Transforming Lives at Westmont College through Solitude, Community, and Ministry

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This ministry focus paper entitled

TRANSFORMING LIVES AT WESTMONT COLLEGE
THROUGH SOLITUDE, COMMUNITY, AND MINISTRY

Written by

KATHLEEN STRUTT NOLING

and submitted in partial fulfillment of the

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Doctor of Ministry

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TRANSFORMING LIVES AT WESTMONT COLLEGE THROUGH SOLITUDE, COMMUNITY, AND MINISTRY

A DOCTORAL PROJECT
SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF THE SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY
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IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT
OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE
DOCTOR OF MINISTRY

BY

KATHLEEN STRUTT NOLING
DECEMBER 2017
ABSTRACT

Transforming Lives at Westmont College
through Solitude, Community, and Ministry
Kathleen Strutt Noling
Doctor of Ministry
School of Theology, Fuller Theological Seminary
2017

Many Christian young adults enrolling in evangelical colleges have a limited understanding of what Scripture teaches or a solid grasp of what they believe. Often, they have not developed personal practices that make space for God, and are sometimes discouraged when attempting to spend time with him.

The college years are a time in life when students establish their own beliefs and apply them to the decisions that they make in the future. It is critically important that they are confident in their relationship with God and know how their lives connect with his purposes for reconciling the world to himself. This kind of knowing takes place when the inner life is shaped to conform to Jesus’ life so that the outer life and all of its relationships are transformed. This is spiritual formation.

Spiritual formation on a Christian college campus can take place in a variety of ways, but central to its efficacy are mentors who lead by example. This project offers a plan for building a spiritual foundation into students through solitude, small group community, and outreach ministry.

While specifically written for Westmont College, its design is applicable for other Christian colleges. Part One examines the spiritual quest of the millennial generation and the particular needs and challenges at Westmont. Part Two provides a biblical and theological framework for spiritual formation. Part Three outlines a strategy for contemplative retreats, small group study, and mission outreach, and it concludes with a method for evaluating outcomes.

At a time when the Church holds little interest for millennials, even though curiosity about spirituality is growing, evangelical colleges have a tremendous opportunity to provide spiritual training that will bolster their students’ academics and give them meaning and purpose long after they graduate.

Content Reader: Paul Jensen, PhD

Words: 292
To my husband Rick, whose support and love have enabled me to complete this project, and to my daughters, Jamie Noling-Auth and Kelly Noling Dickson: I am continually blessed by your ministries and am grateful for your prayers and encouragement.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Much of what I have learned about spiritual formation has come from two people: the late Dallas Willard and his wife, Jane Willard. Dallas, your humble and gentle spirit exemplified what it means to live in Jesus’ presence. Jane, through your spiritual direction and grace you have helped me be in that presence. Thank you both for all that you have taught me and continue to teach me.
TABLE OF CONTENTS

PART ONE: MINISTRY CONTEXT

INTRODUCTION 1

Chapter 1. A CULTURE IN NEED OF TRANSFORMATION 9

Chapter 2. CREATING A CLIMATE FOR CHANGE AT WESTMONT COLLEGE 33

PART TWO: THEOLOGICAL REFLECTION

Chapter 3. BIBLICAL FOUNDATIONS FOR SPIRITUAL FORMATION 51

Chapter 4. THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS FOR SPIRITUAL MENTORING 61

PART THREE: MINISTRY STRATEGY

Chapter 5. THE DEVELOPMENT OF SMALL GROUPS AND LEADERS 76

Chapter 6. INCORPORATING SOLITUDE AND MINISTRY IN *CAPAX DEI* 89

Chapter 7. EVALUATING OUTCOMES 101

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION 110

APPENDICES 117

BIBLIOGRAPHY 144
INTRODUCTION

The inspiration for the following project came while I was serving as associate campus pastor at Westmont College, an undergraduate Christian liberal arts college in Santa Barbara, California. Founded in 1939, the college was originally located in Los Angeles and was known then as Western Bible College. It was renamed Westmont College in 1945, and when it outgrew its facilities, the college looked for a new location that could accommodate the vision of its first president, Wallace Emerson. Emerson imagined an institution that could rival the best colleges in the nation, one of academic rigor and excellence.¹

After earning its accreditation in 1958, Westmont purchased two side-by-side pieces of property in Montecito, the 125-acre Dwight Murphy estate and the Deane School for Boys.² Twenty-eight buildings have been added to the property since then, but the beauty of the original estate has been retained. Ruth Kerr, the college’s primary founder, would be pleased to see what her efforts produced if she were alive today.

Westmont is ranked among the best one hundred liberal arts colleges in the nation among other prestigious California institutions such as Harvey Mudd, Scripps, and Occidental.³

Westmont’s location also adds to its uniqueness. It is a small residential campus with approximately 1230 students, surrounded by the high hedges and estates of the rich

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² Ibid.

and famous. Within this setting, bordered by the sea to the west and statuesque mountains to the east, the school keeps a fairly low profile in order to retain the favor of a community that values its privacy and quiet. As you might imagine, that is not the easiest proposition considering the energy of college students. Yet the peaceful nature and beauty of this location is ideal for introducing students to spiritual practices that will be with them long after their college years. Spiritual formation is the work that I was called to do when I was invited to be a campus pastor in 2001.

As part of that work, I regularly met with students that sought counsel and direction. I noticed that several consistent themes emerged in my conversations with them. Most heartbreaking were the many stories that I heard of personal brokenness from abuse, addictions, family dysfunction and depression. These students wanted God’s help and healing, but felt unworthy or uncertain how to go about finding it.

Another recurrent theme was the loss of faith following a study abroad experience. Whether in an urban setting in this country or in an overseas program, their Christian worldview had been challenged or even attacked, and they were left with questions that no one was addressing. They felt isolated and angry when they returned to campus, certain that no one could understand what they had seen and experienced. In reality, there was no place where these students could gather, process their questions, vent their frustrations, and receive thoughtful, compassionate responses.

I also frequently heard about small groups that were student initiated and led, but that fell apart after a few weeks. Often this was due to a lack of solid leadership. Rather than following any kind of a focused study, these groups were often formed to provide
accountability in terms of living a Christian life, but they became little more than the “blind leading the blind” in spiritual matters.

Inherent in the above three scenarios, I heard the need that students had for “safe” communities with capable leaders, where they felt valued, could have time with God, connect faith with life, and explore their questions. As I reflected on my conversations with them and observed the campus atmosphere, I also realized that students needed quiet spaces in their lives. The demands of academia and the distractions from technological devices, peers, and extra-curricular involvements kept them from any opportunity for soul rest.

The Spiritual Transformation Inventory, a study developed by Todd Hall, a professor at Biola University’s Rosemead School of Psychology, supported and fueled some of my observations. Researching over three thousand students at forty different Christian colleges, Hall found that while students were secure spiritually, they were unpracticed. Further, relationships were the top struggle for students. Interestingly, seniors had lower spiritual vitality than freshmen. That seemed to be the opposite of what it should be.

I began to think about what strategies and changes could be implemented at Westmont in order to address these issues as well as giving students some time for quiet reflection. Years ago I read Richard Foster’s *Celebration of Discipline* and found the practices that he described to be transformative in my own life. It was a fresh introduction

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5 Ibid., 2-3.
to solitude, meditation, and prayer for me. I thought that if students could become familiar with them, if we could practice them together, they might discover God’s love and compassion at a deeper level than they had ever known.

Additionally, I knew that being part of a community of peers held a lot of appeal for this generation of young adults. It seemed that well-designed small groups meeting off campus, primarily in homes, could provide the unspoken, but longed for, connection that these students desired and needed. Further, studying and practicing “inward” disciplines in small group community has merit, but unless that knowledge is expressed through the “outward” discipline of service, the transformation process is stunted and God’s work in the world suffers. In his book, *Subversive Spirituality: Transforming Mission through the Collapse of Space and Time*, L. Paul Jensen writes, “I have looked under the hood and examined an immense problem in the Western church: the disconnect between the transmission (mission) and the engine (spirituality).” College could be a good time to make this connection.

Thinking that working with first-year students might be a good place to start, in the hope that they could be engaged for all four years, I designed a small group option for incoming freshmen in 2002 that would meet for one semester and offer one chapel credit per week. Seventy students signed up to study *Celebration of Discipline*. During the

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8 Students at Westmont are required to attend chapel three times per week. The small group option satisfied one attendance each week.
summer preceding their enrollment, faculty and staff leaders were recruited and hastily trained.

This “experiment” was a success, and most of the participants indicated that they would like to continue meeting with their groups. Their evaluations showed that studying the disciplines had indeed been eye opening and transformational. The single caveat they mentioned was that, as new students, they did not want to miss any chapel services (an enthusiasm which, unfortunately, often wanes later). The chapel credit option was removed and, ultimately, small groups were opened up to all students at Westmont. In retrospect, I believe that offering chapel credit for a temporary period of time is a great recruiting tool, but perhaps better for second-year students who are not so new to college and who may even be experiencing the “sophomore slump,” a time when the support of a focused community would be encouraging.

With promotion in chapel, on the ministry website, and by word of mouth, interest in groups grew dramatically. More administrators were needed, more leaders were recruited and trained, and “Capax Dei” was officially birthed. Capax Dei means “capable of receiving and embodying the divine life.”9 Through practicing the disciplines, guided discussion with faculty, staff, and alumni leaders, and time for silent reflection, it was hoped that these weekly small groups would begin to develop students who loved and served God.

Whenever possible, Capax Dei groups meet in homes, providing hospitality and “soul rest” for students away from campus. Each semester, groups are encouraged to take

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half-day contemplative retreats together at beaches or parks in the area for an extended time to be still and listen for God’s guidance. Optional guided meditations are provided for these retreats.

As a relatively new ministry on the campus, Capax Dei is still evolving. It began as an extension of the campus pastor’s office, but has recently received the partnership, endorsement, and participation of the new Dallas Willard Center at Westmont. This doctoral project represents a plan to help students develop spiritually through progressive small group study and the practice of the spiritual disciplines. It incorporates leadership training for students and mentor training for faculty and staff.

This doctoral project has three parts. Part One describes the postmodern era in which the millennial generation has grown up and how it has shaped their perceptions about themselves, their relationships, and their interest in spirituality. It considers their disappointment and resulting disinterest in the Church. It discusses how spiritual development during their college years can change some of those negative impressions and encourage them to use their unique gifts to re-imagine the Church. Finally, it presents the context for which this paper is written: Westmont College. This section reviews Westmont’s mission statement and the ways it is implementing that to develop students spiritually, as well as where that implementation is falling short.

Part Two explores the theological foundations for spiritual formation. It shows how Jesus’ example, the work of the Holy Spirit, and the availability and receptivity of the seeker work together to bring about transformation in a person—in solitude,

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10 The Dallas Willard Center is an ecumenical Christian outreach of Westmont College dedicated to placing an enduring emphasis on the intellectual legacy of Dallas Willard.
community, and through ministry. The importance of solitude and silence in the transformation process is also discussed. Additionally, this section examines spiritual mentoring through the lens of Scripture and how it is used to discern healthy and destructive patterns in personal development.

Part Three presents a ministry strategy for the development of small groups, training leaders and assessing learning outcomes. It outlines a plan for developing students in the spiritual life through small group interaction and practice, mentoring, and ministry outreach. The recruitment and training of faculty, staff, and alumni follows, including a discussion about training upper division students as apprentice small group leaders.

After working with college small groups for over eleven years, I have become passionate about helping students discover a deeper relationship with God through engagement with the spiritual disciplines. I have watched time and again the miraculous changes that take place in lives when they learn to discern God’s still small voice in solitude. I have been fascinated with the bonds that have been built between them in community—bonds that often last well beyond the college years. Few things can compete with the joy of seeing students grow so much spiritually that they become leaders for their younger peers, or change vocational goals so that they can better serve God. Capax Dei continues to grow and develop at Westmont College, and it has been a privilege to be a part of this important work.
PART ONE

MINISTRY CONTEXT
CHAPTER 1
A CULTURE IN NEED OF TRANSFORMATION

The Search for Spirituality

Since the end of World War II, a societal and cultural shift has been taking place. The modern era is being replaced by a postmodern one, bringing with it a new worldview that is significantly different from that of previous generations. The modern era is generally considered to be the time beginning with the invention of the printing press (1450 AD) and culminating with the end of the Baby Boom generation, around 1960.¹

Modernity was characterized by individualism, rationalism, and factualism. The autonomy of each person, confidence in the power of the mind to explore and understand reality, and the use of reason to arrive at truth were the hallmarks of this era. The mystery of the pre-modern era before it (10,000 BC to 1450 AD) was replaced by enthusiastic endorsement for the scientific method as the way to know objective truth.²

Early in the twentieth century, this modern worldview began to change. Noted writers and philosophers such as Jean Paul Sartre and Albert Camus taught that there was


² Ibid., 16-17
no meaning or purpose in life, other than existence and what was made of it.³ This, coupled with Friedrich Nietzsche’s earlier writings condemning the very idea of God and the worldview built around Christianity, set the stage for a dismal entry into postmodernism.

With the rise of Communism, the atomic bomb, assassinations of political and religious leaders, numerous wars, the energy crisis, increasing natural disasters, poverty and disease, and more recently, the attack on the World Trade Center, the former attitudes of invincibility, freedom, and trust were challenged. The modern worldview had been optimistic about the future, but in the latter half of the twentieth century, that turned sour when it became evident that life was fragile and could be destroyed in an instant. It is not surprising, then, that postmodern people are looking for something that can bring them hope.

In postmodernity, certainty was replaced by unpredictability. The pursuits of security and success were replaced by pursuits of pleasure and identity. Independence became less important than interdependence. And the questions of spirituality moved from “Is there a God?” to a more pluralistic “Which God?” or “We are all God.”

Postmodernity

Since religion was devalued in modernity, Christianity became just one of many options from which people could choose. In postmodernity, those options multiplied with the belief that whatever is true for each individual is fine—there is no absolute truth. In a

recent Barna Research study, Americans were asked if they believed in absolute truth, and 76 percent said no. A surprising 67 percent of born-again Christians said the same.4

Broadcaster and writer Dick Staub suggests that spiritual sensibilities have been numbed by spiritual relativism:

Today’s spiritual delusions are the product of misguided beliefs embedded in the sixties credo: I am the supreme arbiter of all things. Experience is better than reason. Feelings trump traditional mores. If it feels good, do it. Relativism trumps absolutes. There is no truth; there is only what is true for you in a given situation. Expression is more important than imaginative capacity or beauty. All authority and every institution must be questioned. You can’t trust anybody over thirty.5

Staub then expands on what some of the spiritual delusions are. He suggests that most expressions of “spiritual seeking” are either atheistic or agnostic, not requiring God. Exotic religions are acceptable, such as Kabbalah or Buddhism, but Judaism and Christianity are “passé.” Actually, any kind of “mix-and-match” deity that suits one’s lifestyle is acceptable. Spirituality is good, religion is bad, and essentially there is no right or wrong.6

Another ideological offspring of the 1960s is what Christian Smith calls “moralistic therapeutic deism.” In his 2005 thought-provoking study of teens, Soul Searching: The Religious and Spiritual Lives of American Teenagers, Smith concludes that the shared religion of American teens is one in which people are promised that therapeutic benefits, such as a happy life and heaven, can be achieved through good,

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6 Ibid., 23-25.
moral, kind, nice, pleasant behavior. In this view, God is distant and uninvolved, religion is peripheral, and beliefs are loosely held.

Five years later, following the same teenagers originally interviewed, Smith found that the moral therapeutic deism mindset was still very much alive with “emerging adults” (now ages eighteen to twenty-three). However, because they were older with more experience, and not as reliant on their parents’ faith, there were some differences. Those who had faith were more clear and definite about their faith convictions. The irreligious emerging adults showed heightened disbelief in and disrespect, even hostility, toward religion. Those who were open showed a strong interest in “the possibility of life-engaging spiritual realities.”

The convictions that arise from these young adults help explain what this generation believes about religion. Perhaps these are best summarized by one interviewee in Smith’s study:

Being spiritual seems almost like a more individual thing to me. You can be spiritual and be religious, be spiritual through religion, or you can just be spiritual on your own, or you could be religious and not be spiritual, like you go to church every week but you could really care less—you’re just doing it to go through the motions. So I guess that’s what I think about it.

The Postmodern Generations

The first two generations to enter the postmodern world are Gen X (or Baby Busters) and the millennial generation (also called Gen Yers or mosaics). Though

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9 Ibid., 156.
opinions vary about the beginning of each generation, it is generally agreed that Gen Xers were born between 1961 and 1981, and millennials between 1982 and 2000.\(^\text{10}\) While this study focuses primarily on the millennials (given this title because the first wave graduated from high school in the year 2000), mention needs to be made of the generation that proceeds them because certain characteristics of Gen X have influenced or impacted the attitudes and practices of their younger counterparts.

The rapid changes in the world mentioned previously deeply affected Gen X, but perhaps even more unsettling was the breakdown of the traditional family. Many grew up in single-parent families, were placed in day care, or became “latch key kids,” kids who were alone after school until their parents got home from work. With the passing of Roe vs. Wade in 1973, they were the most aborted generation in history. All of these factors made them feel isolated and unloved as a group and anxious to develop lasting relationships within small groups of friends. A case could be made that the television show “Friends” (1994-2004), with its hit song “I’ll Be There for You,” was so successful because it identified a yearning in the then twenty- and thirty-somethings. Friends filled the void that family left behind.

Gen X was the first in several generations to be poorer than their parents. With the severity of the recession, it is likely that the millennials will not enjoy the prosperity that their parents have either. Nevertheless, the vast majority of millennials (88 percent)

expect to earn enough in the future to live a good life, compared with only 76 percent of Gen Xers who felt the same way.\(^ {11}\)

Gen X was the first generation to enter the technological age, but the millennials have never known anything different, fusing their social lives into the gadgets that they maintain to bring family and friends closer. They are history’s first “always connected” generation. As with Gen X, millennials have a tendency to believe that there are few absolutes. They equate absolutes with being close minded or bigoted. Instead, everyone is entitled to believe what he or she wishes, and, they might add, “It’s all good.”

The Millennials

The millennials are more optimistic about the future and their ability to bring positive change into it. According to a 2010 study done by the Pew Research Center called *Millennials: A Portrait of Generation Next*, these young adults are “confident, self-expressive, liberal, upbeat, and open to change.”\(^ {12}\) Their confidence may stem from the fact that they have been raised in a more secure environment than Xers, one where they have been wanted and nurtured, maybe even overwhelmingly so. Parents of this generation are sometimes referred to as “helicopter parents,” or parents who hover over their children in an overly protective or directive manner.

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\(^ {12}\) Ibid., 1.
There are approximately 76 million people in the millennial generation, the second largest in American history.\(^\text{13}\) According to Neil Howe and William Strauss in their groundbreaking study, *Millennials Rising*, their impact will reflect much more than their numbers:

There’s a revolution under way among today’s kids—a good news revolution. This generation is going to rebel by behaving not worse, but better. Their life mission will not be to tear down old institutions that don’t work, but to build up new ones that do. Look closely at youth indicators, and you’ll see that millennial attitudes and behaviors represent a sharp break from Generation X, and are running exactly counter to trends launched by the Boomers. Across the board, millennial kids are challenging a long list of common assumptions about what “postmodern” young people are supposed to become.\(^\text{14}\)

While Howe and Strauss do not mention the spirituality of these young adults in the book, their research indicates that this is a generation to pay attention to because its influence will be considerable.

Millennials place parenthood and marriage above career and financial success. They are decidedly more traditional than their elders, both in their lifestyle and their attitudes.\(^\text{15}\) According to a Gallup survey, they are less likely to use alcohol, tobacco, and marijuana than their parents, and less likely to approve of sex before marriage or having children out of wedlock.\(^\text{16}\) Yet curiously, Pew Research estimates that in 2006, more than one third of the eighteen- to twenty-nine-year-old women who gave birth were

\(^{13}\) Howe and Strauss, *Millennials Rising: The Next Great Generation*, 14

\(^{14}\) Ibid., 7.


\(^{16}\) Ibid.
unmarried, much higher than earlier generations.\textsuperscript{17} Pew Research also reports that they are more likely to be cohabiting with a partner, their numbers include more mothers of young children in the workforce than ever before, and they are the first generation to favor the legalization of gay marriage. But their tolerance does not translate into outright approval, as only 34 percent describe any of these trends as good for society. “Tolerant” is one of the key descriptors of these young adults, yet they believe in absolute standards of right and wrong.\textsuperscript{18}

Pew also found that the millennials are on track to be the most educated generation in American history. The scarcity of jobs has driven record numbers toward community and four-year colleges, as well as graduate schools. More than one third depend on financial support from their families, and many of them have moved back in (“boomeranged”) with those families because it is too expensive and the economy is too unpredictable to live on their own. Fortunately, they get along with and respect their parents much better than Gen Xers did.\textsuperscript{19}

They have been called the “Sunshine Generation,” not only because they like their parents, but because they are generally congenial toward all people, whether young or old, rich or poor, of a different race, or an alternative lifestyle. Their concern for others extends internationally to the orphans, widows, homeless, hungry, and violated. Issues related to justice are immensely important to this generation. However, their acceptance

\textsuperscript{17} The Pew Research Center, \textit{Millennials: A Portrait of Generation Next}.

\textsuperscript{18} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{19} Ibid.
and empathy are tempered by caution toward human nature, born out of the terror they see all around them every day.

That caution may contribute to their feelings about religion, as well. According to *Millennials: A Portrait of Generation Next*, these young adults are twice as likely to be unaffiliated with any particular faith as their parents’ generation and much less likely to consider religion an important part of their lives. One in five under age thirty, or 18 percent, have left the religion of their upbringing without reconnecting with a new faith. Despite what some would consider a downward trend, millennials are fairly traditional in their religious beliefs and practices. While they are less inclined than older adults to view the Bible as the literal Word of God, 45 percent indicate that they pray daily, 75 percent believe in life after death, 74 percent believe in heaven, and 33 percent attend worship services at least once a week.²⁰

Millennials often say that they are “spiritual but not religious.” For many, the two are simply not synonymous. Religion is usually equated with human-made laws and dogma institutionalized by certain groups. Spirituality is the view that personal belief in a higher power or Supreme Being is not necessarily associated with any particular religious institution or orientation, but it is the quest for one’s self-essence or sense of purpose in society. This separation between religion and spirituality represents an interesting cultural shift that has infiltrated institutions of higher education, influencing students in both secular and religious colleges.

Millennials in College

In a seven-year study done by the UCLA Higher Education Research Institute entitled *Overall Findings: Spirituality in Higher Education: Students’ Search for Meaning and Purpose*, students were surveyed to determine what they thought of spirituality, its role in their lives, and how they view spirituality in regards to their higher education experience. Of those interviewed, 80 percent indicated that they had a great interest in spirituality, while 76 percent said they were searching for meaning and purpose in life. The research was collected from 14,527 juniors attending 136 colleges and universities nationwide in 2010 following an initial study of 112,000 freshmen in 2004. The researchers report,

> It is our shared belief that the findings provide a powerful argument for the proposition that higher education should attend more to students’ spiritual development, because spirituality is essential to students’ lives. Assisting students’ spiritual growth will help create a new generation who are more caring, more globally aware, and more committed to social justice than previous generations, while also enabling students to respond to the many stresses and tensions of our rapidly changing technological society with a great sense of equanimity.

The research found that self-reflection and meditation are “among the most powerful tools for enhancing students’ spiritual development,” facilitating growth in their academic and leadership skills, contributing to their intellectual self-confidence and psychological well-being, and enhancing their satisfaction with college.

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22 Ibid.

23 Ibid.
The premise of this doctoral project is that millennial students in evangelical Christian colleges are on a spiritual quest, looking for that which will give them hope and help them make sense of their lives. They look to, and even expect, that those in positions of influence on their college and university campuses will help them do that. However, as found by the *Overall Findings: Spirituality in Higher Education* study, educators, whether in religiously or non-religiously affiliated colleges, are often reluctant to address questions related to spirituality because they consider them “too personal” or “not appropriate” for the classroom. They fear that in some way it would compromise the intellectual integrity of the institution or its central mission. They believe that such questions are better left to churches or other religious organizations that are equipped to handle them. However, spirituality certainly can and should be addressed on campus, both in and outside of the classroom. It is questionable whether the Church recognizes the needs of students, and even if it does, whether students will look to the Church for what they seek.

**The Church and “Christianity-Lite”**

It is important for the Church to know how it is viewed by millennials, and the perceptions that cause those who have never stepped foot in a church to stay away. Sarah Cunningham, herself a millennial, offers three insights in her book, *Dear Church: Letters from a Disillusioned Generation*:

First, many twentysomethings doubt the church’s claim to be inclusive. In fact, many of them think the church is exclusive to a fault. Second, some balk at infractions that seem to undermine “authenticity” in how the church presents itself. Finally, some question whether attending a local church has anything to do
with a person’s faith. They wonder if sitting in a sanctuary once a week is a valid marker of transformation or spiritual growth.24

The Church is perceived as being exclusive if it does not actively seek a relationship with all people, regardless of age, ethnic, sexual, or economic differences. This generation is concerned with accepting and bridging diversity. Unfortunately, most congregations are fairly homogeneous, which feels limiting and perhaps even elitist to young adults. Equally troubling is that they are often not included. There may be a ministry set aside for their age group, but when it comes to inclusion in the life and fellowship of the church community, young adults are often on the outside looking in. Congregations that successfully engage millennials are those that develop intergenerational ministries and small groups that welcome them and the strengths they bring.

Second, Cunningham states that millennials want to see “authenticity” in the Church. They want to know that Christians, both pastors and parishioners, live what they believe. Instead, according to a Barna Research study on the perceptions of young adults who are outside the Church, what they see turns them away. Among the most unfavorable images of the Church cited in this study were that it is anti-homosexual, judgmental, hypocritical, insensitive to others, and intolerant of other faiths.25 Just 16 percent said they have a “good impression” of Christianity, and apparently that percentage is eroding. Yet, as Dan Kimball points out, most people outside of the Church do not see or meet the average Christian, and their impressions may be built on unreliable or biased sources:

24 Sarah Cunningham, Dear Church: Letters from a Disillusioned Generation (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2006), 25.

Like many people in the early church era, today’s emerging generations don’t know Christianity. They don’t know the difference between Baptists, Methodists, or Episcopalians. They see the more vocal and right-wing Evangelical Christian leaders being interviewed on news shows, and to many people, they represent all of Christianity. Most who have grown up outside of the church have impressions of Christians based only on television, or on occasional encounters with Christians handing out tracts and telling them they are going to hell, or on seeing Christians standing outside of rock concerts with lists of sins on big signs and shouting through megaphones that everyone passing by won’t find God in the concert. We have the reputation of being right-wing, fundamentalist, finger-pointing, judgmental individuals. While some Christians might fit those categories, most of us don’t. Sadly, the most vocal and aggressive voices that people are familiar with do.26

Finally, Cunningham and her peers wonder whether sitting in a pew each Sunday has anything to do with a person’s faith. Coupled with the concerns about authenticity, there is the question of whether simply attending a church changes the way a person thinks about God, himself or herself, and others. They wonder whether dispensing or receiving information about the Bible changes a person’s words and actions.

In a five-year project headed by The Barna Group, six additional reasons for disenchantment with the Church were given by young adults who had attended church during their teen years.27 Some of the reasons are related to those mentioned above, yet all give insight into why nearly three of every five young Christians disconnect either permanently or for an extended period of time after age of fifteen.28 At the top of the list is the complaint that churches are overprotective, making much of the experience of

26 Dan Kimball, *They Like Jesus but Not the Church: Insights from Emerging Generations* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2007), 32.


Christianity feel stifling, fear based, and risk averse. One quarter of the eighteen- to twenty-nine-year-old respondents said that “Christians demonize everything outside of the church.” 29

The second reason for disenchantment with the Church was that they felt that their experience in church was shallow. Some of the respondents reported being bored, others that the teaching was not relevant to their careers or interests, and others that the Bible was not taught clearly or often enough. Sadly, one fifth said that “God seems missing from my experience of church.” 30

The third reason given relates to how the Church handles questions of science. For a generation that is quite interested in science-related industries, it is unfortunate that one third of those polled felt that churches are antagonistic to science. Some said that “Christians are too confident that they know all of the answers,” while others believed “churches are out of step with the world we live in.” 31 Almost one fourth of those polled (23 percent) said they have “been turned off by the creation-versus-evolution debate.” 32

Fourth, when it comes to issues of sexuality, young adults believe that the Church is often simplistic and judgmental. With unregulated access to digital pornography and immersed in a culture that promotes promiscuity, Christian young adults particularly struggle to determine how to live with the Church’s expectations of chastity and sexual purity, especially given the fact that they are marrying later. With research indicating that

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29 Barna, “Six Reasons.”
30 Ibid.
31 Ibid.
32 Ibid.
most young Christians are as sexually active as their non-Christian peers,\textsuperscript{33} the perception of condemnation from the Church is debilitating and dismissive, causing them to gravitate toward those outside of the Church that are more accepting.

The fifth reason for disenchantment with the Church, as cited in the Barna study, agrees with Cunningham’s concern: the exclusive nature of Christianity. When it comes to race, ethnicity, sexuality, religion, and sources of authority, this is a very eclectic generation. They desire finding common ground with each other, even at the cost of glossing over differences. Some felt that “churches are afraid of the beliefs of other faiths,” while others mentioned that “Church is like a country club, only for insiders.”\textsuperscript{34}

Finally, the Barna research found that the Church feels unfriendly to those who doubt. Many of those polled said that they do not feel safe admitting that Christianity does not always make sense. A large segment, 23 percent, admitted to having “significant intellectual doubts about faith,” but felt that their questions were often met with trivialized answers.\textsuperscript{35} For one sixth of those polled, their faith “does not help with depression or other emotional problems” that they experience—a concern that needs to be taken seriously by all who work with this generation.\textsuperscript{36}

The world for millennials has changed in significant ways, but overall the Church has continued to minister to a conventional population that no longer exists—one where following the typical path of leaving home, getting an education, finding a job, getting

\textsuperscript{33} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{34} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{35} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{36} Ibid.
married, and having kids was the norm. Today’s young adults delay the latter and may do these things in a completely different order. Their opinions and commitments are different because they have remarkable access to the “global village” and its worldviews through rapidly expanding technology. They are skeptical of authority and institutions that have disappointed them, and that skepticism extends to external authority, including Christianity and the Bible.37

Churches that cultivate intergenerational faith communities (or small groups) for studying, sharing, and growing together will be the ones that speak into this generation. But these groups must be for more than acquiring knowledge and comfort—they must produce commitment and application. Communities where there is mutuality, where the young and old can learn from each other and partner on the holiness journey, will be much more appealing to millennials than the old hierarchical approach of “passing down the baton of faith.” Young adults desire to be part of a community where they are included and valued. They want mentors who are transparent and authentic. Fortunately, some churches have adopted a new paradigm and are beginning to rethink how they care for this generation.

Santa Barbara Community, a non-denominational church near Westmont College, is doing this well. Approximately 90 percent of the congregation are in “home groups” that meet at various times throughout the week to study Scripture relating to the following week’s sermon. The groups are intentionally designed to be intergenerational. In the group my husband and I participated in, ages ranged from eighteen to eighty-three.

Young adults shared along with everyone else in the leadership and were actively sought out in the discussion. If they were absent, it did not go unnoticed. Not surprisingly, Santa Barbara Community has a large millennial attendance.

St. Andrew’s Presbyterian Church in Newport Beach brings the generations together in a different way—over meals. “Dinners for Ten” was designed to get everyone in the church connected, and young adults in the congregation are active participants. Each group meets monthly, meal preparation is shared, and there are optional questions on the table that help participants learn one another’s stories. “Dinners for Ten” is yet another creative way that millennials are invited into the life of the church, where they can benefit from the friendship, wisdom, and faith of older generations. Unfortunately, not enough churches are experimenting with ways to welcome millennials, nor are they preparing the youth who have been raised in the church for the challenges they will face during the college years.

Sadly, 40 to 50 percent of all youth group graduates do not stick with their faith or connect with a faith community after high school.38 The Fuller Youth Institute identified three reasons for this. First, teenagers need to “rub shoulders and build relationships” with adults of all ages, some of whom may serve as intentional mentors. It is not enough for them simply to attend groups and activities. They need role models that will take a personal interest in them and the questions they have. Second, though families and churches may assume their seniors are ready to go off to college, only one in seven feel they are ready to face the challenges of college life, which include loneliness or even

knowing how to look for a new church. The way they resolve these issues in the first two weeks of freshman year often sets the course they will follow throughout their college careers. Third, the Church needs to focus less on behavior adjustment for teens and more on helping them be spiritually formed. Otherwise, when they enter college, if they fail to live up to the kinds of activities they think define Christianity, their guilt may cause them to abandon their faith completely.  

Christian college campuses have a tremendous opportunity to help bridge the gap that has been left by the Church. They are, by nature, places where community is developed, dialogue is anticipated, and mentors who offer training are available. It should be safe, if not welcomed, to express doubt and questions. These colleges cannot take the place of the Church, but they can assist in helping students make the transition from acquired faith (from parents) to a personal faith that is able to grapple with the questions and bring fresh insight, creativity, and leadership to the church.

**Young Evangelicals**

Like those of their generation, young evangelicals are searching for spirituality, but their search is based within the context and foundational truths of the Christian faith. However, they are willing and perhaps even anxious to consider a broader understanding of the faith than they have learned at home or church. As Robert Webber writes in his book, *The Younger Evangelicals*, “In order for younger evangelicals to affirm the

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39 Ibid.
Christian story, they realize they must embrace the past.”

Myron Penner, in his book, Christianity and the Postmodern Turn, suggests that examining the spiritual practices of the pre-modern era provides some clues about the things that this generation of Christians are attracted to. Penner draws three parallels between the spiritual climate of postmoderns and pre-moderns. The first deals with mystery and transcendence. Penner writes, “In pre-modernity rational thought begins with an attitude of wonder. . . . The source and ground of the human being’s rational thought lies beyond oneself. . . . There is a sense of awe and mystery, and even gratitude, that accompanies premodern philosophic reflection.” Wonder, awe, mystery, and gratitude are incorporated in the philosophical orientation of postmodern generations. In the ancient world, as with young adults today, the nature and character of God as transcendent reinforces the biblical picture of who God is. The early Church functioned with an extraordinary awe and reverence toward God and the ways that he engaged with humans. The two elements of transcendence and mystery can be a bridge that will help young evangelicals find the roots of their own faith.

Penner’s second parallel deals specifically with the disillusionment felt today with the modern influences of rationalism on faith. As mentioned earlier, postmoderns are suspicious of science and reason. Penner believes that the breach between faith and


41 Myron Penner, Christianity and the Postmodern Turn: Six Views (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2005).

42 Ibid.
reason can be repaired and recovered by working from a pre-modern frame of reference, where the life of faith and the life of reason are “entirely consonant.”

The third parallel stresses the importance that this generation places on community: “The life of reason is a communal event. Philosophic reflection takes place within a like-minded community. The ontology of human being—that is, the sort of creature a human is—matters a great deal to the way in which reason is characterized. For the pre-modern philosopher, a human life achieved its unity in its harmonious relations within a community.” Wonder, mystery, gratitude, and community are all concepts that this generation understands and desires, but for young evangelicals who are, in varying degrees, pursuing a deeper relationship with God, they are of particular interest.

While younger believers are drawn to more ancient forms of spirituality, they also have renewed interest in the sacramental. Webber explains that evangelicals traditionally avoid the word “sacrament” because they equate it with Catholicism. For young evangelicals, however, a recovery of the sacramental relates to the interest in its meaning. Through the ecclesial sacraments (confirmation, confession, marriage, ordination, and healing) and dominical sacraments (eucharist and baptism), they seek to experience and partake in the mystery and holiness of God.

For younger believers, Webber explains that embracing the Kingdom of God takes a less orthodox path than that followed by their predecessors. They are recovering the sacredness of time because many of them realize that time has been secularized.

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43 Ibid., 21.
44 Ibid., 22.
45 Webber, The Younger Evangelicals, 180.
Christian year, particularly the observation of the seasons of Advent and Lent (including Ash Wednesday), has taken on new meaning for them, along with such practices as the daily office and spiritual pilgrimage. Mike Yaconelli, a pioneer in youth ministries, summarizes this divergence: “What young people long for is not to be told about God, not to be told about the spiritual life, but to get a chance to taste it for themselves.” They “taste” through the use of imagination, the telling of stories, *lectio divina*, walking labyrinths, symbolism, and the elevation and appreciation of the arts, because the creative and the experiential lead these young adults into the very presence of God.

In sum, younger evangelicals desire . . . a piety that has the force of tradition behind it, a piety that is communal and participated in by Christians always and everywhere, a piety characterized by structure and freedom. They are finding this kind of spirituality in the ancient, more enduring forms of piety discarded by the modern, innovative boomer leaders. This piety, that of ancient and medieval Christianity, draws young people like a magnet.

**Addressing the Need and Spiritual Formation**

It would be easy to imagine that Christian colleges and universities are aware of the spiritual needs of their students and are doing their best to address them, but in reality many colleges assume that their focus is primarily academic, while spiritual needs should be left to the Church. Yet, as mentioned earlier, believing and non-believing millennials alike have been disappointed by the Church. They may be more inclined to find other outlets for their spiritual questions, and many of those outlets can lead them so far astray that they might never encounter the gospel.

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46 Mike Yaconelli, as quoted in Webber, *The Younger Evangelicals*, 183.

47 Ibid., 185.
At a pivotal time in students’ faith development, Christian colleges have a tremendous opportunity to influence that development by offering experiences that will help their students connect with God and with one another in meaningful ways. By their very nature, Christian colleges and universities are places where new ideas about God are explored, reflection is encouraged, and relationships are developed. It is possible, in fact, that these might be among the best places to reach a generation that wants a different experience of God.

Every four to five years during the first decade of the new millennium, the Ivy Jungle Network surveyed staff members of parachurch, denominational, and local church-based college student ministries in an attempt to track trends and shifts in college ministry. In the most recent 2008 report surveying 660 respondents, students were described as being cause oriented, spiritually hungry, and eager for community. Yet these staff members also reported that one of the primary challenges faced by students was knowing how to integrate faith into all areas of life. In an earlier Ivy Jungle study (2005), it was also discovered that developing passion for God and growing in an intimate walk with God were also challenges.

In his research on the millennial generation, Jensen has found that millennials, like their predecessors, have experienced a deep sense of abandonment and loneliness, even though their parents “hovered” and kept them involved in endless activities. As a result, they need to know that “nothing can separate them from the love of God” (Romans

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49 Jensen, Subversive Spirituality, 251.
The overscheduled experience of this generation has also created a sense of time urgency in which spending time with God is perceived by many as unrealistic. Therefore, Jensen observes, learning to create space for silence and solitude with God is critical. Yet, adds Jensen, “periodically slowing and stopping the addictive pace of this generation so it can rest will be impossible without divine intervention and the support of a caring community.” That community, he insists, can be a safe environment where they are listened to and loved and where mistrust of God can be addressed, and with grace, dissolved.

Mature guides, sacred space, and community are all important elements in reaching this hurried and lonely generation of seekers, and Jeremiah 6:16 offers the key: “Stand at the crossroads and look; ask for the ancient paths, ask where the good way is, and walk in it, and you will find rest for your souls.” It is the ancient paths, as Penner and others suggest, that Christian millennials are intrigued by and gravitate toward, and it is the ancient practices found within that will help them connect with God. These ancient practices, or spiritual disciplines, create space to be with and learn from God, but they require slowing in a culture that craves instant gratification. Such disciplines as solitude, silence, listening prayer, meditation, and rest are alien in this culture, but they will reach deeply into the soul of this generation to bring God’s healing and love.

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50 All biblical references in this project are taken from the New International Version, unless otherwise noted.

Conclusion

Dallas Willard comments, “Spiritual formation for the Christian [is] the Spirit-driven process of forming the inner world of the human self in such a way that it becomes like the inner being of Christ Himself.”\textsuperscript{52} The focus of this project is to provide tools for Christian millennials at Westmont College that will equip them so that their inner world might be formed to that of Christ. This will be done by creating small group communities that study and practice spiritual disciplines together under the direction of trained mentors and through intentional ministry in the community. The next chapter discusses Westmont’s mission statement and the discrepancy between what it desires and what is currently in place. It considers curricular and co-curricular impediments to spiritual formation and how organized small group ministry will be instrumental in effecting change.

\textsuperscript{52} Dallas Willard, Class notes, “Spirituality and Ministry,” June 2007, Fuller Theological Seminary, Pasadena, California.
CHAPTER 2
CREATING A CLIMATE FOR CHANGE AT WESTMONT COLLEGE

This chapter explores the culture of Westmont College, particularly its mission as it relates to the spiritual development of students. Various challenges are then discussed, including the ways in which spiritual formation is limited both in the classroom and within student life. The chapter concludes with a presentation of Capax Dei, a relatively recent ministry at Westmont College that focuses on mentor-based spiritual formation.

The Mission of Westmont College

A college’s mission statement should provide a sense of direction, describing where it wants to go and the kind of impact that it wants to have on its students. It helps faculty, administration, parents, and students have a sense of what the college is trying to accomplish.¹ In brief, the mission statement exerts significant influence on the spiritual journey of students.

According to Westmont’s profile, “The mission of Westmont College is to provide a high quality undergraduate liberal arts program in a residential campus

community that assists college men and women toward a balance of rigorous intellectual
competence, healthy personal development, and strong Christian commitments.”

Another document entitled “What Do We Want for Our Graduates?” is more specific
about the desire for Christian commitment:

Graduates of Westmont College should have a biblical and theological
understanding and appreciation of worship and spiritual formation that exceed
what can be acquired at a secular university supplemented by campus Christian
fellowships and active participation in a local church. They should have a vision
of Christianity that is as large and developed as their disciplinary and professional
sophistication.  

While these are good goals, the path for accomplishing them is unclear. Much of the
understanding and appreciation of worship comes with participation in the thrice weekly
required chapel services on campus augmented by classroom instruction in certain
religious studies courses. Certainly this is an important part of spiritual formation, but
more is needed to address the interior work of transformation in the individual student, as
the following study indicates.

In 2013, Westmont participated in a thirteen-school “Christian Life Survey”
coordinated through Taylor University’s Center for Scripture Engagement. The survey
measured levels of involvement in various spiritual disciplines: levels of Scripture
engagement; focus on God; focus on others; and Christian identity. At the time,
Westmont enrollment was 1262, and 502 students participated from across the classes of
2013 to 2016, with a 40 percent response rate. Results were reported in the “Assessment

2 Westmont, “College Profile.”

westmont.edu/_offices/institutional_portfolio/documents/Whatdowewantforourgraduates.pdf.
of Christian Understandings, Practices, and Affections” (hereafter, CUPA),\textsuperscript{4} and a faith-learning faculty roundtable was established for making future recommendations.

The research found that while students had a “high and widespread Christian commitment, expressed primarily in relational and service-oriented acts,” many mentioned that they rarely reflect upon or discuss Scripture passages regularly and were even unsure of how much of the Bible to believe. The researchers also found, “Almost all Westmont students call themselves ‘Bible believing’ and call the Bible ‘the authoritative Word of God’ . . . but they are much less insistent that the Bible has decisive authority over what they say and do.”\textsuperscript{5} The evaluation notes that Westmont students have “diminishing contemplation and biblical practices” and that graduating seniors “think less about God than first-year students, lacking the confidence in their faith that would motivate further growth.”\textsuperscript{6}

These students have taken the required religious studies courses during their years at Westmont, and some have probably majored in religious studies. They observe the chapel attendance requirement. Some have gone on spring break mission trips, participated in San Francisco’s Urban Program, or traveled abroad for a semester in Europe or some other international learning experience. Others have been in dorm Bible studies, participated in topical seminars, or been in leadership, yet somehow the


\textsuperscript{5} Ibid., 2.

\textsuperscript{6} Ibid., 1.
development of a faith that is passionate and reflective, one that is firmly rooted in Scripture, has eluded them.

Westmont’s students are not so different from other Christian college students. Dr. Todd Hall, a professor at Biola’s Rosemead School of Psychology, developed a research project in 2004 entitled the “Spiritual Transformation Inventory” (hereafter, STI) that measured twenty-two indicators of students’ spiritual lives. With over three thousand students from nearly forty Christian colleges participating, Hall found that students are secure, but unpracticed spiritually. Hall concludes,

First, I think the secure connection to God, sense of meaning and Christian perspective are noteworthy good news. Despite the instability and struggles of this stage, the breakdown of the family and increasing rates of emotional problems among children and college students, students attending Christian colleges have a secure connection with God, which is the foundation for spiritual development.

Despite this good news, students at Christian colleges are generally not practicing their faith in a substantial way. Why might this be? It may be partly due to busyness, which was the most frequently reported struggle. It may also be that students feel that spiritual input is built into their environment so they don’t need to be intentional about it.7

At Westmont, twenty-two recommendations were made by the faculty roundtable formed to address the issues found in the CUPA study. Interestingly, few of them suggested co-curricular solutions to strengthen student spiritual development (see Appendix A). The presumption seemed to be that spiritual formation, as mentioned in “What Do We Want for Our Graduates?” should primarily happen within the curricular realm. And yet, for education to be holistic, both are necessary and strengthen one another. In their book, Putting Students First: How Colleges Develop Students Purposefully, Larry Braskamp, Lois Trautvetter, and Kelly Ward contend,

7 Todd Hall, “Spirituality at a Crossroads,” Biola Magazine (Fall 2010).
A recurring theme from our research is the importance of out-of-class environments for helping students make meaning of their interior lives, making use of the exterior programs in place. Higher education is one of the central institutions for young adults in today’s world and college campuses are unique places to help students grapple with their purpose in life and the role of a college education in helping them realize their purpose.  

As mentioned above, students at Westmont are exposed to a wide variety of both curricular and co-curricular opportunities during their years in college, and certainly many of these offer spiritual formation elements. But there is little opportunity for students to learn spiritual practices within a safe community that will help them experience God at a deeper level.

**Curricular Limitations**

There are a number of reasons why the classroom cannot adequately teach spiritual practices and provide a safe environment for experiencing God. First of all, unless curriculum is specifically designed to teach spiritual formation, professors are limited by the amount of time they may devote to spiritual exercises while completing the academic requirements for each course. If any time is allotted for spiritual practices, it may be only for a brief devotion or prayer.

Second, professors themselves may not have adequate training or maturity in their Christian faith to explore the deeper questions or facilitate experiences that will be transformational for students. Even at a Christian college, some professors are not comfortable discussing matters of faith with students, as they view this as a personal

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matters or one that the church should address. A. W. Astin and H. S. Astin, in their book, *Meaning and Spirituality in the Lives of College Faculty*, explain,

> While faculty and administrators see a need for greater involvement with students, they are unclear about how to proceed, since most faculty have not been trained or socialized in graduate school to relate to students in a more holistic way. Faculty are also fearful of being intrusive in the private lives of students, first amendment rights, and that they will be viewed as too sympathetic and thus soft on students.⁹

The third challenge is that it is difficult to develop the kind of community within the classroom that will welcome a depth of sharing, inspire trust, and give space for listening to God. Again, time constraints and curricular agendas tend to limit developing such bonds. As mentioned earlier, millennials “yearn to belong to a community. . . . They crave genuine relationships and authentic friendships. Some are hoping for the home they never had.”¹⁰ This kind of community is very difficult to achieve in the classroom for myriads of reasons.

Many Christian colleges have adopted a faith integration plan for classroom instruction. Such plans encourage the rigorous expression of Christian thought as it intersects with the subject being studied. The interpretation of this depends on the way that each professor prepares his or her content. To date, Westmont has not adopted a faith integration plan for its academics. However, even if it had such a plan, it would be hard to imagine that the classroom could substantially address the need that students have for spiritual formation without the rigorous spiritual formation of faculty and training to help them learn how to teach their subject matter formationally.

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Co-Curricular Limitations

At Westmont, most co-curricular opportunities fall under the administration of the Student Life department. These include chapel, residence life, leadership, immersion experiences, service projects, and clubs, and they partner with academics to provide for the holistic development of students. Each of these co-curricular areas offer experiences that contribute to spiritual development in positive ways, but they lack one or more of the components that bring about transformation in the inner life: solitude, community, and ministry.

Chapel at Westmont is perhaps the most visible place for spiritual training on campus. Chapel meets three mornings each week for fifty minutes in the gymnasium. The primary focus of chapel is worship, which is led by the campus pastor, a student band, and speakers from inside and outside of the college. Attendance is required for students, and there are always faculty and staff members present as well. The campus pastor describes the centrality of chapel this way:

Worship services at Westmont are like leaven or salt in our community. Though they make up only a tiny portion of our life together, they affect everything else we do. In chapel we sanctify a part for the sake of the whole. We worship God in chapel so that we may worship and serve him everywhere else—in the classroom, the laboratory, the dorm, and the dining commons. Chapel services, gatherings of thanksgiving and praise to God, and the hearing of the Word of God are integral to the Westmont experience.¹¹

There is little doubt that students are shaped by what they hear and experience in chapel. Messages and music are orchestrated to elevate God’s Word and demonstrate, from many

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perspectives, a Christian worldview that will be instrumental in challenging students to integrate their faith with their work. Yet, with approximately 75 percent of the campus in attendance at each service, it is clearly not a place where solitude can be practiced, nor does it offer the intimacy, familiarity, and trust that can be nurtured within a small community of peers.

Another prominent co-curricular area on campus is Residence Life. This organization oversees seven dormitories, six of them on campus and one off campus. Dorm directors and student resident assistants (RAs) are hired to organize activities and provide support for the students who live in their buildings. There are a lot of dorm activities and, if there are small groups at all, they are usually peer led and short lived due to the general busyness of students. Students are offered a plethora of activities and events that they can participate in, both within the dorms and on campus. These activities, combined with a rigorous academic schedule, have led to over commitment for students and exhaustion for staff. The CUPA study states, “The frantic pace of work at Westmont contributes to the impediments, simply because overworked staff are less able to take the time to build true community. Simultaneously, Student Life’s profusion of programming may actually atrophy a student’s personal initiative to create their own community.”12 A question to consider might be: What disordered affections and attachments underlie this frantic pace built into the structure and leadership patterns at Westmont?

The “frantic pace” at Westmont stifles the motivation to take time for solitude, but social activities and the preoccupation of being “always connected” to technology are

also factors that stifle solitude. When I served as a campus pastor, I organized a half-day solitude retreat to be held on a Saturday. To my knowledge, solitude retreats had never been offered before. There were a number of students who actually expressed anger at the idea because they felt they had no time in their schedules to “sit and do nothing” when there were so many demands on them. Nevertheless, many students did attend and the response was quite positive. Clearly, the time had come to introduce the importance of being still and spending time with God.

Study abroad options and short-term mission trips are also co-curricular opportunities that offer local, domestic, and international exposure to various cultures and a wide variety of missional needs. During spring break, students may join projects dealing with children, poverty, and homelessness in such places as Santa Barbara, Salt Lake City, San Francisco, or Los Angeles. Students participating in Potter’s Clay travel to Ensenada for the week to build homes, hold worship services, and learn from the locals.

These immersion experiences can be some of the most spiritually impactful during a student’s college years. Some develop empathy that will often lead to a change of major or a ministry call. However, once students return from these trips, as mentioned in the Introduction, some report angst, questions about faith, and feelings of not knowing where they fit in the world. For the most part, there is no place to process those feelings—they simply return to campus and pick up where they left off.

For this reason, the campus pastor’s office planned a one-day retreat off campus for students returning from short-term mission trips. It began and ended with worship and gave students several hours in solitude to process and journal, and several more hours to
meet in small groups with other students to talk about their experiences. Their positive responses (see Appendix B) further underscored the need for solitude and community—for hearing from God, healing, direction, and support. This experience served as a building block for what would become Capax Dei.

Some immersion experiences probably incorporate solitude and/or some form of community building. Yet with no faith integration policy in place at Westmont, the decision to include these as part of the pedagogy is left to each instructor or, in the case of student-led mission trips, it is left to student leaders. This emphasizes the need for leadership training for faculty, staff, and students on how to practice solitude and develop community so that this may be implemented for off-campus programs.

One of the great advantages that co-curricular activities offer is occasionally connecting students with members of the faculty and staff in informal settings whereby students can learn from their lives. Sometimes mentoring relationships develop from these encounters, but not enough to fulfill the needs of this generation. As noted earlier, millennials earnestly desire to have mentors who will help them traverse the difficult landscape of life choices and questions. The topic of mentoring is discussed at length in Chapter 4.

Additional Challenges and Limitations

There are other challenges prohibiting Westmont from providing an environment where students can grow spiritually. These include the lack of a strategic plan and training, an understaffed campus pastor’s office, and the lack of availability on the part of faculty to invest in the spiritual lives of students and student leaders. Overcoming these
challenges and putting the right people and plans in place will make Westmont more hospitable to student spiritual growth.

At the time of this writing, Westmont has not articulated a strategic plan for student spiritual development that would build on existing strengths and put administration, faculty, and staff working toward a common goal. In the spring of 2010, four people were commissioned, two from the school and two from other Christian universities, to conduct an external review of the campus pastor’s office. Developing a vision or plan for student development was one of its highest recommendations:

Those involved in enrollment management might be interested in funding and assisting with the creation and nurture of Capax Dei-like groups that connect students more deeply to one another and to a mentor. This could serve to integrate into the community students or whole classes who might be considered “at risk” with regard to retention. In any case, CCCU schools who have spiritual or character development goals embedded in their mission and values statements are increasingly seeing that a more campus-wide approach to intentional spiritual development must be developed. These schools believe that they can no longer expect an often-small department located in the co-curriculum to bear the lion’s share of implementing what is for many schools a central institutional value.\(^\text{13}\)

Another challenge alluded to in the above recommendation is the size of the pastoral staff at Westmont. When Capax Dei was launched, there were two full-time campus pastors and a half-time worship director. When I left, my position as associate campus pastor was never replaced, leaving the office with only one pastor. This left a void in the areas of pastoral care and mentoring, as well as spiritual formation. Administration of Capax Dei was left to volunteers until recently, when funding was provided to create a full-time position that would include worship direction and Capax

Dei administration. This growing ministry requires an additional pastor to provide full-time oversight, leadership recruiting and training, and organization of student enrollment and promotion. If the budget does not allow for an additional pastor, funds might be raised from outside sources or grants for this important role.

A third challenge relates to those who provide group leadership and mentoring. This includes staff, alumni, and faculty. It is not hard to recruit Westmont staff because many of them serve in positions that do not allow them to have much meaningful interaction with students, and many have expressed a desire for that. Alumni who stay in the Santa Barbara area are also often anxious to help students have the positive experience they had as well as stay connected to the college. The faculty are the most difficult to recruit because the demands on them are significant, and the college currently does not offer any kind of help to them for adding one more commitment to their already full schedules. Still, a number of faculty members are enthusiastic about opening their homes and providing leadership because they too desire personal interaction with students that does not happen in the classroom or even during limited office hours. Students already view their professors as mentors and gravitate toward opportunities to spend more time with them. For these reasons, the administration should consider offering some kind of incentive for faculty who are willing to invest in the spiritual lives of students.

One bright spot in the midst of this particular challenge has been the establishment in 2010 of the Dallas Willard Center for Spiritual Formation on the Westmont campus. The endowed center gave legitimacy to an area of study that previously was viewed by a number of faculty members as a “soft subject,” not
particularly academic or worthy of serious consideration. By partnering with the campus pastor’s office to train leaders, host groups, and offer resources, the Willard Center validated *Capax Dei* as an important, even essential, ministry. It became easier to engage faculty and staff in conversation about spirituality and recruit them for small group leadership.

Lacking an all-campus student spiritual development plan and incentives for over-committed faculty are significant challenges that will need to be addressed for the success of the ministry to students. Yet, a full-time facilitator/pastor for this ministry is an immediate need because *Capax Dei* will not thrive, now or in the future, unless there is one who provides vision, leadership, and oversight. Additionally, ongoing tasks that must be orchestrated each semester and which fall under this position include recruiting students, scheduling, finding leaders, securing off-campus locations for small groups to meet, and providing transportation to get students to those locations.

*Capax Dei*

As mentioned earlier, on its college website Westmont asks, “What Do We Want for Our Graduates?” Included in the answer is “a biblical and theological understanding and appreciation of worship and spiritual formation that exceed what can be acquired at a secular university.”

14 Though there are several places on campus where students might learn about worship (such as the excellent music program), arguably, 150 minutes of chapel per week probably has the most influence when it comes to giving students a biblical and theological understanding of and appreciation for worship.

14 Westmont, “What Do We Want for Our Graduates?”
Spiritual formation, on the other hand, has not had the same visibility nor intentionality by the college, but its importance, and the hunger for it, cannot be underscored enough. Dallas Willard, in his article, “Spiritual Formation: What It Is, and How It Is Done,” explains,

Spiritual formation could and should be the process by which those who are Jesus’ apprentices or disciples come easily to “do all things whatsoever I have commanded you.” What I call “the great omission from the great commission” is the fact that Christians generally don’t have a plan for teaching people to do everything that he commanded. We don’t as a rule even have a plan for learning this ourselves, and perhaps assume it is simply impossible. And that explains the yawning abyss today between being Christian and being a disciple. We have a form of religion that has accepted non-obedience to Christ, and the hunger for spirituality and spiritual formation in our day is a direct consequence of that.15

With the inception of *Capax Dei*, spiritual formation on campus is beginning to change. The ministry does not take the place of a college-wide strategy for developing students spiritually, but it encourages one and provides a model for one way it can be done. Further, it meets a need that students have for a mentor/leader and for community, and it gives them practices that help them enter into a deeper relationship with God.

Promoted in chapel at the beginning of each semester, *Capax Dei* groups have eight to ten students and a facilitator/mentor who is a trained member of the faculty or staff or an alumnus of Westmont. The groups meet weekly on various days and times to accommodate class schedules. They meet off campus, primarily in homes or the Willard Center next to campus, which give students a different environment and an opportunity to unwind, process, and learn from one another. Refreshments or an occasional meal are always well received.

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A typical Capax Dei meeting will be an hour and a half, and will include time for fellowship, solitude, teaching, and prayer. The focus is to teach students spiritual disciplines that will help them know and deepen their relationship with God, but also to encourage the practice of those disciplines during the week. As they share their experiences, the desire is that they will help one another mature in faith.

In the very beginning, participants in Capax Dei studied Celebration of Discipline by Richard Foster. However, we learned through trial and error that students do not have money to purchase additional books and, even if they did, reading beyond what is required for class rarely happens. For that reason, the leaders are responsible for lesson preparation. Curriculum options are discussed in Part Three of this project.

Time for solitude is perhaps the most important part of the Capax Dei experience. Students are asked to find a quiet spot and given approximately twenty minutes to meditate on a Scripture passage related to the discipline being studied. For most, this is a gift of time for quiet and reflection amidst their busy and distracted lives on campus. It also reinforces the value of uninterrupted time with God. In addition to these brief times of solitude, the campus pastor’s office offers one half-day solitude retreat for all Capax Dei participants each semester, and one for leaders during the summer preceding the school year.

Currently, Capax Dei does not include a ministry/service component, but this is an adjustment that needs to be made because, for Jesus, solitude and community preceded ministry, as is discussed in the next chapter. Ministry is part of the transformation process. The challenge, once again, is how to engage students in meaningful ministry experiences when busyness is such an issue on this campus. Committing to any kind of
ongoing ministry off campus could feel obligatory and depleting when rest is hard to come by. Foster cautions against duty-driven ministry:

Service that is duty-motivated breathes death. Service that flows out of our inward person is life, and joy and peace. The risen Christ beckons us to the ministry of the towel. Perhaps you would like to begin by experimenting with a prayer that a number of us have used. Begin the day by praying, “Lord Jesus, I would so appreciate it if you would bring me someone today whom I can serve.”

For four years, most Westmont students live on campus. It is their world for this brief period of time. Foster elaborates, “Service to be service must take form and shape in the world in which we live. Therefore, we must seek to perceive what service may look like in the marketplace of our daily lives.” With this in mind, it is important to consider ways that students might extend what they are learning in community, practices such as listening and compassion, to those they live with as well as those who serve them. Chapter 7 discusses some ways to do this.

Conclusion

A college cannot expect that the spiritual formation of its students will happen solely through classroom instruction, over-programming of co-curricular activities, chapel, or even a combination of these. Students must be given space to discover their identity in Christ, a place where they can listen for his voice and sit in his presence. They need a safe community where they can process their questions, fears, and stories—a place where they can encourage growth in one another. Further, they need to take what they have learned and extend it to others in word and deed. These are the goals of Capax Dei.

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17 Ibid., 117.
The success of this ministry depends on leaders who are also willing and able to be mentors to students—members of the faculty, staff, and alumni who will walk alongside these young adults and share their lives with them. David Setran and Chris Kiesling, in their book, *Spiritual Formation in Emerging Adults*, point out,

> Without question, the “mentoring gap” in emerging adulthood is one of the most significant factors blunting spiritual formation in these years. Emerging adults have little direct access to the wisdom and experience of older adults, lacking settings in which to hear the stories of success and failure of those who have gone before them. They miss out on tangible role models of exemplary adult living, lacking settings in which to see clear pictures of faithful adult practice. Their views of the world are shaped primarily by those in the same stage of life, and they are rarely challenged by alternative points of view.\(^{18}\)

Chapter 4 examines the importance and theological foundations of mentoring. Before turning to that subject, Chapter 3 presents the biblical foundations for spiritual formation more generally.

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PART TWO

THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS
Some believe that what we see around us and the various experiences we have are all there is to life, and that there cannot be any more. But the spiritual life is different. It is one that is guided by God’s Spirit so that “what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal” (2 Corinthians 4:18). Reality, then, is beyond what we can experience with our senses, but it is the place, the only place, where we discover who we truly are and what our purpose is in this world and beyond.

With the guidance of God’s Spirit, Jesus demonstrated how his followers might experience this spiritual life. Certain practices, or disciplines, that he regularly modeled and that his disciples observed and participated in, were intended to make space for God in an otherwise hectic existence. These practices are no less relevant today. While there are a number of spiritual practices mentioned in Scripture, the three foundational ones that Jesus attended to, and that are found throughout the synoptic gospels, are solitude, community, and ministry. There is a progression to these practices, as exemplified in the Gospel of Luke:

One of those days Jesus went out to a mountainside to pray, and spent the night praying to God. When morning came, he called his disciples to him and chose
twelve of them, whom he also designated apostles: Simon (whom he named Peter), his brother Andrew, James, John, Philip, Bartholomew, Matthew, Thomas, James son of Alphaeus, Simon who was called the Zealot, Judas son of James, and Judas Iscariot, who became a traitor. He went down with them and stood on a level place. A large crowd of his disciples was there and a great number of people from all over Judea, from Jerusalem, and from the coast of Tyre and Sidon, who had come to hear him and to be healed of their diseases. Those troubled by evil spirits were cured, and the people all tried to touch him, because power was coming from him and healing them all. (Luke 6:12-19)

Prior to choosing a community of twelve into whom he would pour his life, Jesus spent extended time alone with his Father in prayer. Taking his newly selected disciples with him, together they ministered to the crowd that came to him seeking healing.

**Solitude**

Jesus frequently withdrew from the crowds to commune with his Father (Luke 5:16). Whether in the wilderness (Mark 1:11-13), on a mountain (Luke 9:28-36), on a hill by the sea (Mark 6:45-46), or in the Garden of Gethsemane where his disciples often joined him (Luke 22:39), Jesus prepared himself for what was ahead by being enveloped in God’s love. He was able to endure rejection and the mocking and condemning voices of the crowd that often accompanied his ministry because he was secure in the identity of being God’s beloved Son.

There is perhaps no more compelling reason to make time for solitude than discovering our true identity as a beloved child of the Creator. In his book, *A Spirituality of Living*, Henri Nouwen writes,

In the world there are many other voices speaking—loudly: “Prove that you are beloved. Prove you’re worth something. Prove you have a contribution to make. Do something relevant. Be sure you make a name for yourself. At least have some power—then people will love you; then people will say you’re wonderful, you’re great.” These voices are strong. They touch our hidden insecurities and
drive us to become very busy trying to prove to the world that we are good people who deserve attention.¹

The temptation is strong to prove ourselves in every area of life, but it pales in comparison to what Jesus, knowing his capabilities, must have felt when tested by Satan (Matthew 4:1-11). After forty days of solitude in the wilderness, he demonstrated the importance of having an identity anchored in his Father.

Identity is an issue for millennials, and they spend a lot of time managing the impression that they make on their peers. How they view themselves is often determined by what others say to them or about them on social media. In The Christian Educator’s Handbook on Spiritual Formation, James Bryan Smith writes,

Low self-image impairs a person’s ability to develop social relationships; the inability to develop relationships increases the low self-image and on and on. “I’m no good; no one wants to be my friend,” leads to, “No one is my friend, so I must be no good.” The issue of our identity is essential, and adolescence is the age when we birth our self-image. Thus, there is no better time to develop a proper self-image—one based on God’s view of who we are, not on the world’s distorted reflection.²

Spending time in solitude gives God a chance to speak into and redefine the false identity millennials may have inherited that keeps them bound and sometimes resistant to him.

In solitude there is restoration for the soul (Psalm 23), detachment from routine (Mark 6:31-32), and the possibility for the healing of wounds and addictions that plague this generation (Matthew 11:28-29). In solitude, as Setran and Kiesling point out in

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Spiritual Formation in Emerging Adults, “there is no one but God to tell them who they really are at the core.” It is the place where character is shaped.

For some, making space to be alone with God might seem like a waste of time. For others, the idea of solitude may feel isolating and frightening—isolating because there is no one physically present, and frightening because it is the unknown where suppressed thoughts, anxieties, and sin may surface, or something may be requested by God that is uncomfortable. Yet in his presence we are promised joy (Psalms 16:11), blessing (Proverbs 8:34, 35), and shelter from “the intrigues of men” (Psalms 31:20). While this is only a partial list of the benefits of time alone with God, it should be compelling enough to explore.

For Jesus, with the press of crowds and their needs always upon him, time alone with God was not optional. He prepared himself before facing the devil in the wilderness, before selecting his disciples, before heading into challenging ministry, and before giving himself to his persecutors to face the cross. On a number of occasions, he withdrew with his disciples. Conversely, by his example, Jesus taught that until we have learned to be alone, we cannot be with others in community. If we try, we will bring to those relationships our anxious, conflicted selves, and we will expect unconditional love from others that only God can give.

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3 Setran and Kiesling, *Spiritual Formation in Emerging Adulthood*, 47.

4 Examples of this may be seen in Mark 6:30-32; Mark 9:2-13; and Mark 14: 32-42.
Community

After Jesus spent the night in prayer, in the morning he selected twelve from approximately seventy-two disciples (Luke 6:12-17, 10:1, 17) to be his apostles. Together with Jesus, these would exemplify what Christian community should look like.

For three years they would share life together. They would be apprenticed by Jesus, watching and then following his example. They would be called “friends” (John 15:15), and Jesus would rely on their companionship during the exhausting days of ministry and the lonely days preceding his death. After his resurrection, they would stay together, meeting daily, devoting themselves to teaching and prayer, eating meals together and sharing what they had (Acts 2:42-47).

Most importantly, after being taught to love God, the disciples would learn to love one another because “by this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another” (John 13:35). Diogenes Allen, in *Spiritual Theology*, observes that “if love is lacking, the motivation for keeping all the commandments is lost.” Loving God and loving one another are not only cited as the greatest commandments of all (Matthew 22:37-40), but they are the cornerstone upon which community is built. Learning to love in this way took time: the disciples argued (Mark 9:33); they doubted (Mark 4:38); they were slow learners (Mark 6:52); they postured for position (Mark 10:37); and after all that they had seen and experienced, they were still fearful to follow Jesus (Mark 14:50).

Yet, despite their human responses to one another and to Jesus, with the exception of

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5 Lists of the apostles also appear in Matthew 10:2-4; Mark 3:16-19; and Acts 1:13.

Judas, the love and kinship they ultimately learned in community would be the catalyst for carrying on their master’s work, empowered by the Holy Spirit.

Jesus demonstrated that true fellowship in community happens when people who know they are loved share life together. They would not need to depend on others for validation because each experienced the depth and riches of God’s love. In this scenario, “iron sharpens iron” (Proverbs 27:17). With confidence in who they are, each is able to affirm and strengthen the others in the group. Nouwen calls this practicing forgiveness and celebration:

Forgiveness and celebration are what make marriage, friendship, or any other form of community possible. Forgiveness is to allow the other person not to be God. Forgiveness says, “I know you love me, but you don’t have to love me unconditionally, because no human being can do that.” If we can forgive that another person cannot give us what only God can give, then we can celebrate that person’s gift. Then we can see the love that person is giving us as a reflection of God’s great unconditional love.7

Millennials seek community. It is one of their highest priorities, born out of the fear of loneliness and the desire to be part of something bigger than themselves, but often the communities they form are unintentional and sometimes counter-productive. On a residential college campus, where much of life is already shared, there is a great opportunity to help them find their true identity through times of solitude and intentional focused communities.

Ministry

When Jesus finished selecting his disciples, he led them down from the mountain to the waiting crowds that included followers and people who had come for miles “to

hear him and to be healed of their diseases” (Luke 6:17-18). As his disciples watched, he touched all who reached out to him. This passage notes that people were healed because “power was coming from him” (Luke 6:19). Jesus knew where it came from (Luke 5:17) and he knew when it left him (Mark 5:30). The work of the Holy Spirit was, and will always be, the empowering force behind God’s reconciling work in the world.

The disciples were probably not aware that they would be doing similar work, yet after a sufficient time of apprenticing, Jesus sent them out with power and authority (Luke 9:1). Amazingly, he told them that they would be doing the work he had been doing, yet even greater work (John 14:12) if they had faith in him. However, later he used the illustration of the vine and the branches to underscore the importance of staying connected to him in order to do ministry. He said, “I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing” (John 15:5).

The ability to remain in Christ is as a result of God’s grace or unmerited favor (Ephesians 2:8-9) it is not due to determination, effort, or the desire to be like Christ. The disciples were able to reach out to others with compassionate love because they were first loved by God (1 John 4:19). The natural result of embracing God’s grace and his love is ministry, and it happens as we sit in his presence and care for one another in community. Nouwen explains, “When we are aware that we are the beloved, and when we have friends around us with whom we live in community, we can do anything. We’re not afraid anymore. We’re not afraid to knock on the door while somebody is dying.
We’re not afraid to open a discussion with a person who underneath all the glitter is much in need of ministry. We’re free.”

Jesus demonstrated this for his followers repeatedly, and the progression that he lived (solitude, community, and ministry) is particularly evident in the sixteen chapters in the Gospel of Mark, which some scholars believe is a book that focuses on spirituality and mission. These three are not the only spiritual practices that Jesus observed, but they are the foundational ones leading to transformation. The Gospel of Mark, along with the other synoptic gospels, mention many other spiritual practices including obedience (Mark 1:12), rest (Mark 6:31), and watching (Mark 14:34), prompting Eugene Peterson to call Mark “the basic text for Christian spirituality.”

Christian spirituality is incomplete without ministry. The prompting for ministry comes from a heart that overflows with gratitude and compassion because it has been accepted and loved. In Jesus’ “Sermon on the Plain” in Luke 6:20-49, he uses the illustration of a tree and its fruit to teach what kinds of things flow from one who has prepared himself or herself by doing the necessary inward and outward work: “The good man brings good things out of the good stored up in his heart, and the evil man brings

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11 The Sermon on the Plain is a parallel, though shorter, to the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5-7.
evil things out of the evil stored up in his heart. For out of the overflow of his heart his mouth speaks” (Luke 6:45).

As noted earlier, millennials are seeking their identity, but too often look to the messages of culture and to their peers to tell them who they are. The idea of taking time for solitude conflicts with the commonly accepted notion that “the busier I am, the more successful (or peaceful) I will be.” Jesus said, “Come with me by yourselves to a quiet place and get some rest” (Mark 6:31). It is in that quiet place that true identity is revealed. In solitude, the disconnected heart is attached to its true source, and from that place the one who possesses it is able to be with and for others in meaningful, healing ways.

When people who have been with Jesus come together, true community emerges. It is not instantaneous, but rather a process that takes place over time. Their purpose is to encourage and build one another up, rather than to compete and compare. They do not demand unconditional love from the others because they already have it from their Creator. They share, they celebrate, and they worship. Together they demonstrate a love, which is “the aroma of Christ” (2 Corinthians 2:15), to a world desperately, but perhaps unknowingly, seeking it. When individuals, alone and together, are empowered in this way by the Holy Spirit, they are compelled to minister, to bring comfort to the broken. Nouwen writes, “As disciples of Jesus, we are sent to wherever there is poverty, loneliness, suffering of any kind. We are given the courage to be with suffering people. We can trust that by entering into places of pain, we will find the joy of Jesus. A new world grows out of compassion.”

12 Nouwen, A Spirituality of Living, 51.
Conclusion

There are many spiritual practices that benefit the journey with God, but there are only a few that help us know God and ourselves, enter into healthy, supportive relationships with others, and send us out to be God’s hands and feet in the world. Transformation happens when solitude, community, and ministry are incorporated into the life of the believer. It is indispensable to have another person to journey with who can offer wisdom and discernment and point the way. The role of mentors will be discussed in the following chapter.
CHAPTER 4
THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS FOR SPIRITUAL MENTORING

As millennials enter college, they tend to move away from the religion they have grown up with and gravitate toward a faith that is truly their own. This is a time when many seek, or at least desire, mentors to help them navigate confusing questions and choices. While parents are more included in decisions by this “boomerang”\(^1\) generation, they may consider objective input from an outside source to be more legitimate, and not as influenced by personal family history. However, it is not always easy to find mentors in college, particularly within the faculty, because some professors do not feel confident about mentoring, do not think it is appropriate in their role, or think it is the responsibility of the local church or parachurch organizations. Colleges can influence this thinking by endorsing and supporting mentoring initiatives.

One of the reasons that millennials seek mentors is that they have a lot of new stressors when they enter college: financial pressures, academic pressures,

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\(^1\) The term “boomerang” in this context refers to millennials who move back in with parents as young adults.
homesickness, new friendships, and anxiety surrounding eating and exercise. One of the biggest, however, is spiritual struggle. Setran and Kiesling reference the research of some colleagues: “In their research on this area, Alyssa Bryant and Helen Astin found that spiritual struggle is most prominent among members of minority religious groups, females, those attending religious colleges, those majoring in psychology, and those who face experiences in college that challenge, disorient, and introduce students to new and unfamiliar worldviews.”

Westmont fits this profile in all of the above categories. Therefore, it is reasonable to assume that spiritual struggle is prevalent on campus. That struggle can be isolating and depressing if there is no one accessible beyond the counseling center (which is usually overwhelmed) and the campus pastor’s office (which is understaffed) with whom to process. There are a number of ways that mentoring could be made available to students, but currently Capax Dei is the only place on campus where spiritual mentors are paired with groups of students for weekly study and conversation. At this time, Capax Dei reaches only 12 to 15 percent of the students, but with the college’s endorsement and support, that percentage could be much higher. Leaders of these groups are trained to mentor individual students in their small groups who request mentoring. In addition, group mentoring takes place as spiritual disciplines are discussed and practiced, and as students find a safe environment where they can process their spiritual questions and struggles.

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3 Setran and Kiesling, Spiritual Formation in Emerging Adulthood, 207.
Mentoring in the Bible

Mentoring is exemplified throughout Scripture and its value is implied in Daniel 12:3: “Those who are wise shall shine like the brightness of the sky, and those who lead many to righteousness, like the stars forever and ever.” Through listening to the lives of others and then showing them how to open their eyes to God’s presence, Christianity has been passed from one generation to the next by faithful mentors.4

Throughout the Old Testament there are stories of older leaders who, having learned from their own experiences, use this acquired wisdom to guide others. Moses is one of the first examples of this. At 120 years old, Moses was ready to pass on his leadership to his apprentice, Joshua. He reminds Joshua that he must be the one to lead the Israelites into the land that the Lord has promised them and divide it between them as their inheritance. The enormity of this charge might have been overwhelming for Joshua, but Moses offers this encouragement: “Be strong and courageous. . . . The Lord himself goes before you and will be with you; he will never leave you nor forsake you. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged” (Deuteronomy 31:7-8). Encouragement for what lies ahead is one of the most important gifts that a mentor can give a mentee.

Samuel was given by his mother to serve under the high priest, Eli, “in the house of the Lord.” During the night, when Samuel was sleeping, he heard a voice calling to him. He did not know the Lord at that time and mistakenly thought it was Eli. After the third time inquiring of Eli, the priest “realized” the Lord was calling the boy, so he

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4 The term “mentor” is from Greek mythology, where Ulysses placed his son, Telemachus, under the instruction of a sage named Mentor who was to teach the boy wisdom and not merely information. Keith Anderson and Randy Reese, Spiritual Mentoring: A Guide for Seeking and Giving Direction (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1999), 35.
instructed Samuel to respond to the voice by saying, “Speak, Lord, for your servant is listening” (1 Samuel 3:9). Eli sensed what was happening in Samuel’s life because he had spiritual discernment, which he passed on to his young mentee by teaching him to listen. Learning to discern God’s voice from one’s own thoughts or demonic intrusion is an important part of the spiritual transformation process that a mentor can teach.

Sometimes the Lord places mentors in our lives to address issues we would prefer to avoid. Nathan was sent by God to confront King David for killing his soldier, Uriah, and stealing Uriah’s wife. David immediately saw and acknowledged his sin and grieved his actions and the consequences that followed (2 Samuel 12:1-14). Confrontation and accountability are a part of the mentor’s role, but these are not popular in our culture and are often side-stepped. Setran and Kiesling address this:

Mentors tend to avoid confrontation on matters of sin for a variety of reasons. Perhaps they fear rejection or a breach in the relationship with the emerging adult. Perhaps they resist because they know the words of rebuke will be hurtful and wounding, perceived as unloving by the recipient. Perhaps they recognize their own struggles and sin (the “log” in their own eye) and therefore feel inadequate to call attention to the “specks” they see in others’ eyes. Perhaps they reason (often correctly) that the mentee will respond defensively and come back with a rebuke of his or her own.5

Several characteristics of mentoring are also found in the book of Ruth. In this story, Naomi’s husband and sons have died and the only remaining family members are her two daughters-in-law who do not want to leave her side. Eventually one leaves, but the other, Ruth, clings to her and stays. A friendship develops between Naomi and Ruth, and Naomi is able to provide wise counsel for the younger woman. This ultimately leads Boaz, a distant relative, to marry Ruth, who later provides Naomi with an heir. The story

highlights the reciprocal nature of this friendship, as mentoring relationships should be. Being in this relationship benefits both parties, often in ways that cannot be anticipated. Further, the wise counsel of Naomi is instructive at a time in Ruth’s life when the future is uncertain.

One of the great mentors in the Old Testament is Elijah, the elder prophet to a school of young prophets. His star pupil is Elisha, who refuses to leave his teacher when he becomes aware that Elijah will soon be taken by God (2 Kings 2:2-6). Elijah has made such an impact in Elisha’s life, that Elisha requests a double portion of Elijah’s spirit. He was not asking for a ministry twice the size, but rather empowerment to carry on Elijah’s work. While empowerment is the work of the Holy Spirit, a mentor can expedite that work through prayer and encouragement of the mentee.

The New Testament is filled with examples of and promptings for mentoring stemming from the model that Jesus provided. He began by developing a community, calling the disciples to join him in an adventure that would develop spiritual friendship. He showed them how to be a spiritual friend by discussing things with them of mutual interest (Luke 24:13-45); inviting their questions and answering them (Luke 9:18-27); sharing certain insights only with them (Matthew 13:36-52); sharing painful places from his experience (Matthew 26:38); lovingly challenging them to grow (John 13:1-17); humbly offering acts of tender care (John 13:1-17); and genuinely caring about their feelings and their fears (John 14). He told them he would never leave them and he would lay down his life for them.⁶

⁶ David Benner, Sacred Companions: The Gift of Spiritual Friendship & Direction (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2002), 64.
Establishing spiritual friendship is foundational for mentoring relationships. Trust emerges as love, vulnerability, and intimacy are shared. As the disciples were able to trust Jesus’ authenticity in friendship, they were able to step out in faith and confidence and minister as they had seen him do. Setran and Kiesling highlight the importance of mutual affection: “Mentoring research indicates that modeling entails not just imitation but also identification resulting from satisfying relationships. In other words, modeling is most influential when it is coupled with friendship, mutual affection serving as a motivating force for the internalization of character qualities admired in the mentor.”

In his letters, Paul frequently refers tenderly to his “children” or those who have come to faith through him. Among these are Timothy (1 Corinthians 4:17), Titus (Titus 1:4), Onesimus (Philemon), and the believers in Thessalonica (1 Thessalonians 2:11), Corinth (1 Corinthians 4:14-16), and Galatia (Galatians 4:19). When writing to Philemon, a slave owner living in Colossae, Paul makes an appeal for the runaway slave Onesimus, who at one time had stolen from Philemon but later became Paul’s “son” in the faith and whom he describes as his “very heart” (vv. 10, 12). The appeal is for Philemon, his friend and a believer, to take back his slave, even though his crime was punishable by death under Roman law. In this petition, Paul both advocates for Onesimus and gently pushes Philemon to place compassion and brotherly love before the constraints of the law. Modeling forgiveness and support as well as respectful prompting toward growth are also qualities of mentors.

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In Acts 18, a husband and wife offer hospitality to Apollos, a man who was considered to be a great preacher and teacher, after they heard him speaking “boldly in the synagogue” (v. 26). Priscilla and Aquila detected that, while he was accurate in most of the things he said, he was still looking for the coming of a Messiah. Despite his education, he had missed the essence of the gospel. Even though they had no formal training, they brought him home, explained the very important part that he had missed, and corrected him. Teaching and correction (in this case, to a highly educated guest) are part of the mentor’s role.

Philip knew the importance of listening for God’s direction, and that is why he did not question when an angel told him to take a fifty-mile trip on foot. While he was on the road, he listened to an Ethiopian eunuch reading from the book of Isaiah. When the eunuch was confused by what he was reading, he listened to his questions. Luke writes, “Then Philip began with that very passage of scripture and told him the good news about Jesus” (Acts 8:35). Listening, first to God and then to the stories, is critical for mentors; the questions and concerns of mentees are the primary work of mentors.

While these passages do not comprise an exhaustive list, they represent some of the work, in both the Old and New Testaments, of mentors—people who made themselves available to guide others on the faith journey. To summarize, the mentor’s role includes encouragement, discernment, confrontation, accountability, wise counsel, empowerment, friendship, forgiveness, appeal for growth, teaching, correction, and listening.
Mentoring through Recollection

Keith Anderson and Randy Reese write that spiritual mentoring should help others discover the mystery of God’s closeness in every aspect of life: “Spiritual mentoring includes a process of listening to the life of another and then teaching people to open their eyes and see what is there-everywhere-teaching them to become detectives for the presence of divinity.”

One of the ways to listen is by hearing one’s story and helping him or her discover God’s action within. It is easy to regard our stories as random, disconnected, and even coincidental, but with guided reflection, a mentor can help others see that there is a greater power at work in their lives. For millennials, looking back or remembering seems counterintuitive because they are focused on the present and the future. Mentors can help them see the value of examining their lives thus far and how their experiences are part of a larger story that God is developing. Yet looking back is also central for understanding how our smaller stories fit within the “big picture” of God’s story of redemption history.

“Remembering” is repeated throughout the Old and New Testaments. One example is in Deuteronomy, where God exhorts the Israelites to remember what he did when he brought them out of Israel so that they won’t succumb to self-sufficiency: “When you eat and are satisfied, when you build fine houses and settle down, and when your herds and flocks grow large and your silver and gold increase and all you have is multiplied, then your heart will become proud. . . . You may say to yourself, ‘My power

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and the strength of my hands have produced this wealth for me”’ (Deuteronomy 8:12-14, 17).

The constant struggle between being self-sufficient or trusting in the sufficiency of God will always be a part of the sinful nature. Consequently, there are repeated commands throughout Scripture to tell the next generation “what we have heard and known, what our fathers have told us. We will not hide them from their children; we will tell the next generation the praiseworthy deeds of the Lord, his power, and the wonders he has done” (Psalms 78:3). That is why stones were piled one upon another to mark what God had done in that place. That is why stories were told and retold about God’s faithfulness.

Unfortunately, the Church in general has not done an adequate job of passing on God’s stories to the millennial generation. Some of them learned those stories in Sunday school as children, but once they became teenagers, the deeper lessons in those stories were never taught. This has probably contributed to the rapid decline in church attendance of this generation. Mentors can be influential in helping millennials pursue their Christian identity by keeping the stories of redemptive history before them. Setran and Kiesling contend,

Just as the Israelites used altars and piles of stones to serve as physical and geographical markers of God’s faithfulness, mentors can encourage emerging adults to fashion reminders of God’s faithful provision, assistance, and presence. At a time when everything seems new and unfamiliar, emerging adults desperately need “Ebenezers”—places to pitch their flags in the ground to signify that “thus far the Lord has helped us.” (1 Samuel 7:12) \(^9\)

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Mentoring through Observation

Through the use of parables and the very example of his life, Jesus wanted his disciples to “open [their] eyes” (John 4:35) to see and understand that they were in the presence of God and that his kingdom was not of the world in which they lived. The Apostle Paul also stressed the importance of looking beyond the experiences and circumstances of life to reality: “So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal” (2 Corinthians 4:18).

Mentors help their mentees “see” that God is present and active in all aspects of life. Setran and Kiesling write,

The Spirit is already active and working in emerging adults’ lives and in the world around them. The mentor’s purpose is to open up spaces to help them become more attentive, receptive, responsive, and obedient to that work. In the midst of multiple distractions that blind the eyes to spiritual reality, the mentor is therefore to help foster an awareness of the presence and work of the true Mentor.10

There are many ways that a mentor can help a student be alert to God’s presence. Beyond noticing God’s involvement within one’s story, looking for his hand in creation may be one of the obvious ways to sense the divine. Scripture declares, “Holy, holy, holy is the Lord Almighty; the whole earth is full of his glory” (Isaiah 6:3). By encouraging slowing down and solitude, mentors can help students learn to observe the beauty and intricacies of the world around them—to feel the breeze on their faces, to look past appearance to the soul, to experience wonder and awe at the creativity of their Maker.

10 Ibid., 218.
Mentors can also ask questions such as, “Where have you seen God this week?” or “How might God have been speaking through that experience?” that will prompt students to think deeply about God’s presence in their daily activities and relationships. As the master mentor, Jesus asked many questions to help people connect their lives with God’s purposes: “What do you want me to do for you?” (Mark 10: 51); “Why are you so afraid? Do you still have no faith? Who do you say that I am?” (Luke 9:20).

Mentors can help mentees approach Scripture “with the eyes of their hearts” by introducing lectio divina (“divine reading”), a Benedictine practice of scriptural reading, meditation, and prayer. Rather than approaching a passage for its informational value, students are encouraged to listen as it is read and notice if a word or phrase surfaces that speaks into their lives. The word or phrase then informs the prayer that follows. In this way, mentors help mentees to listen for God’s direction and observe how he speaks through his Living Word.

Mentors help their charges to be awake to God’s involvement and presence in all aspects of life. In the classroom, that might mean helping a student to understand the course content through the lens of a wise and creative God. In the workplace, it might mean showing a young employee how to watch for how God’s activity and join him in it. Learning to study what the culture is saying about spirituality or how God is speaking through news events are all ways to learn to “see” beyond what is apparent. These are some ways that mentors can help their mentees observe what God is doing in their personal lives as well as the wider world, but mentors’ very lives can also have a huge influence on the future of their mentees.
Mentoring toward the Future

Paul cared deeply for the people he mentored. To the Thessalonians he wrote, “We loved you so much that we were delighted to share with you not only the gospel of God but our lives as well, because you had become so dear to us (1 Thessalonians 2:8).” Paul did not just teach, he let others see who he was, how he lived, and even how he suffered so that they could really know him.

In the same way, mentors need to be “real” or, as millennials might say, “authentic.” This means modeling a life that is worthy of emulating—a life that is always seeking to grow in its relationship with God, that honors its commitments to family and to the church, is dedicated to serving, and is passionate about following God’s call. Setran and Kiesling write,

Studies indeed seem to indicate that such modeling is the best means of facilitating Christian faith in the next generation. In one analysis of parent-child religious transmission, Christopher Bader and Scott Desmond found that faith was best formed when communicated both in message and lifestyle. When the message was clear but the behavioral modeling was mixed, children picked up the message but not the lifestyle.\(^\text{11}\)

When millennials are able to be in relationship with a mentor who models a life that is faithfully and responsibly lived, they are able to envision how their lives could look in the future. By being in their mentors’ homes, watching them on the playing field, witnessing their involvement in church or in the workplace, or seeing what they are passionate about, mentees can begin to hope for their own future and all that it can hold.

Yet some millennials struggle with acaedia, or “a pervasive lethargy regarding human aspirations,” either because they do not think excellence matters or perhaps because they think they cannot attain it. By being cautious and self-protective, risk and disappointment are avoided. Mentors can help these millennials to have a vision for God’s great call on their lives with prayer, affirmation, and giving them opportunities for expertise in something, when possible. Setran and Kiesling consider Mordecai in the story of Esther: “Like Mordecai encouraging Esther to take action to protect her people, mentors are called on to challenge emerging adults for future influence (Esther 4:14).”

Listening and prayerfully seeking God’s wisdom need to be the primary functions of the mentor, as the following story indicates. When Eugene Peterson was twenty and home from college for the summer, he had his first encounter with a spiritual mentor—a man from his own Montana church. Peterson reports that he was anxious to have spiritual conversation, and Reuben Lance, a jack-of-all-trades, was available. Peterson recalls,

My first spiritual director didn’t know he was a spiritual director. He had never so much as heard the term spiritual director, and neither had I. But our mutual ignorance of terminology did not prevent the work. We were both doing something for which we had no name. For a summer of Tuesday and Thursday evenings we met, conversing and praying in the prayer room in the church basement. We got on well. He was not only the first but among the best spiritual directors I have had. . . . It was accomplished by means of Reuben’s prayerful listening. He had nothing to tell me, although he freely talked about himself when it was appropriate. But he never took over.

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12 Ibid., 225.
13 Ibid., 226.
14 Eugene Peterson in The Contemplative Pastor (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1993), 183, as quoted in Anderson and Reese, Spiritual Mentoring, 57.
There are a lot of millennials just like the young Eugene Peterson with questions about spirituality and life that need someone to process with. That person does not need to have a great deal of experience or skill as a mentor. Reuben was simply interested, made himself available, was willing to share some of his story, and prayerful. He probably had no idea the kind of impact he would have in this college student’s life. Great mentors rarely do.

**Conclusion**

There are many biblical accounts of the influence of mentors in the Old and New Testaments. Today, mentors can impact the lives of those they work with by helping them look back at what God has done in history, as well as in their own stories. They can help them observe God in the present through nature, *lectio divina*, the news, the culture, their relationships, and in the classroom and the workplace. Finally, they can live lives worthy of exemplification, lives that help their students envision what their own lives can be in the future. Mentors are an integral part of the transformation process and of *Capax Dei*. Chapter 5 describes the ministry strategy for the college, including the structure of *Capax Dei* and how solitude and ministry are incorporated.
PART THREE

MINISTRY STRATEGY
CHAPTER 5
THE DEVELOPMENT OF SMALL GROUPS AND LEADERS

The thesis for this doctoral project is twofold. First, practicing the spiritual disciplines of solitude and community will inspire and prepare college students for outward mission. Second, Capax Dei provides a venue at Westmont College where students, led by trained mentors, can experience spiritual transformation. Transformation refers to change such that a person no longer conforms to the ways of the world, but is committed to pleasing God (Romans 12:2). As the mind is renewed, inward transformation manifests itself in outward actions and that person begins to reflect the likeness and glory of Christ (2 Corinthians 3:18).

A common misunderstanding is that practicing spiritual disciplines alone will bring about transformation. Practicing the disciplines creates space for God to work, but transformation happens as a result of God’s grace (Ephesians 2:8) and the work of the Holy Spirit (2 Corinthians 3:3). In his article, “To Grace a Debtor,” Robert Meye writes, Above all else, grace—God’s grace—and gratitude—our response to the grace of God—are the two most essential components of an authentic Christian spirituality which, patterned in the imitation of Christ, and empowered by the Spirit of Jesus Christ, will ever bear fruit in love, joy and peace. All of this will happen only within the framework of our privileged response of faith in God in Christ and in the power of the Spirit, especially expressed in our life in prayer, in the Word, and
in the community of faith. Such life ever rises to the true worship of God and flows out into witness and service to the world.¹

As the CUPA study found, many Westmont students had “diminishing contemplation and biblical practices” and lacked confidence in their faith.² Dr. Todd Hall supported this finding from his research with the STI: “Students at Christian colleges are generally not practicing their faith in a substantial way.”³ As I considered the campus environment, it was clear that there was no place directly addressing this spiritual lethargy at Westmont. Despite this, I knew that this generation of students was very interested in and open to spirituality.

**Capax Dei**

For this reason, the first freshman study of *Celebration of Discipline* was launched in 2002. The study was so well received that it was expanded to include all students, with an emphasis on years two through four. In the beginning, there were only enough registered to form four or five groups, and the leadership primarily came from the campus pastor’s office and a few staff members. As word spread, more students signed up and leadership was opened to spouses of faculty and staff, as well as alumni. We experimented with other curriculum and found that *Soul Feast*, by Marjorie Thompson,

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² Westmont, “Christian Understanding, Practices, and Affections.”

³ Hall, “Spirituality at a Crossroads.”
was also an excellent resource on spiritual disciplines.\textsuperscript{4} From her book came the name for the ministry, \textit{Capax Dei}, which means “capable of receiving and embodying divine life.”\textsuperscript{5}

On the Westmont website, under the campus pastor’s office, the ministry is described this way: “\textit{Capax Dei} groups foster a deeper walk with God through prayer and reflection on Scripture, and provide an introduction to classical spiritual disciplines of the Christian faith.”\textsuperscript{6} The remainder of this chapter describes the format, schedule, and curriculum for the ministry.

**Promotion**

When students begin a new school year, they learn about \textit{Capax Dei} in chapel through a video announcement\textsuperscript{7} and testimonials of students who have participated during the previous year. They are directed to an online site for registration where they will see pictures of the group leaders, a brief description of the study, days and times that the groups are available, and whether the group is gender specific or co-ed (see Appendix C). Most students opt for either an all-female or all-male group. Since the groups are held off campus, students can indicate whether they need or can provide a ride to the weekly meetings.


\textsuperscript{5} Ibid., 8.


\textsuperscript{7} This video is also available on the campus website: see Westmont, “\textit{Capax Dei}.”
Second-year students are the first to be placed in groups. The reason for this is that first year students are new to the college and are reluctant to miss chapel. Second-year students are eager and open for new experiences and, with three years ahead of them, they may be apprenticed for future group leadership. Ideally, groups are capped at eight students with one leader who may be assisted by a student apprentice.

Participation in a group is optional. Though it is not the policy, it is likely that more students would register for Capax Dei if a chapel credit were given for each week of attendance. Approximately 12 to 15 percent of the student body participate. Chapel credit is a controversial topic because it is felt by some that coming together as a campus community to worship should not be missed. While that is an important value, worship is strengthened as believers practice disciplines that deepen their relationship with God.

**Structure**

With the number of scheduled breaks for mid-terms, finals, and holidays, there are only about nine weeks each semester during which students are available to meet in small groups. Sessions last for an hour and a half. Leaders are discouraged from letting them go longer than that so that students’ schedules are respected.

Each meeting begins with fifteen minutes for hospitality and refreshments, something college students welcome. Ideally, this is held in a different room than where the group meets so that when it is time to begin, the demarcation is clear. If the meeting is taking place in the leader’s home, hosting a meal or two around the table during the semester, though not required, helps develop community and is actually a great way to
begin the study. It also is a good time for the leader to initiate the sharing of personal stories by beginning with his or her own.

The first session is different from those in subsequent weeks because it begins with introductions, establishing expectations for the group, and discussing commitment, which takes about fifteen minutes (see Appendix D). A “Small Group Covenant” from Richard Peace’s book, *Contemplative Bible Reading,* is given to each participant to sign (see Appendix E). College students are sometimes disorganized or reluctant to commit, and setting expectations helps “weed out” those who are unsure of whether they can or want to participate.

During the first session, *lectio divina* will be introduced and practiced, students will be given alone time to reflect on the *lectio divina* questions, group sharing will follow, and the meeting will close with prayer and announcements for the next session (see Appendix D for a complete schedule). In subsequent weeks, the schedule will be as follows. The meeting will begin with fifteen minutes of refreshments and fellowship. The next fifteen minutes are dedicated to the opening prayer and story sharing. Each week one person will share his or her story. Fifteen minutes limits what can be shared, but knowing even a summary of one another’s stories helps strengthen the bonds between participants and provides points of contact.

Following the sharing of stories is twenty minutes of teaching time. Two weeks will be spent on each topic, with the *Spiritual Disciplines Handbook* and *Living like Jesus* being exceptions to this structure. When using *Contemplative Bible Reading,* one week

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will be inductive Bible study and one week will be a \textit{lectio divina} reading from the previous week’s study. When using \textit{Celebration of Discipline}, the discipline and practice of it during the week will provide two weeks of reflection and discussion. The \textit{Spiritual Disciplines Handbook} will cover one prayer type each week using questions and Bible passages in the book for personal and group reflection. \textit{Living like Jesus} is a book study and discussion will be prompted from the reading. Further explanation is given in the “Curriculum Schedule” below.

The next twenty minutes are dedicated to solitude. Students will be given time alone to reflect on the Scripture passage or guided reflection and its application for their lives. Following this, fifteen minutes are given for group reflection. Students will re-gather to share insights from the Scripture being studied or the spiritual discipline being practiced. The time ends with five minutes for a closing prayer. All students share in praying for the prayer requests among the group.

\textbf{Curriculum Schedule}

When \textit{Capax Dei} began, Richard Foster’s \textit{Celebration of Discipline} was selected to introduce students to the spiritual disciplines. This was followed by Marjorie Thompson’s \textit{Soul Feast}. Over time, we decided to include a study that would focus on how to read and meditate on Scripture, and Richard Peace’s \textit{Contemplative Bible Reading} was added, supplemented with selections on prayer from Adele Calhoun’s \textit{Spiritual Disciplines Handbook}. All of these studies, and others since, are used to further develop the foundational practices exemplified by Jesus of solitude, community, and ministry and to facilitate transformation in the lives of students. What follows is a curriculum schedule
for six semesters with a seventh/eighth semester option. As mentioned earlier, first-year students are encouraged to attend chapel, but are welcome in Capax Dei as well, and fourth-year students who have been in a group for at least two years may co-lead with a trained leader.

The curriculum provides the topics and guidelines for teaching, but leaders have flexibility within each lesson to select key points and time allotments as long as they do not exceed the ninety-minute meeting time allotment. Figure 5.1 provides the outline for all eight semesters.

**Semester 1- Contemplative Bible Reading**
- **Week 1** | Introduction of Group and Contemplative Bible Reading
- **Week 2** | The Longing for God-Bible Study on Psalm 63
- **Week 3** | The Longing for God-Group Lectio on Psalm 63
- **Week 4** | The Call of Jesus-Bible Study on John 1:29-42
- **Week 5** | The Call of Jesus-Group Lectio on John 1:35-39a
- **Week 6** | The Cost of Discipleship-Bible Study on Mark 10:17-27
- **Week 7** | The Cost of Discipleship-Group Lectio on Mark 10:23, 27
- **Week 8** | The Priorities of Life-Bible Study on Luke 10:38-42
- **Week 9** | The Priorities of Life-Group Lectio on Luke 10:41-42

**Semester 2- Celebration of Discipline-The Inward Disciplines**
- **Week 1** | Introduction and the Spiritual Disciplines (Leader’s Guide p.1-15)
- **Week 2** | The Discipline of Meditation (p.15-32) (Leader’s Guide p.19-23)
- **Week 3** | The Discipline of Meditation
- **Week 4** | The Discipline of Prayer (p.33-46) (Leader’s Guide p. 24-27)
- **Week 5** | The Discipline of Prayer
- **Week 6** | The Discipline of Fasting (p.47-61) (Leader’s Guide p. 28-31)
- **Week 7** | The Discipline of Fasting
- **Week 8** | The Discipline of Study (p.62-76) (Leader’s Guide p. 32-35)
- **Week 9** | The Discipline of Study

**Semester 3- Contemplative Bible Reading**
- **Week 1** | The Courage of Faith-Bible Study on Matthew 14:22-33
- **Week 2** | The Courage of Faith-Group Lectio on Matthew 14:27-29
The Spiritual Disciplines Handbook⁹

Week 3  Breath Prayer (p.204-206)
Week 4  Contemplative Prayer (p.211-214)
Week 5  Inner Healing Prayer (p.227-230)
Week 6  Centering Prayer (p.207-210)
Week 7  Fixed Hour Prayer (p.223-226)
Week 8  Praying Scripture (p. 245-248)
Week 9  Prayer of Recollection (p.249-252)

Semester 4- Celebration of Discipline- The Outward Disciplines
Week 1  The Discipline of Simplicity (p.79-95) (Leader’s Guide p. 39-43)
Week 2  The Discipline of Simplicity
Week 3  The Discipline of Solitude (p.96-109) (Leader’s Guide p.44-47)
Week 4  The Discipline of Solitude
Week 5  The Discipline of Submission (p.110-125)
         (Leader’s Guide p.48-51)
Week 6  The Discipline of Submission
Week 7  The Discipline of Service (p.126-140) (Leader’s Guide p. 52-55)
Week 8  The Discipline of Service
Week 9  Review of Outward Disciplines and Selection of Outreach

Semester 5-Outreach on Campus and in the Community
During this semester, groups will apply the outward disciplines in a way that they choose for nine weeks in service to the school or community. Outreach will be discussed more thoroughly in Chapter 6.

Semester 6-Celebration of Discipline-The Corporate Disciplines
Week 1  The Discipline of Confession (p.143-157)
         (Leader’s Guide p.59-62)
Week 2  The Discipline of Confession
Week 3  The Discipline of Worship (p.158-174) (Leader’s Guide p.63-67)
Week 4  The Discipline of Worship
Week 5  The Discipline of Guidance (p.175-189) (Leader’s Guide p.68-71)
Week 6  The Discipline of Guidance
Week 7  The Discipline of Celebration (p.190-210)
         (Leader’s Guide p.72-75)
Week 8  The Discipline of Celebration
Week 9  Review of the Disciplines

Semesters 7 and 8-Options
If groups have completed the above studies, they may want to consider several options:

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1) A book study reading *Living like Jesus* by Ron Sider.\(^\text{10}\) This book explores eleven characteristics of authentic Christian faith and is good preparation for life after Westmont. To accommodate all of the chapters in nine weeks, two sessions could cover several chapters. Characteristics discussed in *Living like Jesus* include:

Week 1: Genuine Christians embrace both God’s holiness and God’s love.
Week 2: Genuine Christians live like Jesus.
Week 3: Genuine Christians keep their marriage covenants and put children before career.
Week 4: Genuine Christians nurture daily spiritual renewal and live in the power of the Spirit.
Week 5: Genuine Christians strive to make the church a little picture of what heaven will be like.
Week 6: Genuine Christians love the whole person the way Jesus did.
Week 7: Genuine Christians mourn church divisions and embrace all who confess Jesus as God and Savior.
Week 8: Genuine Christians confess that Jesus is Lord of politics and economics.
Week 9: Genuine Christians share God’s special concern for the poor.

Additional chapter titles are: “Genuine Christians treasure the creation and worship the Creator” and “Genuine Christians embrace servanthood.”

2) Students may also wish to apprentice as a co-leader with an established leader for one or two semesters if they have participated in a group for two years. There have been a number of graduates that have apprenticed, that stay in the Santa Barbara area and return to Westmont to lead groups.

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Leader Recruitment and Training

In the beginning, it was not easy to find small group leaders, but with the growth of the ministry, interest was piqued for people who wanted a chance to spend time with students but did not have a way to do that. These included staff, staff spouses, alumni, and increasingly, faculty members and their spouses. Nevertheless, as more students registered for groups, additional leaders were needed to keep groups to the optimal size of six to eight. Recommendations were made by those already participating, and letters were sent during the summer preceding the school year to potential candidates (see Appendix G). During the 2014-2015 school year, thirty-five leaders and co-leaders, the highest number yet, were recruited.

Initially, recruiting leaders during the summer worked, but as the ministry grew and more leaders were needed, it became necessary to enlist in the spring and hold a training session during the summer shortly before the beginning of the school year. Ideally, several training sessions would have been best, but we learned that this is not realistic given people’s schedules and expectations of the faculty prior to the school year. Recruiting in the spring also meant that leaders would have time to become familiar with the book they would be using with their groups in the fall, as well as one that focused on the specifics of their role. These books are provided for them.

*Capax Dei* leaders are mentors. They are mentors to their groups and sometimes they do additional mentoring with individuals in their groups. For that reason, they are asked to read *Spiritual Mentoring: A Guide for Seeking and Giving Direction* by Keith Anderson and Randy Reese during the summer in preparation for their role in the fall. The authors define spiritual mentoring in this way: “Spiritual mentoring is a triadic
relationship between mentor, mentoree and the Holy Spirit, where the mentoree can
discover, through the already present action of God, intimacy with God, ultimate identity
as a child of God and a unique voice for kingdom responsibility.”

Students need mentors who will share the transforming work that God has done in
their lives so that they will be able to envision what he can do in theirs. Mentors need to
grasp the significant influence that they can have by the way they lead. Spiritual
Mentoring helps leaders be more than small group facilitators, with its emphasis on
relationship building, accountability, and empowerment. Each chapter concludes with
discussion questions that can be discussed at the leaders’ retreat.

The Leaders’ Retreat

Leaders are asked to participate in one six-hour (9am-3pm) training retreat to be
held in August prior to the beginning of the school year. The purpose of the retreat is to
introduce and acquaint participants with the mission and curriculum of Capax Dei, offer
lectio divina and solitude experiences similar to what they will be doing in their groups,
and provide time for reflection and questions. Handouts include a “Leader Roster” and
“Meeting Format Guide.” Staffing for retreats is minimal and usually only requires one
pastor/facilitator and a worship leader. There is a lot of material to cover in six hours, but
with adequate prayer and preparation by the presenters, it is enough to equip and
encourage prospective leaders. The schedule for the Leaders’ Retreat is given below in
figure 5.2.

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11 Keith Anderson and Randy Reese, Spiritual Mentoring: A Guide for Seeking and Giving
Direction (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1999), 12.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Activity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9:00-9:15</td>
<td>Gather and morning refreshments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9:15-9:45</td>
<td>Group Introductions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Question: Why do you want to be a <em>Capax Dei</em> leader?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9:45-10:30</td>
<td>The Mission of <em>Capax Dei</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Solitude, Community and Ministry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>First Meeting Format Guide (Handout, Appendix C)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Subsequent meeting schedule</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10:30-10:45</td>
<td>Break</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10:45-11:45</td>
<td>Overview of Curriculum and Vision</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Fall Semester</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Spring Semester</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Four Year Proposed Plan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11:45-12:30</td>
<td>Lectio divina and Reflection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mark 6: 45-56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Leaders will have time for reflection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12:30-1:30</td>
<td>Solitude</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Meditation and journaling on lectio passage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Boxed lunch provided</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:30-1:45</td>
<td>Group Sharing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Impressions of lectio and solitude</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:45-2:00</td>
<td>Break</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2:00-2:30</td>
<td>Mentoring</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Two or three questions from <em>Spiritual Mentoring</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2:30-3:00</td>
<td>Closing Worship and Prayer</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 5.2. Schedule for the Leaders’ Retreat

In addition to this training retreat, the Dallas Willard Center and the Campus Pastor’s office co-sponsor two half-day solitude retreats for students during the school year, one in November and one in April. Leaders are encouraged, but not required, to
attend these retreats. The Willard Center also hosts a luncheon at the end of the school year in their facility next to the campus to thank leaders for their work with students and also to discuss what worked well in groups and what can be improved upon. The partnership of the Dallas Willard Center has given Capax Dei greater visibility and the support it has needed to expand the ministry to both students and faculty.

**Conclusion**

The mission of Capax Dei is to teach and engage students in the foundational disciplines that Jesus modeled. Healthy community is developed as individuals find their true identity before God in solitude. That community finds its expression and purpose in ministering to others. Chapter 6 will explain how solitude retreats are done at Westmont and will propose how ministry might be incorporated into this work.
CHAPTER 6

INCORPORATING SOLITUDE AND MINISTRY IN *CAPAX DEI*

Jesus began his ministry by spending forty days alone in the desert (Matthew 4:1-11). He regularly spent time in solitude to be strengthened by his Father for the work ahead, and he knew that if he was to be with others meaningfully, he must first be able to be alone, listening. He modeled this practice so that we might also embrace our need to listen to the Father above all other voices that seek to define us and determine our course.

When we know who we are and whose we are, we can selflessly extend Jesus’ compassion and care to those residing near to us, compelled by the Spirit residing within us. Solitude and ministry are spiritual disciplines that need to be incorporated into *Capax Dei* for a generation of students who find it hard to be still and, at times, selfless. This chapter explains how these disciplines can be incorporated into the ministry.

**Solitude**

My first experience with extended solitude came on a field trip at the conclusion of a spiritual formation class in seminary. Our day-long trip met at a Salvation Army camp in Malibu Canyon, California. After gathering and some preliminary announcements, our class was released to spend the day, or approximately six hours, in
solitude somewhere on the grounds. We were not given anything to read or exercises to follow; we were just told to go, enjoy the time, and check in at the end of the day. Our final assignment for the course would be to turn in a paper documenting the experience.

I panicked, first because I could not imagine how I would be able to occupy my time for six hours with no direction on this overly warm spring day, and second because I had to write about it, and it would affect my grade in the course. I had experienced short times of solitude before, but never for a whole day with only my Bible, a notepad, and a boxed lunch. After wandering around looking for a place where I could be alone, I sat down and essentially asked God, “What now?” The thought occurred to me that I should write. I picked up my pad and pen and stared at the blank paper before me. After a few moments, I started to write what I was thankful for. Then, I wrote down some Scriptures that came to mind.

I started to write faster as questions that I had for God surfaced. After each question, I paused and listened and then wrote what came into my thoughts: words of friendship, love, encouragement, and comfort. I wondered if they might be answers from God. My first thought was, “This can’t be,” but I kept writing and listening, completely engaged. I must have taken a break at some point, but I don’t remember it. At the end of my six “directionless” hours, I had written twenty-three pages on letter-sized notebook paper of my conversation with God. I have referred back to these pages on a number of occasions. And I have since heard many stories similar to mine.

I learned in that seminary course that something does indeed happen when you make space for God. In subsequent times of solitude, I have also learned to not have
expectations that every experience will be the same. The reason for solitude is simply to be with God. What he does with that time is up to him.

It is not easy to convince college students that solitude is a beneficial practice. The culture dictates that being productive, social, and active are the ways to be successful in life, and the oft held perception that solitude is “doing nothing, alone” for extended periods of time does not generate much enthusiasm for collegians. Nor does unplugging from technology, even for a brief time, but there is a down side to not unplugging, as Ruth Haley Barton writes in *Sacred Rhythms*:

Exhaustion sets in when we are too accessible too much of the time. A soul-numbing sadness comes when we realize that a certain quality of life and quality of presence is slipping away as a result of too much “convenience.” Breaks in the day that used to be small windows of replenishment for body and soul—like driving a car, going for a walk, having lunch with a friend—are now filled with noise, interruption, and multitasking. What feels like being available and accessible is really a boundaryless existence that offers no protection for those things that are most precious to us.¹

This “always connected” generation has not known anything different. The steady stream of noise, words, and images produced by their devices has an addictive quality, making it hard to imagine being without them, even briefly. Yet these intrusive devices diminish the benefits of time alone with God.

Fear may also be a factor that causes collegians (and others) to resist solitude. It may be fear of not completing assignments on time or fear of just being alone. It may be fear of hearing from God and what he could require, or fear that not hearing could mean he does not exist.

Such concerns underscore the need to remove the mystery surrounding the practice of solitude by talking, in chapel and in the classroom, about Jesus’ priority of spending time alone with his Father. Adele Calhoun, in the *Spiritual Disciplines Handbook*, lists personal benefits that are additional incentives for incorporating times of solitude in our schedules:

- Freedom from the need to be occupied and stimulated
- Moving away from letting the world “squeeze you into its mold” (Rm. 12:2)
- Liberation from constantly living your life in reference to other people
- Quieting the internal noise so you can better listen to God
- Giving yourself time and space to internalize what you already know
- Speaking only what you hear from God rather than out of your store of opinions
- Including solitude and retreat as part of your lifestyle.  

Another way to remove the mystery or confusion about solitude is by providing short experiences where students can be alone with God. In *Capax Dei*, each session allocates twenty minutes for time alone to reflect on Scripture and listen to God. Once students practice the discipline and sense their need for it, half-day or even full-day solitude retreats might have more appeal.

*Capax Dei* and the Dallas Willard Center co-sponsor a half-day retreat on a Saturday each semester, one in November and one in April. All students are invited, whether they participate in a small group or not. Small group leaders are also encouraged to attend. Registration is done through the campus pastor’s office and boxed lunches are available through the dining commons on campus.

Locations for the retreats vary. While the close proximity of the beach (about three miles from campus) is an appealing setting, on-campus or near-campus retreats

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make attendance easier for students who do not have transportation. A local church that is within walking distance of Westmont, Montecito Covenant, also works well for retreats as it has plenty of outdoor space and a prayer garden for reflection.

Retreats are held from 8:30 a.m. until 1:00 p.m. and are facilitated by a staff member from the campus pastor’s office and a worship leader. The schedule is as follows:

- 8:30-9:00 Welcome, opening prayer, and worship
- 9:00-9:15 Guided reflection handout distributed and discussed
- 9:15-12:15 Solitude
- 12:15-12:45 Group sharing
- 12:45-1:00 Closing prayer and worship

During the opening session, students are encouraged to turn off their phones or laptops (if they have brought them) and to use the next three hours for stillness and listening. For many, this will be a new experience, so an optional handout is provided to give some structure to the time (see Appendix H). The handout provides questions and Bible passages, but there is much more material than can be covered in the allotted time. Therefore, they are asked to only select one or two of the suggestions.

**Ministry**

In his book, *Spiritual Formation as if the Church Mattered*, James Wilhoit writes, Christian spiritual formation ultimately is about enabling people to love others more and to help create a just and well-ordered community. Appropriate responses to the gospel come in many forms. At times a quiet prayer is the fullest and most appropriate response. At other times the appropriate response may be costly and dramatic. What is crucial is that we see that following Christ requires us to cultivate a lifestyle of response.³

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If we are to follow Jesus’ example, a “lifestyle of response,” includes service. To date, *Capax Dei* has not built service into its structure. The primary objective has been to develop small groups with mentors/leaders who facilitate the discussion and practice of the spiritual disciplines. However, serving was Jesus’ passion. He demonstrated for his disciples how to minister to others and then sent them out, telling them that they would do the same and even greater work (John 14:12).

Ministry, or the discipline of service that students read about in *Celebration of Discipline*, needs to be incorporated in such a way that participants in *Capax Dei* can practice and experience the spiritual transformation that comes as a result of extending the compassion of Christ to others.

While service has not been built into the ministry, over the years some of the groups have found creative ways to do outreach. For example, several years ago when there was a major drought affecting Santa Barbara, some of the students organized a successful campaign to dramatically reduce water usage in their dorms. One group held several baby showers for pregnant teens whom they had learned about through a local organization. Several groups assembled bagged lunches for the homeless people who congregated at the beach. As well intentioned and meaningful as these efforts were, a “lifestyle of response” necessitates a more ongoing engagement.

Ministry requires time and sometimes money, two things that are in short supply for most college students. Spring break or summer mission trips are appealing for some because they do not conflict with academics. Participating in an ongoing ministry during the school year is something few are willing to sign up for.
Richard Foster’s words in *Celebration of Discipline* bear repeating because they have helped me think about how ministry might be incorporated into the *Capax Dei* experience:

Service that is duty-motivated breathes death. Service that flows out of our inward person is life, and joy and peace. The risen Christ beckons us to the ministry of the towel. Perhaps you would like to begin by experimenting with a prayer that a number of us have used. Begin by praying, “Lord Jesus, I would so appreciate it if You would bring me someone today whom I can serve.”

When I reflect upon these words, I am reminded that service is not something that we do in a myriad of places and ways, but something that we are, wherever we are. Developing a “lifestyle of response” can happen right on campus in ways that do not require much time, but bring joy to both the giver and the receiver.

Foster suggests nine kinds of service that can be practiced on a college campus: hiddenness, small things, guarding the reputation of others, being served, common courtesy, hospitality, listening, bearing the burdens of each other, and sharing the word of life. The first type of service is what Foster calls the service of hiddenness. This is doing something in secret for someone without needing acknowledgement. There are many ways to do this at Westmont: getting a meal from the dining commons for a student working long hours on a paper, folding clothes that have been left in the dryer, writing an anonymous note of encouragement, washing a car, or cleaning up another’s mess. Foster underscores the benefits for the giver: “Hiddenness is a rebuke to the flesh and can deal a fatal blow to pride.”

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4 Foster, *Celebration of Discipline*, 122.

5 Ibid., 117-121.

6 Ibid., 117.
The second type of service is the service of small things. When we allow ourselves to be interrupted from pressing tasks to help another with trivial matters, we are serving. On campus this might mean helping sort out a computer problem, helping another study for an exam, running an errand, assisting a move in or out of the dorm, or driving an ill student to a medical appointment. None of these things is necessarily convenient for the one serving, but the spiritual benefit of the “service of small things” is that the giver must confront any inclination he or she might have toward sloth or idleness.

The third type of service is the service of guarding the reputation of others. Potentially, this service might be the most challenging for college students, as it is for many. Scripture is clear regarding gossip or any talk that is disparaging toward another: “If anyone considers himself religious and yet does not keep a tight rein on his tongue, he deceives himself and his religion is worthless” (James 1:26). Reigning in gossip and slanderous talk to protect another’s reputation is a service that develops discipline and compassion. There is little doubt that there are students on campus who would benefit from having such an advocate.

The fourth type of service is the service of being served. Pride causes us to resist letting others serve us, as it did for Peter when he refused to let Jesus wash his feet (John 13:8-9). There are times when every student needs help, but many are reluctant to accept it, feeling in some way that they must reciprocate. Yet being a grateful recipient actually serves and blesses the giver, and God uses these circumstances to teach submission to the recipient.

The fifth type of service is the service of common courtesy. Though common courtesy may not seem like a service, one only has to think about the times they have
been touched by gracious or kind acts from another. In a college context, that may mean telling a professor that a lecture was meaningful, thanking a pastor for a great chapel, sending a thank you note to another student, taking the time to admire an individual’s art exhibit or attend an athlete’s game, or expressing gratitude to a dining commons employee for a great meal. Foster writes, “The purpose is always the same: to acknowledge others and affirm their worth.”

The sixth type of service is the service of hospitality. Hospitality can mean a welcoming dorm room or a welcoming presence. My understanding of this kind of service was expanded by Thompson’s explanation in Soul Feast:

Hospitality is essentially an expression of love. It is a movement to include the guest in the very best of what we ourselves have received and can therefore offer. It is the act of sharing who we are as well as what we have. Thus, hospitality of heart lies beneath every hospitable act. The classic elements of hospitality offered to guests are food and drink, shelter and rest, protection and care, enjoyment and peace. These paired categories cover a basic range of physical, emotional, and spiritual needs. They reveal that hospitality is concerned with the total well-being of the guest.

College students often open their doors for dorm mates to drop by, but the service of hospitality extends more to the visitor: a warm welcome, availability, and a balm for weary or struggling students. This service requires that the giver be fully present and receptive to their guests and often includes the service of listening.

The seventh type of service is the service of listening. When I served as a campus pastor at Westmont, there were a number of students who needed to process their experiences or events in their lives, and nothing has changed. They came with sadness

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7 Ibid., 120.
8 Thompson, Soul Feast, 122.
over an impending divorce in the family, with grief over the loss of a loved one, with shame due to an abuse or an infraction, or with fear that they would not succeed in college. I listened and offered counsel when I could.

Certainly students are not expected to offer the same kind of help to their peers that a pastor can. But there are a lot of students with less serious concerns, who simply need to talk with someone who can reflect back to them what they have heard. This is the service of listening. Foster again reminds that there is a benefit: “To listen to others quiets and disciplines the mind to listen to God.” That discipline is what we desire for students in *Capax Dei*.

The eighth type of service is that of bearing one another’s burdens. In Galatians 6:2, the Apostle Paul instructs believers to “carry each other’s burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ.” In every community there are those who suffer and need someone to walk alongside occasionally, listening but especially lifting them in prayer. This is a ministry that is learned over time because the burdens can be heavy, easily overwhelming the one helping. As the helper is increasingly able to place the burdens of the other into Jesus’ hands, the work becomes life-giving for both giver and receiver.

The ninth and final type of service is the service of sharing the Word of Life. Sharing the Word of Life takes place when followers of Jesus come together and talk about what God is teaching them and doing in their lives. In this way, God’s Word goes out to all and “iron sharpens iron.” This happens in *Capax Dei* groups when students talk

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9 Ibid., 121.
about their experiences with *lectio divina* and meditation, when they process what they have received during solitude, and when they see answers to the prayers they have prayed for one another. Yet *Capax Dei* is incomplete if students are not involved in ministry.

Foster calls the nine ministries above, “Service in the Marketplace.” These are services that can be done anywhere and by anyone. They could be transformational if applied to the Westmont campus by the approximately 150 students participating in *Capax Dei*.

As a weekly assignment, these students could experiment with Foster’s prayer, “Lord Jesus, I would so appreciate it if you would bring me someone today whom I can serve,” and then staying alert for the person or situation that God places in their path. This awareness might not come easily at first, but with perseverance and sensitivity to the leading of the Holy Spirit, opportunities to serve will become clear. Some students may be reluctant to participate, but as they hear about the experiences of peers in their groups, that hesitancy may be dispelled.

Caring for others on campus by serving them can bring changes to the character of a community as it infuses new life, joy, and deeper unity into its residents. More than that, it teaches that service is a way of being for those who practice it. Nouwen writes, “Solitude, community, ministry—these disciplines help us live a fruitful life. Remain in Jesus; he remains in you. You will bear many fruits, you will have great joy, and your joy will be complete.”

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10 Ibid., 117.

Conclusion

This chapter has considered two key elements of the *Capax Dei* ministry: solitude and ministry. Chapter 7 describes the desired learning outcomes for *Capax Dei* and how the ministry is field tested. It reports on the results and assesses the success of the ministry thus far.
CHAPTER 7

EVALUATION OF LEARNING OUTCOMES

The intention of this doctoral project is to describe the process of effecting spiritual transformation in the lives of Westmont College students through the ministry of *Capax Dei*. According to Richard Peace, “Transformation occurs when people are brought into effective contact with a transforming agent such as Scripture, the Holy Spirit, the Church, the gospel, and godly insights.”¹ Students in *Capax Dei* encounter all of these with the possible exception of church, though involvement is encouraged.

**Assessment Tools**

To determine the success of the ministry and where it needs improvement, evaluation questions are distributed at the end of the spring semester to *Capax Dei* students and leaders. Student questions are designed to determine the frequency of attendance, type of small group desired, thoughts about the *Capax Dei* experience and whether it can be improved, and most importantly, what was learned. Students are also asked about what the biggest spiritual needs are among Westmont students.

The leaders’ evaluations are less detailed. This evaluation primarily seeks their opinions about what worked well, what could be improved upon, any additional comments, and significantly, the ways that they observed student growth in their groups. The information gleaned from both evaluations is sent in a summary letter to the leaders at the close of the school year (see Appendix H, 2015/16).

During the 2014/15 school year, a graph was designed by the administrator of Capax Dei to illustrate how students answered evaluation questions. Of the 155 students involved that year as participants, 43 responded, or approximately 28 percent, which is a fairly typical response rate for the yearly evaluations. Out of 33 student leaders, 12 responded, or approximately 36 percent (see figure 7.1).

![Image of pie chart showing student and leader responses]

Figure 7.1 Student Evaluation: Student Participants and Student Leaders

The evaluation graph for 2014/15 is entitled, “55 Responses.” The entire document is seventeen pages in length and was designed by the administrator of Capax Dei, Joel Patterson. While it is not possible to reproduce the graph in its entirety here, Patterson summarized the evaluation findings as follows:
When asked what they liked about *Capax Dei*, two things stood out among student responses: community and space. The relationships they formed with other students and their leaders were very important to them, as well as having a time to catch up with each other and touch base about the week. They valued the personal connection and accountability that *Capax Dei* offered, and really appreciated it when they were able to feel safe about opening up and sharing with others. Also, many students mentioned their appreciation for having a set-aside time for quiet, stillness, rest and prayer. A number of them also particularly mentioned how much they enjoyed being able to connect with a professor outside of the classroom setting.\(^2\)

Figure 7.2 provides data gleaned from responses to two questions on the evaluation that were helpful in determining whether spiritual formation was happening in the groups.

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\(^2\) Joel Patterson, *Capax Dei* Administrator, “Feedback Summary Spring 2015.”
While the statistical data tells one story, it is also helpful to read some of the personal responses of students to the questions, “Can you give us an example of how one of the above statements (from the graph) played out?” and “What did you like about Capax Dei?” See Appendix I for a sample of these responses. It is satisfying to know that the majority of students who responded to this evaluation expressed positive feedback. Many felt that they “learned to be more comfortable with being silent in God’s presence” (74.4 percent) and “grew in their sense of God’s presence in their lives” (72.1 percent). Silence and solitude do not come easily to this generation, yet when they discover that God wants to meet with them, they are eager to learn more.

Appendix I also provides student responses to one more question from the evaluation regarding student needs. This question asked students to identify the spiritual needs of their peers, and, in some cases, themselves. Hearing directly from Westmont students about what is needed spiritually might also help other Christian colleges consider better ways to meet those needs. Appendix J provides feedback from the student leaders in response to the following questions: “How did students grow?” and “Anything else you’d like to say?”

**Learning Outcomes**

While these evaluations provide helpful and encouraging information, the goals of Capax Dei are not specific enough. Learning outcomes clarify the goal, identifying what the learner will know and be able to do by the end of their time in the ministry. To date, specific learning outcomes have not been established. For that reason, the following five
outcomes and evaluation questions are proposed here for future student and leader surveys.

The first desired learning outcome is cognitive. Students will know what spiritual disciplines are, including the contemplative practices of meditating on Scripture and *lectio divina*. The evaluation question is: What spiritual disciplines or contemplative practices are new to you or have been the most helpful? In years one and two, students will study Bible passages inductively and meditatively. In addition, spiritual disciplines will be covered in years one through three.

The second desired learning outcome is affective. Students will learn how to encourage and affirm their group peers as they share their stories with one another. The evaluation question is: Did you feel that sharing personal stories helped you have deeper connections with the others in your group? Beginning with the mentor/leader, stories will be shared within the group that include God’s activity and direction. This will help participants develop bonds through connection and compassion.

The third desired learning outcome is behavioral. Students will practice spiritual disciplines alone and in their groups. The evaluation question is: What spiritual disciplines did you practice in your group? Were there any that you experimented with on your own? Through times of solitude within the group structure, as well as on retreat, students will learn the value of silence and making space for God. A desired future behavioral outcome is that students will practice acts of service on campus.

The fourth desired learning outcome is structural. Students will learn their identity in Christ. The evaluation question is: What does having your identity in Christ mean to you? According to Richard Peace, structural outcomes provide help for becoming
proactive in accessing rights that are theirs, or consciousness raising.\(^3\) When students are able to grasp their true identity and the freedom that comes with it, it can affect every aspect of their lives, both now and in the future.

The fifth desired learning outcome is relationship. Students will participate in a supportive spiritual community facilitated by a mentor/leader. The evaluation question is: What has it been like to be in this kind of a small group this year? In what ways has your group leader helped you personally? Most students will never have been part of a community formed for the purpose of spiritual transformation. Covenanting to work and pray together develops trust and accountability. Having a mentor to help them navigate difficult choices and challenges is a significant benefit of being in this community and one desired by many millennials.

With a more focused assessment, *Capax Dei* will be better able to determine how best to minister to students and effect spiritual transformation. With that in mind, evaluations are only one way to determine whether *Capax Dei* is making an impact on the Westmont campus. The ministry has doubled in size since its inception. It has also been embraced and equipped in part by the Dallas Willard Center. With the endorsement of the Center, additional faculty and staff have become involved. Many have commented on how the curriculum, training, and new relationships have been personally fulfilling. After eight years of involvement, I concur. Having led groups that have met for three or four years, I have learned a lot about mentoring, made lasting friendships, and even had

\(^{3}\) Ibid.
the honor of officiating at several weddings of my students. It is not a burden to lead and mentor; it is a privilege.

**Developing a Stronger Ministry**

There are a number of things that can be done to strengthen *Capax Dei*, beginning with service. Jesus knew that it was not enough to show his disciples how to do ministry. One day he would no longer be with them and they would be charged with carrying on his work. In the same way, all followers of Jesus must do the work that he did, starting in the communities in which they live. Intentionally caring for those they reside with and those who serve them during the four years of college can develop hearts of service in a wider context. The spiritual disciplines of solitude, community, and service work together to bring about spiritual transformation from the inside out.

Of lesser importance, but nevertheless needed, is better coordination of transportation to off-campus groups for students who do not have cars. This has been an ongoing problem, further complicated when students have classes that end right before meetings begin. Ideally, several willing student drivers should be assigned to each group as they are being formed, which would lessen the burden on leaders who are trying to shuttle group members back and forth to campus.

A number of leaders have requested an earlier start date each semester because they do not feel that nine weeks is an adequate amount of time to cover the curriculum, share personal stories, and provide needed solitude for students. Groups currently do not start until the fourth week of the semester so that promotion and registration can take
place during the first weeks. If promotion and registration began toward the end of spring semester and just prior to the fall semester, this issue could potentially be resolved.

In addition, on their evaluations, some students requested that leaders make sure the written description of their group, posted online with the registration form, is clear. Clarity includes letting students know that they may switch groups or opt out completely if the size of the group or particular study is not what they anticipated. This change is critical to helping students decide whether to participate and choose an appropriate group.

Sometimes groups are too big, making sharing and times of solitude difficult. Certain leaders may be particularly popular, attracting students who have not even registered for their groups but who “crash” them to be with those leaders or even with their friends. Groups should have between five and nine students to be effective. One or two open groups might be established for late joiners.

Communication is central to the success of *Capax Dei*, especially communication from the campus pastor’s office to the administration, faculty, parents, and students about the goals of the ministry and the inspiring stories of the students involved. Sharing the vision will fuel enthusiasm and encourage support for the work. Some leaders have expressed a desire for online communication, or a website where they can share insights and resources with one another and receive announcements about upcoming retreats, training, or events sponsored by the Willard Center. As leaders are connected with one another and with the *Capax Dei* administration, the support they receive will translate into increased confidence and possibly long-term commitment.

Several small grants have been received for *Capax Dei*, but additional funds would enable the ministry to have a full-time pastor/ overseer who would not only
coordinate and promote the work within the school, but could share the vision with other Christian colleges. Additional money could also provide curriculum for participating students and leaders, and cover any expenses related to leader training and solitude retreats.

Currently, approximately 15 percent of the student body at Westmont participates in *Capax Dei*. That number could increase substantially by clarifying learning outcomes, strengthening communication, coordinating transportation, and limiting the size of groups. But more important than increasing the number of participants, as good as that would be, is investing in a deeper experience for the ones who are already involved by incorporating ministry into the structure of *Capax Dei*. Nouwen writes, “Solitude, community, ministry—these disciplines help us live a fruitful life. Remain in Jesus; he remains in you. You will bear many fruits, you will have great joy, and your joy will be complete.”

**Conclusion**

The final section of this doctoral project reviews the spiritual plight of postmodern millennials, their flight from the Church, and their interest in pre-modern practices. With this in mind, it is important to consider how spiritual transformation might be realized on a Christian college campus by practicing solitude, being in community, and joyfully serving. Westmont College is engaging in this venture through *Capax Dei*, and it is hoped that this ministry will realize its full potential.

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SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

At a time when many young evangelicals are rejecting the institutional Church that they have grown up in, Christian colleges can help them discover the spirituality they seek by providing venues where they can connect with God and with their peers in meaningful ways. The focus of this doctoral project is Westmont College, a campus located in Santa Barbara, California, where I was commissioned as a campus pastor to develop a spiritual formation ministry for students. As I listened to students and reflected on the campus culture, I discerned a need for a safe community of peers that would journey with them, a desire for mentors, and most importantly, a yearning to know God and experience him.

In my research, I noticed that the desires of these students were not unique to Westmont. I also observed that, generally, students at Christian colleges are not practicing their faith in a substantial way.¹ I wondered how to meet these needs in a way that would not compete with classes or extra-curricular obligations, yet offer a restful interlude with an important purpose.

At a point in my life when I was not much older than these college students, I questioned whether there was more to the Christian faith than I was experiencing. I was greatly affected by reading Richard Foster’s Celebration of Discipline. Foster writes, “The classical Disciplines of the spiritual life call us to move beyond surface living into the depths. They invite us to explore the inner caverns of the spiritual realm.”² That was

¹ Hall, Spirituality at a Crossroads.
² Foster, Celebration of Discipline, 1.
what I wanted, and what young evangelicals still seek today—to move “into the depths,”
to not just know information about God, but to know him. In fact, I believe that all
millennials, whether they are aware of it or not, ultimately desire the same thing in their
spiritual quests.

At Westmont, the first study that we did of Celebration of Discipline for incoming
freshmen was so well received that our office decided to open it to all students. For
several years there were only four or five groups, totaling approximately thirty to forty
students. When we learned how and when to promote the ministry, and when students
started to share their experiences with one another, more groups were formed. Ultimately,
those groups became Capax Dei.

As anyone who has worked on a college campus knows, initiating anything new
has its challenges. New ideas are rarely implemented quickly. In the beginning, raising
awareness of the need for the spiritual formation of students was one of those challenges;
it was difficult to generate interest from the administration in Capax Dei. Perhaps it was
assumed that formation was already happening, that it was somebody else’s job, or that it
was a low priority. Whatever the reason, it became clear that a plan for developing
students spiritually had to be embraced by all—administration, faculty, and staff. It could
not be dependent on one department. Once everyone agrees on a vision, it is easier to
work toward its implementation. When Dallas Willard’s library was moved to Westmont
and a center was established in his name, the vision for expanding spiritual formation on
the campus and in the community gained momentum.

The vision for Capax Dei was and is to encourage spiritual transformation in the
lives of students by placing them in peer groups with mentors/leaders to study and
practice spiritual disciplines. The disciplines are not meant to be legalistic, but rather they are practices that invite the Holy Spirit to bring about change in individual lives. While all of the disciplines create space for God to work, there were certain disciplines that Jesus practiced regularly that are foundational: solitude, and community, and ministry.

Practicing solitude means retreating for a time, being still, and listening. There are many voices that compete for a student’s attention—voices that seek to define, direct, entice, or that simply overwhelm. In solitude there is one voice that dispels the others, bringing clarity and truth and, above all, unconditional love. In solitude, students can learn to know the voice of God and his “peace that passes understanding” (Philippians 4:7). In solitude they can learn their true identity, and with it, the purpose of their lives. Solitude is a core spiritual discipline, but because there are few that practice it, there are not many who teach it. In Capax Dei there are leaders who teach it and practice it with their students, and there are also scheduled retreats that help both students and leaders be present to God.

Community for young evangelicals is not simply a group of friends getting together, but a safe group of peers who can share their stories and explore their questions with the knowledge that they will not be judged for being different or unworthy. Instead, they will learn together, support one another, and even hold each other accountable. The success of these groups depends on a leader/mentor who is sensitive to individuals in the group, listens well, and is committed to praying for the Spirit’s guidance.

Solitude and community are both important in the believer’s life. In Life Together, Dietrich Bonhoeffer writes of their interdependence: “Let him who cannot be alone beware of community. . . . Let him who is not in community beware of being alone. . . .
Each by itself has profound pitfalls and perils. One who wants fellowship without solitude plunges into the void of words and feelings, and one who seeks solitude without fellowship perishes in the abyss of vanity, self-infatuation, and despair.”

Ministry is the outward expression of the inward transformation that takes place in the young disciple. It is what Jesus taught his followers to do—not only for how it would help those receiving the ministry, but for the fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22-23) that it would develop in the giver. While students study the spiritual discipline of service in Celebration of Discipline, Capax Dei has not incorporated the practice of serving (Ephesians 6:7-8) into its ministry, with the exception of a few individual group projects. In this project, I have recommended that Foster’s nine types of “service in the marketplace” are good ways to extend compassion on campus. They generally do not require a lot of time, but through acts of kindness and care, health and vitality are generated in the community, and groups are inspired to think of creative ways of demonstrating Christ’s love right where they are.

Mentoring is also a critical element of Capax Dei. So much of my research, as well as my ministry, indicates that this generation is looking for mentors—people who will spend time with them, listen to them, pray for them, and share their lives with them. The millennials are not looking for experts, but rather simply “regular people” who will help them navigate through difficult life decisions, not only by their words, but by the way they live their lives. Setran and Kiesling concur: “On the cusp of adulthood,

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4 Foster, Celebration of Discipline, 117-121.
twentysomethings need leaders who can teach and exemplify a vision of human flourishing that beckons them forth into a life of meaning and purpose.”

_Capax Dei_ is a good place to connect students with leaders who can fill that void. Students can choose from a wide variety of leaders, and if the first one is not a great fit, they can select another. Though the amount of one-on-one time that leaders can spend with the individuals in their groups will vary, even group time, ideally in the leader’s home, provides a relationship with a person who is there to help guide.

According to the CUPA Survey administered at Westmont in 2013 to approximately 40 percent of its students (classes of 2013 to 2016), the good news was that students had a “high and widespread Christian commitment, expressed primarily in relational and service-oriented acts.” The not-so-good news was that students had “diminishing contemplation and biblical practices,” and that graduating seniors “think less about God than first year students, lacking confidence in their faith that would motivate further growth.”

_Capax Dei_ groups help cultivate contemplation and biblical practices by providing time for reflection and meditation, including _lectio divina_. These, combined with teaching and processing in a supportive community, encourage students to have confidence in their faith. It is unfortunate that anyone graduates from a Christian college without being provided with enough tools for spiritual growth. If further research were to be conducted on _Capax Dei_ in the years ahead, it would be interesting to interview

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5 Setran and Kiesling, _Spiritual Formation in Emerging Adulthood_, 232

6 Westmont, “Christian Understanding, Practices, and Affections.”

7 Ibid.
participants five or ten years out of college to learn whether, or in what ways, the spiritual disciplines have influenced their faith journeys. It also might be revealing to compare those stories with the stories of graduates who never participated.

Certainly there are a number of ways that *Capax Dei* can be improved, as cited in this project. Yet, I wonder what it would be like if, instead of being a ministry of the campus pastor’s office only, it was part of a much broader vision for spiritual formation. Another idea is for the school to require student participation for at least a year, and to incorporate classroom instruction, pertinent reading, chapel topics, and outward mission experiences. Such a strategic plan would guarantee that every student had at least one year of immersion (and ideally more) in some of the best resources available, augmented by the Dallas Willard Center.

Addressing spiritual formation at a deeper level will graduate students who are equipped to take their faith into the workplace, their relationships, and the Church that many of them abandoned before college. When they re-enter the Church, as many of them will, they will bring with them a faith that has been shaped by spending time with God in solitude, strengthened by a community that cares for them, and stretched by the acts of compassion they have shown to their neighbors. In addition, they will bring their commitment to social justice that is a hallmark of their generation, as well as their creativity that will change the way that the Church of their parents’ era was done.

I conclude with a story that I wrote down the night I heard it. I wrote it down, in part, because it meant so much to me personally. But I also wrote it out of gratitude for the many ways that God had blessed this ministry.
I had the privilege of leading a group of students for all four of their years at Westmont. We had become very close, meeting once a week over those years, and this was our last time to be together before they graduated. We all felt emotional about going our separate ways, so it was no surprise that our gathering extended beyond the usual hour and a half.

When there was a break in the conversation, I asked them what had been the most spiritually significant experience they had had during their time at Westmont. One of the young women, who had paid her way through school and did not come from a Christian home, answered immediately: “It was being in this group for four years. Without it, I would have left Westmont. I will be honest—I’m afraid to not have this in the future. Here I can be myself and share and learn. I don’t know any other place like this.”

I am happy to report that her fears were unnecessary. She found a wonderful fellowship after college. A few years later, I was asked to officiate at her wedding, and her bridesmaids were her friends from our Capax Dei group. May there be many similar stories of students who grow deeply with God and one another at Westmont, and at other Christian colleges throughout the world.
APPENDIX A

CUPA Faculty Recommendations

Possible Recommendations

1. Are true literacy and proficiency realistic given students' baseline? How much (and where) can the academic curriculum help? What should be our goal for graduates?

2. Should we make first-year students aware of the problem and the challenge, to recruit them to the task of gaining proficiencies?

3. Should we integrate Bible and theology more deeply (yet naturally) across the curriculum? Where are good opportunities for individual faculty and departmental initiatives?

4. Should we encourage a Bible-bringing culture ("BYOB"? ) where community members are expected to bring Bibles to chapel, class, dorm discussions of various issues, church, prayer, study groups, daily devotion, personal study, expository preaching, and the like?

5. How can we encourage sustained practices of Bible reading among our students, across many semesters?

6. Should we require basic biblical literacy (with a test and/or basic Bible content course) as a prerequisite to RS GEs?

7. How can faculty model good theological judgment, not just offer exposure and critique?

8. Students perceive 'critical thinking' in terms of deconstruction and skepticism. Are there better labels for capturing its spirit?

9. Should we encourage our majors to integrate matters of Christian relevance and Christian identity more deeply into their final work (e.g., with a reflective essay in a capstone course?).

10. How and where can we address seniors' more sophisticated questions and faculties of judgment?

11. Could courses (especially Serving Society) help students inform and frame "Christian commitment" in more deeply theological and biblical ways?
   A. Kingdom of God (missional participation)?
   B. Virtues (faith, hope, love)?

12. How might staff and faculty grow our proficiency and confidence in fielding students' questions on biblical and theological matters?
   A. Faith-learning and Westmont Institute?
   B. Auditing RS GEs?
   C. Continuing education?
13. Should we separate assessment of faith-learning from
   A. data collection for tenure and promotion decisions?
   B. course evaluations?

14. Should we have standard faith-learning questions?
   A. "How have you grown in your Christian faith as a result of the activities of this
course?"
   B. "How have you developed Christian practices, affections, and virtues in this course?
   C. "How has this course contributed to Westmont's Christian liberal arts education?"
   D. Can departments have more freedom to decide where to assess faith-learning?

15. What do we consider 'essential' outcomes in RS-001, RS-010, and RS-020?
   A. What is 'important' but not essential?
   B. What is merely 'worthwhile'?

16. Students tend to oppose the Bible's 'human' qualities and its 'divine' qualities. Are
students learning a sufficient framework for understanding the Bible? Where should
that happen?

17. Should students be advised to delay taking RS GE courses until their biblical literacy
and critical judgment are better developed?

18. Should RS GEs be sequenced in a predictable way?

19. Should we pursue scholarship funding for semesters of sustained biblical/theological
study?

20. Should we require basic biblical literacy (with a test and/or basic Bible content course)
as a prerequisite to RS GEs?

21. How can the RS department (or others) help the college grow proficiencies, literacies,
and commitment?
   A. Should RS or others help 'plant' campus traditions such as a Bible preaching or
recitation tournament, 'Bible baseball' tournament, or others?
   B. Should RS faculty assist the Campus Pastor's office, Student Life, and the Dallas
Willard Center in training students for spiritual leadership in their dorms?
      i. piloting or focusing on Clark and Page?
      ii. as an upper-division Religious Studies course?
      iii. as a practicum?
      iv. outside the formal curriculum?

22. Others?
APPENDIX B

Evaluation of Off Campus Programs Retreat

1. The reentry will help me in my transition back
   1 – 0 2 – 0 3 – 8 4 – 24 5 – 9
   Average: 4.02

2. The sessions were relevant to my needs
   1 – 0 2 – 0 3 – 1 4 – 19 5 – 20
   Average: 4.475

3. I learned new things
   1 – 0 2 – 1 3 – 5 4 – 21 5 – 19
   Average: 4.31

4. I would recommend this reentry to other students
   1 – 0 2 – 0 3 – 0 4 – 18 5 – 27
   Average: 4.6

5. The setting was appropriate and comfortable
   1 – 0 2 – 0 3 – 0 4 – 3 5 – 36
   Average: 4.92

6. I would like to participate in other similar events
   1 – 0 2 – 0 3 – 8 4 – 14 5 – 18
   Average: 4.25

7. Please rate the sessions presented based on how useful, how interesting, and/or how enjoyable you found the session:
   a. Worship
      1 – 0 2 – 0 3 – 4 4 – 12 5 – 22
      Average: 4.47
   b. Reflection and Solitude
      1 – 0 2 – 0 3 – 6 4 – 3 5 – 31
      Average: 4.63
   c. Small Groups
      1 – 0 2 – 0 3 – 4 4 – 4 5 – 31
      Average: 4.69
   d. Large Group Sharing
      1 – 0 2 – 0 3 – 5 4 – 16 5 – 14
      Average: 4.26
   e. Growth Opportunities
      1 – 0 2 – 1 3 – 2 4 – 13 5 – 13
      Average: 4.31

8. Please summarize your reactions to the reentry:
   - It was much needed! My OCP experience was 2 semesters ago and I desperately needed something like this when I returned. Thank you for organizing this.
   - It was great and greatly appreciated.
   - Great site, good call on low-key status, loved the solo time
   - Good to talk and hear stories. Nice to know others are going through similar things
   - Best part was hearing things about other programs.
   - I was surprised to have so much solitude time this morning, but it was very nice and I would not have done it otherwise
   - Really enjoyed the solitude; small groups were great
   - Nice to see all faces of OCP students together
   - I was so thankful to have this chance to get away from the hustle and bustle – not to have to explain myself, but just be
   - It was great hearing about what others learned on their trips, but also good to articulate think about and recall what I experienced as well.
   - I really enjoyed the time of solitude – ir provided much needed rest and a time to just enjoy being alone with God and reflecting upon His goodness. I enjoyed the worship a lot and the small groups too! Overall, it was great and relaxing
   - The solitude time was really good. I don’t know that I would have been of any use in the small group without that time to myself.
• I appreciated the opportunity for focused reflection on my past semester. It was fun to be able to share with people having similar experiences.
• I really liked the small group time and recreation (although maybe the latter could be a little longer next time?) the food was great too!
• It was a good time / balance of events. However, I wish Ojai wasn’t that far away because it took awhile to get here, starting at 9 am.
• I really enjoyed the small group – how they included someone from each of the many OCP’s – I enjoyed hearing the experiences of others and finding connections with them through our differences.
• It was great to connect with other people and process everything together. The small group time was especially great.
• It was wonderful to hear about other’s experiences. And also to be able to share my own.
• It was a joy to know others had the same difficulty of sharing about their experiences in depth.
• It was great to share with others and to hear their experiences. God moved in so many ways, and will continue to do so.
• The retreat helped me by being able to share my experiences with others who understand a bit more where you are coming from.
• Good to have campus pastor’s office all here; appreciated talking with them.
• I was impressed and enjoyed the reentry. It was good to hear about other trips and the struggles they went through into relation to mine.
• Good time to talk, listen, share common experiences.
• Great all around, should be mandatory.
• Mice location, very good to see who else was abroad.
• I am very thankful for this time. I really appreciated having some solitude time.
• Better that I expected. Good chance to reflect in a group setting. Awesome people.
• It was very helpful to get together with others who understand what I was feeling.
• I appreciated the questions we had to think through during our quiet time.
• It was a very pleasant day but I felt I had already done a lot of “processing” so it wasn’t something that was super needed for me. However it was a great day and I think you should continue to do them.
• I am so thankful we had this. I can tell that prayer went into this event and I feel like the Lord used it in my life to help me through this time (which has been difficult).
• I really enjoyed hearing about other people’s experiences. My reentry has been relatively easy but I loved gathering and sharing all our stories.
• I loved it, it was so appropriate and well worked out. The questions were relevant and interesting. Well directed and insightful.
• Small group time was so valuable. Reflection time at the start of the day was perfect.

9. What changes would you suggest if this reentry session was offered again?
• 2 days! Maybe host it over a weekend and have one each semester.
• more questions to go over for small groups.
• more small group time.

120
• More worship
• Less letting us guide activities, issues worthy of addressing researched and provided for discussion
• Tell people to bring a couple of pictures from their trip for small group time
• Maybe a little less solitude time, maybe switch small groups so you get a chance to hear more experiences from various people
• Have people bring a few pictures to share. Tell people to bring Bibles and journals
• Don’t start until 10 AM
• Maybe have it be closer of have it start later in the morning. I fell asleep during solitude time
• Maybe 15 minutes more free time and less breakfast time
• Perhaps a little more recreational time and opportunities just to share experiences with each other
• A but more free time (separate from solitude)
• More small groups
• Put us in a couple different groups so we can share with more people
• More recreation time
• A little more time for recreation and a little more worship. Many of us haven’t been able to worship like this in awhile.
• More free time. Like 30 minutes more even would be fun. But other than that, seemed almost perfect
• I would allow for a little more free time and I would make the small groups much smaller, groups of 3 would have been better. This would allow people to share more. A group facilitator wouldn’t be necessary.
• It ran smoothly, great amount of time for small groups. Really enjoyed it.
• More free time. Just enough to do the zip line
• A little more time in the small groups

10. In future reentry sessions, what would you like us to focus on? Please elaborate.
• More small group time
• Allowing as you did, for reflection on the big, standard questions
• Go easy on yourself and don’t feel like everything has to be easy right away. It takes a long time to process this stuff
• Sharing between different OCP experiences, best moments, what was learned
• How experiences can be discussed with curious minds; different types of responses to “so! How was it?” Thank you all
• I thought it was great
• Small group and sharing interaction which helps us remember what we experienced and share it with others
• The things we talked about this time were great. Very helpful to talk to other OCP students about their experiences. What they did, learned, struggled with, etc. and be able to tell others about my experiences too
• Times of discussion between people who were at different OCP. This is valuable because I got to learn what different people were struggling with
• It was well done! Thank you very much for putting this together.
• All good – if anything more time, but I don’t know if that would be possible an
  still keep it at just one day.
• Focus on remembering everything and on taking meaning from it.
• Just do exactly this again.
• Vision  how can we (practically) bring back to Westmont the things we’ve
  learned?
• I loved hearing other people’s memories and experiences.
• How to go from here. How we can support each other.
• In reflection we need to give thanks for what Christ has done but also rejoice and
  celebrate through laughter and stories.
• I liked how it was.
• The group sharing was really fun and enjoyable and meaningful. Solitude time
  was great. Usually those times aren’t long enough – this was great!!
• I liked how the focus was pretty open ended – a good mix of remembering events,
  giving thanks for my off-campus experience and for what God has for me now at
  Westmont.
• Honestly, I thought that they were excellent.
APPENDIX C

CAPAX DEI REGISTRATION

What is Capax Dei?
Capax Dei (loosely translated, “Capacity for God”), is the name for the community of small groups that meet during the school year, sponsored by the Westmont Campus Pastor’s Office and the Dallas Willard Center for Spiritual Formation.

These groups are designed to be a place where you can learn to hear the voice of God in Scripture, make lifelong friendships, and find peace in the midst of sometimes busy and hectic lives.

What Does Capax Dei Look Like?
Capax Dei groups are led by a wide variety of Westmont staff, faculty, trustees, graduates, local pastors, and other trusted members of our community.

The specific format and content of each Capax Dei group varies according to the individual leaders, but most groups involve praying through scripture, quiet time and fellowship. Groups typically run about an hour and a half, and can meet on-campus or off-campus.

Groups begin the third week of school and continue for approximately 10 weeks, although some groups meet longer or shorter depending on circumstances. Meeting times are set by the leaders (see below).

Student sign ups happen during the first few weeks of the semester through the Campus Pastor’s Office. Once we receive your contact info and group preferences, we will place you in a group. Your leader will then contact you, and your group will begin!

Ready to sign up? Let’s get your information...

Name *
First & Last Name
Gender *

Year *
Current year at Westmont

Where do you live? *

Email *
Best email to reach you - please check it daily as this is how you will hear about being placed in a group.

Phone *
(XXX) XXX-XXXX

Would you need a ride to the group if it meets off campus? *

If you have a car, would you be willing to drive others to the group?
Rides are very important for our off campus groups

If you could drive others, number of seats available (excluding yourself)
If none, leave blank.

Were you in a Capax Dei group last semester? *

If yes, do you want to continue in the same group?

Name of Former Leader
If you want to continue in the same group, who was/were the leader(s) of your group?
APPENDIX D

Capax Dei Format - First Meeting

3:30-3:40* Relaxed time of refreshments and conversation

3:40-3:50 Introductions

A. Name, year in school, major, dorm, where do you consider home?
B. What is unique about you that few people know?

3:50-4:05 Establish expectations for the group

A. What Capax Dei is & what to expect
   a. Capax Dei means “capable of receiving & embodying divine life.”
   b. We will spend time in scripture, some of which will be lectio divina (which will be explained shortly).
   c. There will be time each week for solitude/listening to God.
   d. Each of us will have a chance to share our stories.
   e. Bring a Bible, journal and pen each week.
   f. (Optional) We will have two meals together during the course of the semester.
   g. (Question) What brought you to Capax Dei? What do you hope to gain through this time or how do you hope to grow?

B. Commitment
   a. Regular attendance is expected (plan ahead regarding studying for tests/papers in order to prioritize coming to this group). This week you can decide whether or not to join us if you have too many other commitments.
   b. We will start and end on time. The leader is available after the meeting if anyone has a question or concern.
   c. Take a look at the calendar to note any holidays or conflicts that will affect attendance.

C. Creating a safe group dynamic
   (Question) What are some things that would establish a sense of safety in our group? Add the following if not mentioned:
   a. Confidentiality
   b. Attentive listening
   c. No cell phone zone. If you are expecting a call or text that you need to take during the group time, please mention this at the beginning of the group.
   d. Provide the “Small Group Covenant” by Richard Peace.

4:05-4:15 Introducing lectio divina & practicing it together
A. Begin with prayer
C. Invite participants to be still for a short period of time and to sit comfortably with eyes closed as they listen.
D. The passage of scripture will be read four times. (Psalm 63:1-8)
   a. 1st reading: Bring senses and imagination to the first reading.
   b. 2nd reading: Listen for a word or phrase that stands out. If heard in this reading, speak the word or phrase out loud.
   c. 3rd reading: Ask: How might this word or phrase connect with my life right now?
   d. 4th reading: Allow the words in the passage to refresh and quiet you. There is no need to do anything but listen in this reading.

4:15-4:30 Send the students out individually to reflect on these *lectio divina* questions:
   a. How is my life touched by this word?
   b. What might God be saying to me through this word or phrase?
   c. Am I being encouraged to do something?
   d. What might God be inviting me to?

4:30-4:40 Group sharing about their individual experience reflecting on the questions/praying/journaling. Students can share on two levels. Either kind is welcome but none is required:

Level 1 response questions:
A. How was the individual experience for you?
B. Was finding connections easy or hard?
C. Was the invitation easy or hard to discern?
D. Did you notice anything else in the passage?

Level 2 response questions:
E. Is there anything you would like to share from what you sense God might be speaking to you?

4:40-4:50 Closing prayer

Prayer requests are not taken this time, but students are encouraged to pray with the group for a specific need which then will be affirmed in prayer by the leader or someone else in the group.

4:50-5:00 Wrapping up
A. Decide who will share their story at the next meeting
B. Have students review commitments for the semester and decide if they are able to participate in *Capax Dei* weekly.
C. Reminder to bring Bibles, journals and pens next week.

*Capax Dei* groups are held on different days and at different times. The above hours listed are only an example of approximate times allotted in the first meeting.
APPENDIX E

A Small Group Covenant

From *Contemplative Bible Reading*, by Richard Peace

The best way to launch any small group is with clear and agreed-upon expectations.

While you may wish to add others based on the special characteristics of your group, the following commitments are a good place to start.

- **Attendance**: I agree to be at the meeting each week unless a genuine emergency arises.

- **Preparation**: I will practice *lectio* during the week as I am able and share with the group some of what I find.

- **Participation**: I will enter enthusiastically into the group discussion and sharing. I will participate in the group *lectio* experiences willingly.

- **Prayer**: I will pray for the members of my small group and for our experience together.

- **Confidentiality**: I will not share with anyone outside of the group what is said during the group session.

- **Honesty**: I will be forthright and truthful in what I say.

- **Openness**: I will be candid with others in appropriate ways. I will allow others the freedom to be open in ways appropriate for them.

- **Respect**: I will not judge others, give advice, or criticize.

- **Care**: I will be open to the needs of each person in appropriate ways.

Signed: ____________________________________________

128
APPENDIX F

Capax Dei Feedback Summary - Summer 2016

Out of about 150 students involved in Capax Dei Fall and Spring semesters, 39 students and 7 Leaders responded to the survey. The following information is gleaned from the general trends I noticed in the data.

If you would like to see the actual survey raw data, including feedback data for individual groups, please email me at jopatter@westmont.edu.

General Impressions

As with last year’s survey, students who attended Capax Dei regularly mentioned two things they appreciated: space for God and community. They appreciated the space and time set aside every week to pray and be with God, and many felt that their groups had a positive and warm social dynamic that helped them feel like they were growing in community. Several also mentioned a growing appreciation for new faith practices and spiritual traditions (lectio divina, liturgical traditions, praying the Psalms, candles, object lessons, etc.).

Not surprisingly, students who attended regularly got much more out of the groups than students who didn’t. The only negative comments came from students who didn’t attend more than a few times, and in most cases they cited busyness and overcommitment as the reason they didn’t attend. All in all, students expressed hunger for more regular time with God, a close mentor-mentee relationship with a spiritual elder, exposure to new spiritual disciplines, and space to grow in faith and friendship with other believers.

In general, Capax Dei Leaders enjoyed having smaller groups (4-6 members in contrast to last year’s 7-10 members). They loved investing personally in students’ lives, and the permission to be still in God’s presence. In the future, they would appreciate even earlier signups, the presence of co-leaders, and more “in house” study guides. A few mentioned wanting to have an online file sharing location and a leader retreat.

Student Feedback for Leaders:

Personal feedback for leaders was almost exclusively positive; students used such words as “encouraging, welcoming, great listeners, insightful, warm, supportive,” to describe their leaders. Students love their leaders, and are extremely appreciative of them.

Things to work on:

“More communication about transportation, perhaps make transportation easier with a sign up sheet for rides”

“Our group started late, which was fine, but we weren’t informed ahead of time, so I thought we were just forgotten about.”

“Transportation!!! It can be incredibly frustrating to have something like Capax Dei
hampered by not being able to find a ride"
"More groups, more variety of meeting times"
"Make the group descriptions more accurate"

Some standout quotes about how students learned/grew during Capax Dei:

"I have developed a deeper understanding of Jesus' presence with me as I pray"
"I had always known that God is with us, but leaving a space (chair, candle, etc) for
Jesus to enter and join was especially significant for me. I'd never practiced leaving a
physical reminder of God's presence during prayer."
"I built relationships with students I never knew before, who helped me grow in my
spiritual walk this semester."
"[I learned] a new type of prayer: . . . showing a sense of anger and aggression (lament)
towards God."
"We used the common book of prayer, which I had never even heard of before."
"I didn't know any of the people in my group very well, but I think it was cool how all of
us were brought together by the desire to make God a priority in our lives."
"I learned to praise God through the Psalms"
"This semester has been busy and Capax Dei was the one time I knew that I could find
support and loving prayer from my group."
"I learned to invite God to sit with me as I pray and appreciate the silence"
"Capax Dei was an incredible space to grow closer to girls in my group, as well as
experience Christ in the midst of a crazy week."
"I loved getting off campus once a week for quiet and community."
"I liked that this year my Capax Dei group had students of each year, hearing from
students who are seniors was really encouraging to me this semester."
"I learned about the Old Testament more in depth"

When asked about which factors were important when selecting a group:
• Evening groups were the most desired, followed by afternoon groups, followed by
  morning groups
• Meeting near campus was most desired, followed by meeting off campus
• An overwhelming majority of students said having snacks was an important factor in
  their group decision
• More students wanted a same-sex group rather than a co-ed group

Student suggestions for future groups
• Sexuality, Christian relationships
• God's will, suffering and pain
• Gratitude
• More Psalms / Proverbs
• Service
• Focus on particular books of the Bible

Students identified these as the more pressing spiritual needs at Westmont:
• Chronic busyness
• True community in the midst of a busy schedule
• Digesting the multiple inputs of chapel, RS GE's, Church, Capax Dei so that faith doesn't become something to check off a list
• Openly discussing faith without being looked down on for being open about loving Christ
• One-on-one mentors to help students through 'taboo' controversial issues, and training in how to discuss these things with others
• Vulnerability
• Stress and anxiety
• Loneliness, prayer, adjustment to freshman year
• Christian doctrine and response to global issues (terrorism, LGTBQ, etc.)
• Rest, peace, devotion time and relational health
• Prayer

Once again, I thank you all for your excellent work in investing in our students' lives! I pray that this feedback encourages you deeply and gives you a sense of God's leading.

Warmly,
Joel
APPENDIX G
Leader Solicitation Letter

Dear Friend,

For a number of years, it has been recognized that our students need help connecting what they believe about God with a life that can guide them into a deeper relationship with him. In response, the Capax Dei spiritual formation group program was begun and has been operating with increasing success for the past several years. Capax Dei means "the embodying of divine life" and is used to indicate the ongoing development of the character and life of Christ in us.

This program is made possible through the grace of God and the amazing commitment of Westmont faculty, staff and alumni to lead these groups. As the number of students participating in this program increases, so does our need for leaders. You are receiving this letter because your name has been recommended as someone who possesses the character, understanding, and love needed for this task.

We are asking that you prayerfully consider becoming a small group leader this year. Assisting six to eight college men or women as they make the journey toward growth in their walk with Christ is both a daunting task and a grand privilege. The thirst for more of God in our college community is substantial and the benefits of participation far outweigh the investment of time and energy.

If you would like to lead a group OR are interested in exploring further, please mark your calendar for Saturday, August 18th. We will meet for breakfast, together with current group leaders, at 9 a.m. at Montecito Covenant Church. We will discuss the vision, purpose and logistics of this ministry, and pray together for this new year. At the end, a brief general training will be provided for returning leaders and those who feel they would like to join in this ministry.

In addition, Gary and Regina Moon, from the Dallas Willard Center for Spiritual Formation, have offered to introduce a curriculum that can be used to further the goals of Capax Dei. Regina will offer a brief explanation of the vision of this curriculum as well as a mentoring program for leaders interested in trying it out.

Please contact the Campus Pastor's at coatkins@westmont.edu by August ____ if you are interested or just want to explore the possibility further.

Blessings in Christ,

Capax Dei Leadership Team
Ben Patterson, Lauretta Patterson, Colleen Atkinson, Lisa Call, Regina Moon
Guided Reflection for Solitude

“A man prayed, and at first he thought that prayer was talking. But he became more and more quiet until in the end he realized that prayer is listening.”
-Soren Kierkegaard-

Some suggestions for your time of Solitude

1) It is tempting to try to “organize” this time with lots of reading, writing, thinking, and prayer agendas. Instead, with Bible and journal in hand, come into God’s presence and “with the eyes of your heart” imagine him sitting across from you. After some time of sitting silently with him, Jesus might ask you (as he does so often in the gospels): “Why have you come?” or “What can I do for you?” Take all of the time you need to respond, and consider journaling your response. After a time, you might have a question for Jesus, such as: “What can I do for you?” Again, have your pen ready as you listen closely to what comes to you.

Does Jesus actually communicate with us like that? John 10:27 says: “My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me…” Learning to discern God’s voice from all the others that want our attention takes time, quiet, and expectancy.

2) Consider one or more of the following passages of Scripture and allow them to ask questions of you that will guide your conversation and journaling with Jesus:

Psalm 103: 1-5

What are the benefits of knowing God? What sins do you need to have him forgive? What diseases (addictions, compulsions, habits) do you need to have him heal? What does it look like to be redeemed from the pit? What does it mean to you to be “crowned” with love and compassion? What do you deeply desire? In what ways does the Holy Spirit renew your youth?

Mark 10: 46-52

Imagine that you are one of the people in this story. Become present to what is going on-who in this story might you be? What emotions do you experience as this participant? Pay particular attention for a word or phrase that stands out to you and stay with it for a while.
Might God be prompting you to respond in some way to the word(s) that stand out to you? Is there an action to take, a confession to make, a burden to acknowledge?

**Mark 9:33-37**

What does Jesus mean when he says that we must become as little children if we wish to enter the Kingdom of Heaven? What are the qualities of a small child that are especially needed in our relationship with God? Which of these qualities do you need to revisit at the present time in your life?

**John 14:1-16**

Close your eyes after reading this passage and try to imagine Jesus speaking these words to you. What would they mean to you? Repeat those words of Jesus that have special value for you; savor them joyfully. Does this open up a conversation with him? Are there questions you might like to ask him?

3) Consider taking a passage of scripture, such as one of these listed below, and stay with it for the entire retreat. As you reflect upon it, notice what stands out to you. Ask God if there is something he desires to speak with you about in this passage. For further reflection, consider memorizing it.

- Psalm 16
- Psalm 25
- Isaiah 55
- Colossians 1:9-14
- Colossians 3:1-17
- 1 Peter 1:13-25
The above are a few ways that you can approach this time with God. The most important part is to give the Holy Spirit time to speak-through Scripture, His creation, or through promptings or leadings. The good news is that God not only does not condemn us if we struggle with stillness, but He shapes us there. He is a patient and gentle instructor, and His desire to be with you is far greater even than your desire to be with him. May God richly bless you as you seek his face!

“I call to you, O Lord, from my quiet darkness. Show me your mercy and love. Let me see your face, hear your voice, touch the hem of your cloak. I want to love you, be with you, speak to you and simply stand in your presence. But I cannot make it happen. Pressing my eyes against my hands is not praying, and reading about your presence is not living in it. But there is that moment in which you will come to me, as you did to your fearful disciples, and say ‘Do not be afraid; it is I.’ Let that moment come soon, O Lord. And if you want to delay it, then make me patient. Amen.”

-From A Cry for Mercy by Henri J.M. Nouwen

Jesus taught his disciples to be in solitude not only for the purpose of being with God, but for listening to what was going on inside of them- the things that were exhausting them, the things they were in denial about, and the things that they feared. It is no less important to be in touch with these things today which underscores the need for the spiritual discipline of solitude.
Can you give us an example of how one of the above statements played out?

Talked about how to know what is God's presence in people's lives acting through the spirit/ what is idol worship. How to be accepting and how to speak truth.

Dr. Lee's group functioned in a Lutheran style, with periods of silence. This was unfamiliar to me but now I appreciate the value of silence for prayer.

I really enjoyed learning more about the intentionality behind liturgy and discovering the symbolism within it. We cover a lot of passages that were great about dealing with grief and growing the Christian life. It's just been really neat to learn about prayer and practice it in a manner so different from how I usually pray. I never considered prior doing call and responses with the psalms.

I learned to be more okay with praying the sad Psalms and I feel like I was able to be more personal with God in a different way than ever before.

As we would read through the Psalms, I really enjoyed others' interpretations of the exact same passage that I had never thought about before.

The major study we did was Lectio Divina - I had not previously heard of it before, so it was a new approach to reading the Bible to me. Now that I am way more familiar with it, I do Lectio Divina during my own devotional time, and it has definitely grown me in my faith and walk with God.

I pray daily in odd places, and I am more aware of God's goodness and grace in all aspects of my life. The prayer and calm atmosphere of Capax Del greatly helped me in this.

I looked more deeply into each passage we read.

We went throughout the semester reading a book and talking it through and comparing it with our lives.

I was really unsatisfied for a time with my faith, and just learned lector divina and learning how to find rest in God made a ton of difference.

I learned how to read scripture in a new way through lectio divina, something I enjoyed very much.

Learning to be silent

When we were reading Esther, we paired it with a passage from the Apocryphal version, which brought new richness to the canonical version.

I have been challenged to seek out the lessons God is teaching in my life.

I experienced what it was like to hear the same passage repeated over and over, and listen for God in that time.

We went through a liturgical way of praying and reading scripture and it provided a way to pray and read differently than I'm used to.

Learning how to deal with worry and anxiety through prayer.

Since coming to my faith I have had a hard time understanding certain aspects of how to live as a Christian or why. This has helped me get a grasp of it.

Silent time

I had never really used scriptures as direct prayer before. I had previously used it as a reference for what I
should pray for, but incorporating it even further into my prayer was a new experience for me. Kristen gave us a safe space to experience silence in the presence of God and then helped us be open about how it really felt. We were able to confess discomfort, etc., and she walked us through with nothing but loving support. I really developed a deepened appreciation, comfort, and ability to do this with God. When we started doing lectio divina I was slightly weirded out at first because that wasn't what I expected, but I slowly grew comfortable and came to enjoy that time of just being silent and meditating on God's word.

We would read scripture and meditate on it.

I learned a new way of prayer by reading and singing hymns that were common amongst monks back in the day. It was very interesting and something new that I have never experienced before.

Reading and praying through the Psalms was new to me as I had never done both at the same time.

I became very close with the girls in my group, which is a different experience from the last capax dei group I was a part of.

One of our group was a lot more spiritualistic and it was interesting the way she was interpreting Genesis and the interactions between light and dark and other parts of creation.

I learned to be more comfortable with being silent in God's presence by spending time during Capax Dei in silence and in prayer.

I felt that the lectio divina helped me to feel close to God and see the scriptures in a different way that can help me see God more clearly in my devotional times.

We did all of our reading from the Old Testament, and I learned that the OT can be just as enriching as the NT!

We would read bible passages slowly and that helped me learn how to read the Word more deeply.

We had one lesson on prayer and how to communally pray together.

I now write out my prayers much more often than not, which has given me important realizations about my own life's complexities. I have also become a lot more comfortable with alone time and solitude because I have come to know that this is space that I need with God.

I learned to look at scripture in a way I had never done before, in not only picking out a verse, but picking out a verse through the context of the WHOLE Bible.

I have learned to marinate in the Word, versus just reading it.

I was surprised by how much I enjoyed going through the common book of prayer and actually plan and integrating that into my own devotions.

I am more comfortable with simply being in God's presence and quieting my heart.

Jim asked how we read and studied scripture, then instructed us on how we could more deeply and meaningfully engage with it.

Taking aside time to read Stan Gaede's book every week made me stop the craziness of college life for an hour and reflect on how God works in our lives in a less boisterous way, but sometimes in a quieter way where you have to seek him out but know that his goodness is in everything.

Have really loved getting closer with the brothers I have in that group. We get stoked on capax dei together.
What did you like about Capax Dei?

I liked how it was a time to touch base with others in a small group setting about the challenges and joys they are facing and to also make a time outside of chapel, church and my own devotions to listen to God.

Meeting and building relationships with new people and having the opportunity to discuss God together while studying scripture.

I loved the community and friendship that was formed through gathering together in order to dig into God's word and understand his presence with us.

The guys in the group are great and we formed a really close bond.

Food, professor's house, solitude, respite, more scripture, hymns, chanting

Being able to experience liturgy in an intimate setting and learn more about church traditions along with it.

I liked the provision of space and rest that it gave.

Intellectual spiritual conversation that incorporated aspects of our personal experience

The time away and in the presence of God

I loved my leader and the topics.

Among other things, my group leader and group members. I do not think I would have gotten as much out of Capax Dei as I did had I been in a different group.

I liked how low key it was, with no outside "prep"

Meeting new people and getting to know not just a professor, but their family also.

I like the community. :)

The new community of girls I found and the spiritual resource of my leader.

silent time

Everything

The long-term mentorship, and a touch-base point every week.

I enjoyed having people to spend time with and pray and support each other.

cookies, Kihlstrom, new freshman friends, Kihlstrom

I enjoy the small group setting

It was a comfortable place to study God's word more and I enjoyed just being together with the group, and

Perla was great too!

Honestly, EVERYTHING

It was great to be in a male-only group because I feel like at Westmont, that is often tough to do.

Spending more time with a faculty member and other students.

I loved the community and the opportunity to talk about what God has done in history and today.

Small group. Intentionality. The wisdom that Ben has to share

It's personal. The people and the leaders get to know you and the more you spend time with them the more you can open up and be supported spiritually and emotionally.

Learning experience
Community, snacks, going to a safe place off campus, being with people of different ages
Set time with God
everything: our discussions, my leaders, the friendships I made, plus there was always home baked goodies
informative, comfortable to be able to speak with Christians about the faith with questions that are sometimes
uncomfortable to ask.
I liked the fellowship.
A sense of belonging, even if for only a short time. A place centered on intentional pursuit of God.
Getting to know one of my professors and their family and eat yummy food while being in a home
Lisa Call - best leader who has taught me so much about grace and trusting God
I loved that I got to share discipleship with a faculty member and other students.
I loved the community of brothers that taught me about Christian masculinity.
Snacks, a place to be calm, and a place to talk about my week.
not one that a lot of people have experience with.
The practice of fasting; the discipline of being still; giving oneself grace in humility
current social issues and how they tie into our faith
Make the theme of the semester opportunities? and focus on how God calls us to all do different things for
him, and how we can achieve this as college students.
share about our weeks/walks
Manhood
Maybe more obscure Old Testament stories. I feel like there are so many I'm unfamiliar with.
Keep up the good work!
Dealing with stress
not really
Including experiences from other denominations. It would be healthy for the campus to experience worship as
other denominations do (Catholic, Orthodox, Anglican, etc).
None that I can think of
Not really
In your opinion, what are some of the biggest spiritual needs among Westmont students?

Peace, courage, initiative

The value of prayer is kind of lost among the students. When they're told to pray about something it, even though in their heads they might know the value of it, in their hearts they feel like they're doing nothing. Daily Bible reading is also hard with the busy schedules.

Talking about suffering and also reminding our self's that Jesus is enough.

Value of Prayer

strengthening and putting more emphasis on community

Finding time to connect with God, and being more intentional about faith instead of just going to chapel every other day

spiritual disciplines, because we have very little discipline in most areas of our life, to be honest.

A realistic, God-centered life vision that doesn't set us up for grandiose expectations that ultimately are not what God necessarily has planned for us.

They need accountability and community. There is a lot of false community and surface level community that occurs on the campus. There needs to be deeper, committed relationships. Westmont students also need to develop more sensitivity to other viewpoints, instead of assuming that everyone thinks about God just as they do.

feeling they have a strong christian community— which capax die allows for

Getting a mentor that they have access to and are willing to talk to.

To feel accepted when they aren't excelling

Patients and quiet

figuring out what to do after westmont

I think the average student needs more discipline in their spiritual lives.

Revival

We need to work on being global, I know we encourage students to go abroad, but not all students can. I knew nothing about Australia until I studied there, I think it's important to establish a global mindset through the Bible and understanding to pray for the world as a whole.

venting and openness
Identity in Christ; once we have that identity, what do we do with it? How can we move forward to help others find their identity? I felt like commitment and accountability seem to be an issue. Students seem to be very caught up in their studies/event and often minimize set apart time for spiritual growth/relationships/etc (which is the point of Capax Dei).

I think being able to learn how to pray and just how to nurture our spiritual life/relationship with God is important, for we either don’t know how, don’t know what to do, or don’t take time for it.

Love and acceptance for one another as well as an openness to the Holy Spirit.

To be challenged and stretched, not to stay comfortable.

I think we are all hurting and need a space to be a mess. Westmont culture makes it seem like we always have to be put together, but I know none of us really are. It’s hard to constantly hide.

An understanding of the outside world, not to be the judge but to extend more grace, for this to happen we need to know each other and others more.

I think that we need to go deeper down into each other’s faith and how we can help each other instead of staying on a very shallow level and moving across. Westmont students need to have a community that goes beyond the surface level.

I believe that Westmont students need to be more active in their faith. Whether that be by ministering to others, volunteering off campus with their Capax Dei groups or prophesy over people, it needs to happen.

Consistency in attending a group, being committed to a small group for all four years.

The ability to be quiet and still in prayer. Westmont students, including myself, often get very caught up in the busyness of life and forget to slow things down and spend quiet time with God. Capax Dei was a great time for that.

I think one of the biggest spiritual needs is to find spiritual community beyond just immediate comfortable friend groups, which I think capax deo does very well.

Endurance in the Lord through tough times, constant focus on God.

Being strong in the faith despite how the world seems to be pushing the other way.

Dealing with stress

Not to be complacent because we’re in a Christian school.

Someone to listen without judgement.

COMMUNITY. People here need to learn what real community looks like and how to come to each other embracing our mutual brokenness and our mutual savior.

Lust, loneliness and other relational difficulties; and feelings of anxiety and inferiority, or pride.
APPENDIX J

2014/15 LEADER EVALUATION: COMMENTS

How did the students grow?

Students got much more comfortable with liturgical worship over the course of the semester/year. Students also got more comfortable reading scripture aloud in a group setting. Some students shared some very vulnerable personal struggles in the group, as well.

Hmmm. Some shy ones found their voice. Able to pray out loud. Also, I saw how girls grew more comfortable with being silent in the company of the Lord. They were given permission to be "unproductive" (in the eyes of the world) by being still.

One of our women has been with us for three years now. She has grown substantially in her wisdom and in her relationships with other people. We have watched her grow in those relationships and make better decisions with her life.

My memory is that most of them grew in their prayer life through praying the Psalms in ways they were not accustomed to.

I think that they really learned from praying together as a group. Most students wanted to spend time learning how to pray since they had not had much experience praying in groups. I also think that the discipline of spending quiet time with the Lord was helpful in a busy college environment. And lastly I think they became aware of using "Christian language" carefully. We had on student who was unfamiliar with christian lingo, phrases that may not be understandable to those in non evangelical tradition!!!

One girl said she has grown a lot in realizing the importance of prioritizing God and time spent with him. She said, "Last semester I would have skipped Capax Dei on a week like this because I'm so busy and stressed, but now I feel I need to be here BECAUSE I'm so busy and stressed." Several other girls agreed with her.

We've also seen them grow more confident about praying aloud together in a group, and more comfortable sharing and opening up.

I think the students were exposed to ways of worshiping that they were not familiar with, not just during our group, but in conversations about liturgy and hearing other's experiences. Conversations afterwards helped one student see that not all issues (gay rights, affirmative action, etc.) are as simple as we would like them to be. Students are on both ends of the spectrum and need guidance and education (not just liberal education!) in forming their values.

It was easier for them to share their feelings and in some it was visibly noticeable and even voiced.

Too early to be certain, but Brad's grasp of the gospel seems to have grown.

Several of them were somewhat reserved at first but I think the atmosphere of safety encouraged them to really open up after a few weeks. At the beginning, no one really wanted to pray out loud but by the time the semester ended, they all were sharing needs and praying for each other.

They were more responsive to questions as the weeks went on

Istanbul group continued to develop in the area of spiritual disciplines
Anything else you'd like to say?

Thanks for supporting us as leaders!

Thank you so much for all the support.

I enjoyed my group and found eating together was helpful and a time to relax, I wish I had more time to meet with each individually but could not do that during the semester.

Thanks for providing an opportunity!

It surprised me how much the women loved being with someone my age - a grandmother!! :)

Another year of doing our best to give whatever we have been given... Sometimes it's a home run; mostly it's just showing up and trusting that God is up to something.

We had a terrific experience, and when (if) our very busy schedule opens up a bit we'll be sure to volunteer again.

It is so rewarding and just wonderful to grow in God together.

Kim and I did small groups with students for many years until she was ill and we loved it. It was nice to be back at it again. Being able to help populate the group through the Capax Dei process was really helpful.

Thanks for the nudge to lead a Capax Dei group. It has been a really valuable experience. Since he's local, I'm hoping to keep meeting with Brad throughout the summer.
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