pain?” It was interesting to note which topics were the most enjoyable for the students. Mostly this included something that was not a struggle but a simple enjoyment. It is important for students to experience joy in learning, and these students had a good experience.

Another question on this survey was this one: “Is this course causing you to hunger more for the things of God?” If the main purpose of this course—as stated in the syllabus, “This course is for those who, like David, desire to press deeper into the heart of God; thus becoming a lover of God”—was not happening in the lives of the students, then the course did not serve its purpose. These responses were needed in order to know how to either revise the course or drop the course from the curriculum. Midterm, five of six students commented that they were seeing spiritual growth in their lives, revealing that their intimacy was deepening with God.

Still another response was needed for this question: “Would you recommend this course to another student?” If students felt that the course had met their needs, then they should have no problem in recommending it to others. This was another true test of
whether or not the course had accomplished its purpose. Since five of six students said
they would suggest the course to others, the course was a success in this respect as well.

The students were asked to comment even more freely with this question: “Other
comments, feel free to respond about anything.” They could comment about the course
overall, a specific part, the presentations, the experiential aspects, or anything else as long
as it was course-related. They were not given guidelines for this section, since their
overall comments and ideas were solicited. Sometimes giving students a chance to totally
express their thoughts can introduce new ideas that a professor may not even have
thought of before. Their responses were enlightening. Many responses embodied hopes
for the study to continue in a “Part 2” version to study the material more in depth. Such a
positive response reveals that these students experienced significant results with respect
to new levels of intimacy with their Lord.

Then several questions were asked together:

Character formation of students is a main goal of the overall Divinity program.
How has this course, (overall—class sessions, assignments, your interaction with
the Lord and with members of the class community), assisted you in growing in
Christ-like character, as exemplified by the fruit of the Spirit (love, joy, peace,
longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, meekness, temperance, faith)? Have you
grown in Christ-like character? Was this course responsible for any change in the
student’s character?

These were also important. This course sought to bring about character change, since the
purpose was to draw the students closer into the heart of God and with that comes
character change. There appeared to be a great deal of change in the hearts of four of the
six students, covering a wide range of positive transformation as they spoke openly about
the experiential aspect of the class. This reveals that students respond to experiential teaching, where they can practice what they learn. In this case, it was an instrument God used to bring about character change.

Another question was added in the seventh item: “Would you be interested (if your schedule allowed and the course was approved by the administration) taking another course like this one (PART 2)?” If the students were happy with their progress, then they would be interested in seeing another course offered in this area of spiritual formation. Students’ responses showed that there is certainly a need, but there must be room and time in their schedule.

A further inquiry on the final evaluation was this: “What can you apply to your life right now and in the future as a result of the material that was covered in this class as well as the class experiences? Will it cause you to live differently?” The students should be able to see immediate application in their lives as well as areas that will take some time to apply as the Lord continued to work in their lives. Students seemed to have no trouble verbalizing immediate applications of the course. According to the students, positive applications began during the course and would continue. This was another indication of the class serving its purpose.

The students then were asked, “What have you found the most helpful to your spiritual growth, even though it may have come by stretching and pain?” The students were given a list of areas that were covered in the course consisting of the following: prophetic prayer, fasting, time spent in solitude with God, overall worship, Song of
Solomon Study, fellowship after class, journaling, the 2½-day retreat, memorizing Scripture, the course reading material, contemplative prayer, class discussion, and a particular teaching that may have stood out during the semester. They were asked to number them “1” to “13,” with “1” being their top choice. The overall top choice was the teaching on the Song of Solomon, followed by their newly discovered times of solitude with God and subsequently other areas dear to their hearts. This revealed what topics and activities ministered the most to them, which also proved useful in revising the pilot course.

The next question was this: “What subject has been the most difficult for you to understand and apply to your life? Please explain.” It was needful to know the subject areas that might be causing struggle in the students. Most students were able to apply each area to their lives without difficulty. One student stated that spiritual direction was new; the individual is still trying to process this as well as the concept of prophetic worship.

**Community**

The important topic of community was addressed in the evaluation process. The question was asked: “Do you feel students and professor have formed a strong community vs. a typical classroom situation? If you answer ‘yes’, then what explanations can you give for a student community forming like this one has? Christian community is talked about throughout Scripture.” On a seminary level, it seems that many students are very self-absorbed with studying, competing, personal family obligations, and the like.

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Community seems to be the least important thing in a seminary student’s life and the hardest thing for which to make time. It was important to know how these students would answer this question after taking this course, because forming bonds with one another was crucial to forming community. All students stated that strong bonds were established and overall attributed this bonding to fellowship, worship, and prayer. This reveals that when the students are given opportunity to form community, then it most likely will happen. This is the reason it happened in this class.

The students also were asked, “Is this strong community aspect a new experience for you in a classroom situation at Regent?” It was necessary to compare the community found in this class with other classes in which the students had participated. Fortunately, many noted that classes other than Spiritual Formation classes offer this opportunity but agree that this is only possible if the professor makes a way for it to happen. This reveals students’ need and desire to experience community.

Assessing students’ experience in “Intimacy with God: Practicing the Presence of God” proved vital. Given the responses, it could possibly open doors for more experiential courses in spiritual formation. The course is important in the life of a seminary student, as it teaches the basic foundational Christian disciplines and encourages the students to practice them—sad, because this is often overlooked by seminary students. The topics covered in this course are greatly needed in order to grow in intimacy with Christ.
SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

In 2 Peter 3:18 Christ followers are encouraged to “grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.” In this verse, Peter not only stresses clearly and firmly the need for knowledge but also of grace. This statement is in the imperative mood and a command and clearly articulates that a believer’s growth should include both knowledge (head) and grace (heart/affective). Pettit agrees and states, “While academic excellence is critical in theological education, the Christian campus must not ignore the essential core values of spiritual formation and community.”

After teaching this course once, I decided that some adjustments were needed, such as replacing some of the textbooks and cutting back on some of the content. There was an abundance of information but simply not enough time to teach it all. More caution was needed, when the syllabus is revised, to identify and remove any information that might be misunderstood by the students. Clarity has become essential.

There was also a need for greater time restraints. Worship went over the time limit many times, which affected the rest of the activities. Though the schedule was flexible by design, the teaching part of the course was adversely affected with lesser time. The hour reserved for experiencing the teaching needed more guidelines. There were times that students were at a loss at what was expected from them or what the desired

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\(^1\) Pettit, *Foundations of Spiritual Formation*, 87.
outcome of their participation was to be. There were assumptions made on my part, for example, that all of the students knew what soaking prayer was, only to find only half of them knew; therefore, they had difficulty during the first time of experiencing God through that means of meditation. This has been corrected.

The most important change/addition that will be required pertains to the pre-course interview to be scheduled with each student signed up for the course. The purpose of the interview is to ascertain the maturity level of the student, since the content of the course is designed for students seeking topics in developing maturity in their relationship with the Lord and also helping them experience God. Students also need to be told in detail what they can expect from the course. Experiential learning and the other activities might be new for some.

Though I was aware of the students’ need for intimacy with the Lord, I had not anticipated just how much they desired this deepening of their relationship with God. Each day God met the students and filled them to overflowing. This was evidenced by a spirit of repentance among the classroom community. They were confessing sin to one another, asking forgiveness, testimonies were given often, and tears flowed on a regular basis when the Lord was dealing with them. Some came into the classroom early, or stayed after, crying out to God; some did so in silent prayer or just sat in His presence. Others held hands asking God for more of Him, and He never disappointed them.

It was a great privilege to watch how the students matured in this three- to four-month period of time. Those who were uncomfortable praying in front of a group now
were leading prayer. Some who needed encouragement now were encouraging others. To this day they remain in contact with one another, which is a good sign that true community was formed. The two challenging students have not communicated with the rest of the class or with me.

After the class ended, I was asked to teach this course in a small group at a student’s home. She started inviting neighbors and friends over, and they invited other people they knew. The course had to be shortened, but those who attended were pleased with the information.

A year after teaching “Intimacy with God, Practicing the Presence of God” at Regent University, I taught the course in a church college environment as well as a secular community college. It also was taught online which proved to be quite a challenge; but much to my surprise, it worked well. Voice PowerPoints and live voice-activated discussion boards were used. In some ways, it worked better—other than the fact we could not have one-on-one community fellowship. Staying in contact with the students by phone also was needed and an additional blessing.

There were many adjustments to make when I took the course from the master’s level in the seminary environment. The maturity level was the biggest adjustment. I had to remind myself that not everyone had been to seminary. In one group alone there were mature believers, immature believers, and even non-believers. The second adjustment was the need to cut back the amount of information and yet to keep the same focus and purpose for the teaching.
Teaching this course outside the university has caused me to realize more deeply that there are many people outside the formal educational system who desire to grow in their relationship with God. They, too, need someone to help them mature in the things of the Lord. Taking this course from its original venue also has caused me to consider ways that I need to divide the material for a more flexible teaching and learning experience. The area I have yet to resolve is the experiential part of the teaching, because most teaching sessions are only one hour in length. Having discovered that different venues demand adaptation and flexibility, I plan to apply more thought to the ongoing development of those points.

Nevertheless, there was one thing that remained unchanged in all of the teaching venues: the hunger for more of God and how to share the ways of meeting that hunger within community. For this reason, in the future I want to create an eight-week Bible Study from the course material for use in a small home community setting or Sunday school environment. This should prove very beneficial to church groups, since this material covers many of the spiritual disciplines including prayer and Bible study. A lighter version of the Song of Solomon also will be a part of the group material. Teaching this information in a weekend seminar or conference is also a possibility. However, my greatest goal is to train others who, in turn, can inspire and equip others to do the same.

As far as Regent University is concerned, I hope to give the same survey to new seminarians. This will be quite beneficial in discovering new student needs as well as to
see if the statistics will prove similar when compared to the first assessment. I also desire for the administration to make it a core course for all students.

My own intimacy with the Lord increased while writing and teaching this course. I realized that I could not write about something that I did not know, and I could not teach about something I had not experienced. It was apparent that I could neither write nor teach on this topic, unless God walked this journey with me. Once I started teaching this course, the spiritual warfare intensified. My definition of intercessory prayer broadened and loving my enemy took on new meaning. However, I grew in my faith; and as my own relationship with God deepened, I grew to depend on Him to a far greater degree, mainly because I knew other lives were at stake: the lives of my students. I remember citing James 1:2-3 quite a bit during the process of preparing for this course: “My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience (perseverance). But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing.” I grew in determination that this course would take place no matter what obstacle I faced, and it did. Still, I must honestly say, that if any good came from this effort, then God gets the glory for it. It was His strength that made it happen. As soon as I realized that and stopped trying to write and teach in my own strength, the students, my abilities, and the course overall started to fall into place.
APPENDIX 1

ORIGINAL SYLLABUS AND COURSE EVALUATIONS

SFRM 585
INTIMACY WITH GOD: PRACTICING THE PRESENCE OF GOD

DESCRIPTION AND PURPOSE OF COURSE
This course will provide a context for students to actively “practice the presence of God” --- therefore deepening their relationship with God. Students will gain greater expertise in the classic practices of “sacred reading” (lectio divina) and other worship forms by practicing these forms of worship within the classroom context. They will study “the heart of David” as a biblical model for intimate communication with God. Practicing spiritual disciplines of the Christian life will allow students to further their understanding and experience of these “habits of the heart”. Certain interpretations of the Song of Solomon will be discussed as pertaining to understanding aspects of God’s love for His people and their response to His love.

COURSE GOALS
1. Gain an understanding of the Greatest Commandment.
2. Experience “prophetic worship” leading to a fuller understanding of discerning the voice of God.
3. Practice “sacred reading” (lectio divina) as it relates to the worship experience.
4. Grow in intimacy with God using David’s spiritual life as an example.
5. Build on the previous knowledge of the spiritual disciplines for the purpose of encouraging closer communion with God.
6. Study the Song of Solomon as a pattern for growing and deepening one’s love for God.

COURSE COMPETENCIES AND LEARNING OBJECTIVES
After completion of this course, students should be able to:
1. **Apply** the First and Greatest Commandment: loving God with all of one’s heart, mind, soul, and strength, into one’s spiritual life.
2. **Process**, for the purpose of integrating into one’s own life, major biblical passages relating to intimacy with God.
3. **Participate** in prophetic worship in relation to the overall worship experience.
4. **Practice** lectio divina within a group setting and integrate into one’s life for personal spiritual development.
5. **Reflect upon and analyze** the life of David, understanding why God called him “a man after God’s own heart”. Speaking to Saul God says, “For now your kingdom shall not continue. The Lord has sought for Himself a man after His own heart…” (I Sam. 13:14).
6. **Evidence** a deeper understanding and application of the spiritual disciplines, integrating the knowledge, principles and practices gained through the study of the required texts and classroom exercises.
7. **Contrast** the concept of ‘self-love’ to loving God wholeheartedly; of knowledge to knowing; of decreasing to increasing; applying these concepts to loving God in a deeper capacity.
8. **Discuss and examine** the “Bridal” paradigm, as presented by some classic Christian writers and found in the Song of Solomon: how this paradigm relates to God’s love for the individual and for the Church.

PROGRAM COMPETENCIES
This course contributes to the fulfillment of the following Program Competencies. Regent’s School of Divinity has set certain goals for each degree program, which it designates as Program Competencies. From the established set of competencies, your instructor has identified the following list as best effected by this course:
1. Articulate major doctrines, historical perspectives and theological issues, including those relative to the spiritual renewal as these bear on the Christian life and mission.
2. Apply spiritual formation practices to one’s personal life, to appropriate professional behavior, and to the broader context of the Church.
3. Articulate strategies for effective leadership and discipleship training for the local church.
4. Identify and implement key principles to establish dynamic worship, spiritual warfare, intercession, and the release of gifts in the context of the Church’s corporate life.

RESOURCES

Required Readings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Author/Publisher</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>After God’s Own Heart</td>
<td>Lake Mary, FL, 2004, Charisma House, Mike Bickle.</td>
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</table>

READ ONE BOOK FROM THE LIST BELOW: [You will need to order this book]

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Author/Publisher</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Having a Mary’s Heart in a Martha’s World</td>
<td>Colorado Springs, CO: Waterbrook Press, 2002, Joanna Weaver.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Fear of the Lord: Discover the Key to Intimately Knowing God</td>
<td>Lake Mary, FL: Charisma House, 1997, John Bevere.</td>
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The Holy Bible: The NKJ version is preferred, but not mandatory.

Midterm and Evaluations
Evaluating the Professor

**The professor is passionate about the subject matter.**

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<tr>
<td>5 responses</td>
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<td>1 response</td>
<td>'over and above'</td>
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**You sense that the professor cares about you inside and outside of the classroom.**

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<td>0 responses</td>
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**The professor is prepared for each lesson.**

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The professor encourages student participation.

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<td>4 responses ‘over and above’</td>
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<tr>
<td>1 response ‘all of the time’</td>
<td>0 responses ‘all of the time’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 response ‘most of the time’</td>
<td>1 response ‘most of the time’</td>
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<tr>
<td>0 responses ‘sometimes’</td>
<td>1 response ‘sometimes’</td>
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When appropriate the professor gave you the freedom within the context of the classroom to use your gifting(s).

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<td>4 responses ‘over and above’</td>
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<tr>
<td>2 responses ‘all of the time’</td>
<td>0 responses ‘all of the time’</td>
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<td>0 responses ‘sometimes’</td>
<td>1 response ‘sometimes’</td>
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<tr>
<td>1 response ‘none of the time’</td>
<td>1 response ‘none of the time’</td>
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ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS ADDED TO THE FINAL EVALUATION

The professor’s teaching evidences a good grasp of and expertise in the course subject matter.

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<th>Final Evaluation</th>
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<td>5 responses ‘over and above’</td>
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<tr>
<td>1 response ‘all of the time’</td>
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<tr>
<td>2 responses ‘most of the time’</td>
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The professor evaluates students’ work fairly and grades fairly.

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<th>Final Evaluation</th>
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<td>6 responses ‘over and above’</td>
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The professor is able to introduce, explain and teach material that is new to the class.

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<th>Final Evaluation</th>
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<tbody>
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<td>1 response ‘all of the time’</td>
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<td>1 response ‘most of the time’</td>
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<td>1 response ‘sometimes’</td>
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COURSE TOPICS

Question #1A-Midterm Evaluation

If this course was redesigned, what elements would you keep in the course?

All of the students wanted to keep the Song of Solomon study. This comment will be voiced throughout the assessment. Favorite texts were also mentioned: The texts by Mike Bickle’s *After God’s Own Heart* and Rhonda Calhoun’s *The Bride* were by far the favorite of all students. It is interesting to note that none of the students mentioned *Soul Feast* by Marjorie J. Thompson, other than in a negative light. This book didn’t seem to appeal to them and made no lasting impression. It is not included in the course revision.

The students greatly appreciated the required Scripture memory, though it was difficult for them at times. Much to my surprise Scripture memory didn’t seem to be a discipline they were accustomed to. After some investigation I found no other course required students to memorize God’s Word, with the assumption that students do this on their own. Other favorite parts of the course included the worship times, journaling, and the table fellowship after each class. Students also noted how much they appreciated and benefited from having found a spiritual director and the fact that it was a requirement for this course. Though it was difficult at times, having accountability on a weekly basis was a blessing to them. This also seemed to be an area of unfamiliarity until taking this course. All six students noted that they plan to continue to meet with their director even after the semester ended. Two others mentioned that they “loved everything about the class and would not change a thing”.

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Question #1B - Midterm Evaluation

*What element would you remove from the course?*

One of the two challenging students stated that he thought *The Bride* by Rhonda Calhoun read “like a cheap romance novel”, which I found quite surprising, since the other five students put the book at the top of their list of favorite things about the class. No one else wanted to see anything removed from the course.

Question #2 - Midterm and Final Evaluation

*So far, what has been your most significant practical experience with the Lord due to taking this course?*

**Midterm Evaluation**

One student remarked, “This class has opened my eyes to the word and it has given me good and practical training in the prophetic.” One student especially enjoyed the journaling and would often come to class with many pages written; even during our practice times I would see her “journaling without ceasing”.

Other students commented favorably on the journaling aspect of the course as well. Again, the Bickle and Calhoun texts were mentioned and how the principles outlined in the Bickle book had impacted their lives. Students mentioned once again about the new love they had found with memorizing God’s word as well as learning how to meditate on it. They appreciated the quiet times that were given to them to ruminant and chew on life-giving Scripture. This was the first time that many of them experienced meditation, probably because they had never taken the time to meet with God in this way. Two other students mentioned how wonderful it was to listen for God’s voice in a corporate setting.

**Final Evaluation**

The final evaluation was administered to the students after the retreat. This would obviously have an impact on their responses. Most students commented about the value of the time spent in solitude with the Lord. Memorization of Scripture was mentioned once again as well as learning and practicing the new forms of worship that were unfamiliar to them before this course. One student was ecstatic that she had been able to go deeper into God’s presence which she had never experienced before. The practical experiences of the students far surpassed the professor’s expectations, proving again how much a class like this is needed in a seminary environment.

Question #3 - Midterm and Final Evaluation

*On a scale of 1 to 10 how would you rate this course?*

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<td>10 = excellent</td>
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<tr>
<td>8 = above average</td>
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<tr>
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<td>4 responses</td>
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<td>3 = fair</td>
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<td>1 = poor</td>
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**Question #5 - Midterm and Final Evaluation**

*Which topic(s) in this course contributed the most to your drawing closer to the Lord?*

Knowing which topics having the greatest impact on the students’ spiritual walk was essential. This not only helped to evaluate the course and its success, but will also be helpful when revising this course for future teaching opportunities. Students clearly stated which topics proved most helpful in drawing closer to the Lord. This also indicates what should stay in the curriculum, what needs adjusting, and what might need to be eliminated altogether.

**Midterm Evaluation**

Everyone agreed that the Song of Solomon teaching was a major factor in bringing them into a more intimate relationship with the Lord. They also added that singing the Scripture and memorizing the Word of God also brought them closer into God’s presence. One student stated, “Memorizing Psalms majorly impacted my life, giving me more inner strength and added more power to my prayers.” Another student added, “Meditating on the Song of Solomon helped me draw closer to the Lord, as this reassured me how
much God loves me.” The book material was mentioned once again as a major contributor accounting for the success these students experienced. One student mentioned that she was delighted with the orchestration of the class. “It allowed more freedom to experience the different teachings.”

Final Evaluation
The Song of Solomon was once again emphasized by five of the six students. Other reoccurring areas were Scripture memory, spiritual direction, solitude, prayer—especially contemplative prayer. Two students mentioned the teachings on Spiritual Warfare and The Dark Night of the Soul stating that these teachings were helping them understand why they were experiencing pain and suffering at this point in their lives. This understanding resulted in bringing them closer to the Lord.

About the Student
Name 1 to 2 changes and amendments that you have seen in your life as a result of taking this course?

Midterm Evaluation
There were a variety of answers to this question: “I now have more patience and understanding”; “I have a renewed desire for God”; “My mind has now opened to new forms of worship”; “I am memorizing the Word more and God has increased the amount of revelation in His Word”; “I am flowing in the power gifts on a greater scale”; “I have a more disciplined prayer time now”; “I am more sensitive to God’s heart of love for me that is helping me to stop being so condemning of myself—not feeling bad about myself is making my prayer time more effective, pleasurable, and powerful”; “I need to change myself rather than judging others”; “I need to love others even when they are rebelling against me; I am learning and practicing ‘to be’ rather than ‘to do’.” “I am now practicing spiritual disciplines, especially contemplative prayer. This is so exciting for me.”

Final Evaluation
On the final evaluation one student stated, “I am now practicing lectio divina—I didn’t even know what it was before this class.” Another noted that she was singing out her praise to the Lord. She was also more comfortable with her own emotions. Another young lady shared, “I am journaling more than ever. I am beginning to see patterns and how God is speaking to me through this discipline.” One student mentioned how he was taking fasting much more seriously now, and that he planned on practicing this discipline on a regular basis from this point on. “I plan on devoting more time to God in silence so that I can hear him more fully and clearly,” quoted another student. “I am singing prophetic songs to and for God now. This is so exciting for me,” a woman in the class stated. “I love memorizing Scripture, and I plan on continuing to do this.” “I am learning to make more time for God, no matter what I have on my plate to do. He is the most important person in my life. I know that now.” “I will be increasing my time with the Lord in the mornings, in fact I already have.” The two challenging students noted that nothing had changed in their lives and that the class had no impact on them. They admitted that they were the same as they were before taking this course. I would have to agree.

Question #2- Midterm Evaluation
What 2 areas have you enjoyed the most, even though it may have come by stretching and pain?

Three students again mentioned the Song of Solomon study. Three other students mentioned memorizing Scripture as the top area they enjoyed the most. Time spent in solitude, prophetic prayer, overall worship, and the fellowship after class followed a close second. Other areas mentioned by at least one student was journaling, fasting, and the study on prayer and meditation. It was interesting that at least one student considered fasting a fun thing to do. He was definitely in the minority.

The students would often mention that before this class started many of these things would have been considered drudgery. But after taking the course they became fun and enjoyable. They confided that they had not known how to enjoy God before, but now they had entered into a wonderful relationship that they looked forward to on a daily basis.
Question #3 - Midterm and Final Evaluation

Is (has) this course causing you to hunger more for the things of God?

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<tr>
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Question #4 - Midterm and Final Evaluation

Would you recommend this course to another student?

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<tr>
<td>‘Yes’</td>
<td>5 responses</td>
<td>4 responses</td>
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<tr>
<td>‘No Comment’</td>
<td>1 response</td>
<td>2 responses</td>
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Question #5 - Midterm Evaluation

Other comments

Students were asked to freely comment about the course on the midterm evaluation. They were not given guidelines for this section since their overall comments were solicited. Their comments, without change, are listed below. “I believe this class should be a core class at Regent”; “This class has not only helped me keep my spirituality going well, but also helped me keep my sanity”; “It would be wonderful to have another course continue what this course started (part 2). I would love to spend more time meditating on the word and the material in the next class”; “A slower pace would allow us to glean more of what the Holy Spirit is saying”; “I love this course”; “I wish we could spend more time in the Song of Songs material and possibly more time in some of the Christian mystics’ teachings”; “This course has ignited a passion in my heart to draw nearer to God and enter a deeper place of intimacy with Him as a lifestyle”. The two challenging students gave a critique of how they would change and teach the class.

Question 6 - Final Evaluation

Character formation of students is a main goal of the overall Divinity program. How has this course, (overall—class sessions, assignments, your interaction with the Lord and with members of the class community), assisted you in growing in Christ-like character, as exemplified by the fruit of the Spirit (love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, meekness, temperance, faith)? Have you grown in Christ-like character?

Was this course responsible for any change in the student’s character? This was another important question that needed to be answered. All courses should have an impact in this area; this course, especially, should bring about character change since the purpose was to draw the students closer into the heart of God, and of course with that comes character change. Below are the students’ comments: “The outpouring of God’s love has increased and it has been made manifest in my life. I have grown in faith and longsuffering while searching God’s face due to the deep interaction of God’s manifest presence.” “Whereas most seminary classes are dry; this class was the definition of practical theology. This class helped me to grow not only in the Lord, but also in community.” “As a result of actual application of worship in various forms (in and outside of class—i.e. prophetic worship, contemplative prayer, silence in God, journaling, memorizing Scripture, fasting, fellowship after class, etc.) I was able to have and better maintain intimacy and fellowship with God and others throughout the semester. I believe the benefits I gained from this class will be eternal. Had the students only received the teachings instead of applying them in class, I doubt the results would have been as good or as nearly effective as they would have been for me.” “The reflective writings assignments have helped me look inside my heart and open up to God and to dig deeper into expressing myself and examining my heart. This has helped me keep a clean slate before God. The great community that has also developed in our class has been wonderful and we have been able to share and support each other in the faith because of the nature of the class. I have also been challenged in my own character in studying the Scriptures in the Song of Solomon by seeing my Father’s heart for me which makes me want to be pure and gentle and to grow in his likeness more.” One challenging students states, “I felt there was partiality and favoritism shown in the class. Also, tongues were spoken in a group
setting without interpretation. I was very uncomfortable with this.” The other challenging student states, “This is the first time I have taken a class at Regent where I felt oppressed and unable to express myself fully.”

**Final Evaluation**

4 responses  ‘Yes’
2 responses  ‘No’

**Question #7-Final Evaluation**

*Would you be interested (if your schedule allowed and the course was approved by the administration) taking another course like this one (PART 2)?*

**Final Evaluation**

4 responses  ‘Yes’
2 responses  ‘No’

**Question 8-Final Evaluation**

*What can you apply to your life right now and in the future as a result of the material that was covered in this class as well as the class experiences? Will it cause you to live differently?*

“I am going deeper now than I ever have in my intimate relationship with God as a result of the revelation of his burning heart for me that I have learned in this class. I am forever changed by this. It has made me more sensitive to his voice. I have also been challenged and tremendously blessed by our intimate worship in class, which I love, but sometimes have difficulty entering into. Now I know I can commune with the Lord “all of the time” and have been challenged to quiet myself and enter the secret place with him regularly for everything I need and to grow in my love and adoration of him.”

“What I have learned in and through this class will most definitely cause me to live differently. Through the material that was covered in the class, God has lifted me to another place in intimacy and fellowship with him and with others.”

“The prayer, worship, fasting, etc. has caused me to walk closer with the Lord.

I have increased my fasting commitment and my morning hours spent with the Lord is increasing now. I am elated.” “The understanding of the Song of Solomon has opened up a whole new chapter in my current walk with the Lord.” “Through this course I have learned that intimacy with God, if approached in the right way, can really be of benefit to a person’s spiritual growth.” “I can easily apply the Song of Solomon to my life.”

**Question #9-Final Evaluation**

*What have you found the most helpful to your spiritual growth, even though it may have come by stretching and pain?*

The Song of Solomon teaching was by far the most helpful in aiding their spiritual growth, followed by their time spent in solitude. The three-day retreat came in third followed closely by the reading material for the course. Scripture memory placed fifth and the overall worship placed sixth. Journaling, prophetic prayer, and the other teachings on “The Dark Night of the Soul” and “Spiritual Warfare”, fasting, class fellowship, and class discussion followed in the order given.

**Question #10-Final Evaluation**

*What subject has been the most difficult for you to understand and apply to your life? Please explain.*

“I thought all subject matter was applicable and explained well.” “Spiritual direction was a little hard for me to understand. I was not used to having a spiritual director but Jesus himself. I am still continuing to learn.” “I have loved and I have easily applied every subject to my life as it was introduced.” “The fasting was fairly easy at first because I was already committed to it, but when more fasting time was added then it was another story.” “I struggled with prophetic worship.” The topics needing more coverage appear to be spiritual direction and prophetic worship. Though only one student voiced this concern, it still needs to be addressed. An individual session with the student may be a good approach.
Community

Question #1-Final Evaluation
Do you feel the students and the professor have formed a strong community vs. a typical classroom situation? If you answer ‘yes’, then what explanation can you give for a student community forming like this one has?

Final Evaluation
Yes  6 responses  100%
No  0 responses  0%

Question #2-Final Evaluation
Is this strong community aspect a new experience for you in a classroom situation at Regent?
“I’ve always felt a strong sense of community at Regent.” It must be noted here that this is a paraplegic student that receives a great deal of help because of his handicap. Other students commented that “This has not been offered in other classes;” “The community was stronger in this class than in most classes;” “I also felt it in my spiritual formation classes and coaching classes, but this was much better.” “It is because of the nature of our class. The professor has made a great effort in pulling us together like a family which other professors do not. We have formed relationships with one another as a result of this, which we would not have otherwise.”
BIBLIOGRAPHY


______. *Song of Songs*. Jacksonville, FL: The SeedSowers, n.d.


