

## ABSTRACT

### **Overflow in Young Christian Leaders: Factors Leading to Emptiness or Fullness**

by

Carey D. Akin

This study addresses why many young Christian leaders in challenging settings find themselves spiritually depleted rather than spiritually full in ministry. To answer this question as to why these young, effective leaders soon become depleted would result in potential solutions to allow them to be impactful in Christian witness and ministry over a lifetime as they serve from a spiritual overflow. The source of depletion and infilling was explored through insights into spiritual formation and direction, mentor relationships, and spiritually emotional health. The importance of family health and ministry networking also lend important understanding to an infilling that led to an overflow in the life of young Christians.

Richard Foster's writings, in particular, *Streams of Living Water*, through his historical analysis, provides a template for spiritual traditions over the history of the church that have led to spiritual infilling and overflow.

The purpose of this study is to research this issue of spiritual depletion and spiritual overflow through interviewing 12 Christian Leaders (nine young leaders and three mature leaders) and perform 45 surveys with young Christian leaders across three distinct cultures, in three different continents, to identify common denominators to spiritual depletion and fullness.

The findings from this research conclude that spiritual fullness or emptiness was affected most significantly by one's relationship with God and one's other relationships with mentors, family, church, and Christian networks.

DISSERTATION APPROVAL

This is to certify that the dissertation entitled  
**Overflow in Young Christian Leaders:  
Factors Leading to Fullness or Emptiness**

presented by  
Carey D. Akin

has been accepted towards fulfillment  
of the requirements for the  
DOCTOR OF MINISTRY degree at  
Asbury Theological Seminary

\_\_\_\_\_  
Dissertation Coach

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Director, Doctor of Ministry Program

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Dean of the Beeson Center

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

Overflow in Young Christian Leaders:  
Factors Leading to Emptiness or Fullness

A Dissertation

Presented to the Faculty of  
Asbury Theological Seminary

In Partial Fulfillment  
Of the Requirements for the Degree  
Doctor of Ministry

by

Carey D. Akin

May 2017

© YEAR 2017

Carey D. Akin

**ALL RIGHTS RESERVED**

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
LIST OF TABLES .....	ix
LIST OF FIGURES .....	x
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS .....	xi
CHAPTER 1 NATURE OF THE PROJECT .....	1
Overview of the Chapter .....	1
Personal Introduction .....	2
Statement of the Problem .....	7
Purpose of the Project .....	7
Research Questions .....	7
Research Question #1 .....	7
Research Question #2 .....	8
Research Question #3 .....	8
Rationale for the Project .....	8
Definition of Key Terms .....	11
Delimitations .....	12
Review of Relevant Literature .....	13
Research Methodology .....	15
Type of Research .....	17
Participants .....	18
Data Collection .....	19
Data Analysis .....	19

Generalizability .....	21
Project Overview .....	22
<b>CHAPTER 2 LITERATURE REVIEW FOR THE PROJECT.....</b>	<b>23</b>
Overview of the Chapter.....	23
Biblical/Theological Foundations.....	24
The Father of Compassion .....	24
The God of Comfort.....	25
Christ who Overflows into Believers Lives.....	26
Reliance on God and the Prayers of God’s People .....	29
Sharing in Christ’s Sufferings Leads to Overflow.....	30
Connection to the True Vine (Jesus Christ) Leading to Fruit.....	32
The Father as the Gardener to Create New Growth.....	33
Old Testament Concept of Israel as the Vine (Foreshadowing of What is to Come).....	34
Remaining in Christ (A Dwelling Place) .....	36
Review of Literature .....	39
The Necessity of Being Empty to Be Filled to Overflowing.....	39
The Secret to Being Spiritually Full .....	42
The Secret of Being Spiritually Full Through the Body of Christ.....	44
The Importance of Passionate Meditation .....	45
Christ’s Presence Found in Community .....	49
Charisma – Spiritual Life Through the Holy Spirit .....	50
Streams of Living Water as a Model for Spiritual Fullness.....	53

The Contemplative Stream of Living Water.....	56
The Holiness Stream of Living Water .....	59
Wesley’s Major Contribution to Holistic Holiness.....	60
The Charismatic Stream of Living Water .....	63
The Compassion Stream of Living Water .....	63
The Evangelical or Word-Centered Stream of Living Water .....	66
The Incarnational or Sacramental Stream of Living Water .....	67
The Role of Culture in Relationships that Lead to Spiritual Fullness .....	68
Research Design Literature .....	73
Summary of Literature .....	75
<b>CHAPTER 3 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY FOR THE PROJECT.....</b>	<b>79</b>
Overview of the Chapter.....	79
Nature and Purpose of the Project .....	79
Research Questions.....	81
Research Question #1 .....	81
Research Question #2 .....	81
Research Question #3 .....	83
Ministry Context(s).....	84
Participants.....	85
Criteria for Selection .....	85
Description of Participants .....	86
Ethical Considerations .....	86
Instrumentation .....	87



Pilot Test or Expert Review .....	87
Data Collection .....	87
Data Analysis .....	93
Reliability & Validity of Project Design .....	94
Reliability & Validity of the Interviews .....	95
Reliability & Validity of the Surveys .....	96
Survey #1 .....	97
Survey #2 .....	97
CHAPTER 4 EVIDENCE FOR THE PROJECT .....	99
Overview of the Chapter .....	99
Participants .....	102
Research Question #1: Description of Evidence .....	106
Qualitative Semi-Structured Interviews .....	106
Lack of Prayer/Lack of Intimacy with God .....	107
Overly Busy/Lack of Time .....	107
Reasons for Lack of Time .....	108
Negative Stress Due to Family .....	110
Habitual Sin .....	111
Physical and Emotional Factors .....	111
Lack of Financial Resources .....	112
Isolation in Ministry .....	113
Survey Findings .....	114

Research Question #2: Description of Evidence .....	116
Qualitative Semi-Structured Interviews .....	116
Spiritual Fruit in Ministry .....	117
Family Spiritual Health.....	118
Deep Personal Relationship with God .....	119
Mentors and Mentoring.....	120
Personal Testimonies and Visions .....	123
Survey Findings.....	127
Research Question #3: Description of Evidence .....	129
Qualitative Semi-Structures Interviews.....	130
Times of Restoration with God.....	132
Technology for Ministry .....	132
Mentoring Program.....	133
Networking and Partnerships.....	133
Summary of Major Findings.....	135
The Significance of Mentors .....	135
Family as a Key in Being Spiritually Full or Empty .....	135
The Value of Testimonies, Visions, and Purpose .....	136
The Importance of Networking Relationships and Resources .....	137
The Importance of Spiritual Practices and Spiritual Traditions: Prayer and a Personal Relationship with God .....	137
CHAPTER 5 LEARNING REPORT FOR THE PROJECT .....	140
Overview of the Chapter .....	140
Major Findings.....	141

First Finding .....	141
Second Finding.....	143
Third Finding .....	145
Fourth Finding .....	147
Fifth Finding.....	149
Ministry Implications of the Findings.....	152
Limitations of the Study.....	155
Unexpected Observations .....	155
Recommendations.....	156
Postscript .....	159

#### APPENDICES

1. Informed Consent Letter Templates .....	161
Interview Informed Consent Letter.....	161
Survey 1 Informed Consent Letter.....	162
Survey 2 Informed Consent Letter.....	163
2. Survey/Interview/Questionnaire Schedule and Questions.....	164
Semi-Structured Qualitative Survey Interview Script .....	164
Survey 1 .....	169
Survey 2 .....	170

WORKS CITED .....	172
-------------------	-----

WORKS CONSULTED .....	176
-----------------------	-----

## LIST OF TABLES

	Page
Table 111.1. Interview Ages .....	103
Table 111.2. Survey Ages .....	103
Table 112.1. Interview Genders .....	104
Table 112.2. Survey Genders .....	104
Table 113.1. Interview Locations .....	105
Table 113.2. Survey Locations .....	105
Table 122.1. Survey 1 – What Causes Spiritual Emptiness – By Region .....	114
Table 123.1. Survey 1 – What Causes Spiritual Emptiness – All Regions .....	115
Table 134.1 Survey 2 – Spiritual Practices that Lead to Overflow .....	127
Table 135.1 Survey 2 – Spiritual Traditions Leading to Spiritual Overflow.....	129

## LIST OF FIGURES

	Page
Figure 1. Cup Overflowing.....	99
Figure 2. Cross .....	149

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am truly thankful to Asbury Theological Seminary and the Beeson Program for affording me the opportunity to further my studies and for the growth I have experienced both intellectually and spiritually as a result of this journey.

I am grateful to Dr. Ellen Marmon, Dr. Milton Lowe, and the DMin staff without whose encouragement, assistance, and prayer this research and the benefits that may result from it would not have been possible. Personal thanks to Dr. Russell West for a conversation at Mary Mac's that led me on this journey and for his 'out of the box' way of thinking that has inspired me to try and do the same.

I want to thank my beautiful wife (inside and out) who has not only allowed me to pursue my passion and calling in missions ministry, despite all the time away, but for over the last three years allowed me to do double duty in missions and the DMin program, so I might be usable in greater ways for God's purposes in mission to the world for God's kingdom. This is only one of the many reasons I love her so much!

I need to give HUGE thanks to Heather Wood, my Administrative Assistant, for all the time and energy she spent assisting me with both missions at Mt. Bethel and research and editing in order that both could be done well while I was drinking from this fire hydrant called the Beeson Program/full-time missions ministry.

I need to thank Mark Young, our Director of Missions, for carrying more than his fair share of the load during this time in order that I could complete this project and God could still use us to impact lives through missions at Mt. Bethel. With both Heather and Mark, I am thankful to not only call them co-laborers for the gospel but also true friends.

I am also thankful for Mt. Bethel UMC, Mt. Bethel Missions, and all the wonderful followers of Jesus who have traveled with me on this journey and helped me along the way, especially the men and women who took the time to share in being a journey partner with me: Dan Boswell, Ferrell Coppedge, Steve Franks, Barbara Lester, Charlie Marus, and Mark Young.

I am grateful to Wes Griffin for his encouragement and help along the way as a mentor and as one who could guide me, having walked this road before.

I want to thank Randy Mickler for having the vision to encourage me to take on the role of Missions Pastor at Mt. Bethel UMC and leading us into becoming an outward-focused church for the sake of the gospel.

I owe a debt of gratitude to Mike Mozley (Michael) and Steve Bell who inspired me as to God's heart for missions and stirred me to want to make that my heart as well.

Last and most importantly, I am thankful to Jesus Christ who saved me when I did not deserve it and has stayed close to me over the years when I have been much less than I should have been. He has done more in my life than anything I could have dreamed of - to not only save me but give me a calling and purpose that is far beyond anything I could have imagined. It is my prayer that the remainder of my life would be given to Him and this calling through living as one fully surrendered and filled with His presence and power for His glory.

## CHAPTER 1

### Overview of the Chapter

First, the autobiographical section will share how God worked through events and stirred my heart through the Holy Spirit to have a passion to explore how to pour into the lives of young Christian leaders around the world. Then, the problem will be researched regarding these young Christian leaders and the depletion or emptiness they often experience due to their challenging circumstances. Next, the purpose will be identified in leading young leaders to overflow, and the three research questions targeting spiritual emptiness or fullness will be listed. These questions are followed by a number of reasons identifying the rationale for this project. The key terms regarding this spiritual issue are defined so that the technical or unfamiliar terms are clearly understood. Next, the limitations to this project are identified.

Several limitations are listed, and then a brief description of the relevant literature that will be mentioned. Next, the type of research methodology that will be explained followed by identifying the type of research and why it is useful. Next, details about the type of participants that were used for this project to obtain the necessary data will be listed. Then, a description of how the data was collected according to valid research methods will be given. The generalizability will ascertain the probability that others interested in this research could replicate this study could receive similar results.

Finally, there will be a brief overview of the entire project so that the reader can have a greater understanding of what this project will entail and what one can expect to gain as a result of this research.



### **Personal Introduction**

It was in January 2007 when a gentleman from our church and I arrived at Entebbe International Airport in Uganda during the night. After another several hours in a van, we arrived at a small hotel near downtown Kampala around midnight. As a man was escorting me to my room, the power went off, and the entire hotel went black. Since Justin, the gentleman I was with, had been escorted to a room somewhere else, I found myself alone, in a small room, in the pitch dark, in the middle of the night, in a place that I had never been before, huddled under a mosquito net. I had been on mission trips before and was excited about what Christ was doing around the world, but this night I found myself wishing I were back in Marietta, GA, in my bed safe and sound. I woke up the next morning and was very happy to see the light pouring through the window. I was equally happy when I found my friend Justin waiting for me outside. The hotel offered us a cup of Kenyan tea. Since I'd never been to Kenya before, I was not sure what the brown milky substance was exactly, but I was glad to find out that it was quite tasty. We were there for our first International Leadership Institute National Conference.

As we finished our tea, we met the host who was in charge of the conference, a pastor from Kampala. After friendly greetings, he informed us that the leadership team from Kenya had missed their flight and would not be arriving until the next day. Since this was our first conference, Justin and I were only responsible for a very small portion of the teaching. Most of the teaching was to be done by the Kenyan team. Our host then informed us that the pastors were ready for the training to begin and were eager to get started. He asked me if I would be willing to teach the first session. In fear and

trembling, I said yes, and I asked him how long I would have to prepare. He said, “Take your time. You have about 15 minutes.” So I went back to my room and started flipping through the manual, looking through lessons that I was not prepared to teach. All week long we would be teaching the eight core values of Christian leadership, so I decided simply to introduce them to the eight core values. I got up in front of the group and began to share about my adventures from the night before. As I saw smiles and a little laughter, I relaxed a little and sensed the presence of the Holy Spirit in the room. Over the next hour or so I shared the core Christian leadership values, and something began to happen. In all honesty, it had very little to do with my teaching, but in all my life I had never seen such eager learners, soaking up each and everything I shared. Something was different, and somehow I knew I would never be quite the same.

The Kenyan team finally arrived, and it was a glorious week of teaching, fellowship, and worship among brothers and sisters who are one in the body of Christ. All week long I kept thinking about what made this so different than anything that I had done previously in my 17 years of full-time ministry. It became more and more clear to me how hungry these people were to grow as leaders and disciples of Jesus Christ. As I heard story after story, I was amazed at their lives and their love for Jesus Christ. Two of the pastors worked with HIV orphans in a remote village in Uganda. All of them had difficult lives, and yet all of them seemed to have lives full of joy in the midst of hardship. However, all of them also seemed to be hungering for something more, something to help them in their very difficult circumstances.

That week I prayed a lot and shed a few tears in my room when no one else was around. I began to search my soul as to what my whole life in ministry had been about

and what it was supposed to be. I did not fully get an answer that week, but I did discover a passion. God gave me a passion for pouring into Christian leaders around the world who are hungry for Jesus Christ. As I prayed about this, I also began to have the same hunger for Jesus Christ that I saw in them. If there was anyone who deserved more help, encouragement, and tools for ministry, it was people just like the ones with whom I spent that week. Moreover, from that day until this day, it has been on my heart to walk alongside people like these, those I have no doubt God truly has a heart for.

Fast forward to January 2014. There have been many conferences, mission trips, preaching and teaching in places like India, Kenya, Romania, Egypt, Bolivia, and Bangladesh. I had just spent a week teaching spiritual growth for Christian leaders at the Wesleyan Seminary in Venezuela. Classes had to be stopped short that week because of ongoing violence in the streets due to political unrest. As we met in the classroom for the last time before classes were dismissed, the Methodist Bishop in Venezuela joined us, and we began to pray for the country and join in worship. The future of Venezuela, even to this day, is uncertain, but as I looked out into the eyes of those Venezuelan pastors and Christian leaders, I saw the same thing I had seen seven years before in Uganda, people who were hungry for Christ. In the midst of uncertainty rather than fear, I saw joy and hope.

Later that night I found myself once again in a room alone. All the students had gone home, but my heart was full as I thought about the events of the day, and I began to pray. I thought about all the leaders that I had met and all the pastors that I had become friends with from around the world and what had kept them going and what I could possibly do for them. I began to think about all the personal conversations that I had had

with many of these pastors and Christian leaders whom I had come to care for so much. As I had talked with them, I often asked them what they needed the most. It had been expressed in many different ways, but whatever the words, the theme was always the same. We need somebody to walk with us. We need spiritual guidance. We need people who will be there for the long haul. We need more of what you and others have given us in the short time you were here. We need fellowship. We need community. We need accountability. We need to know that we are not alone. We need partners. We need mentors. We need true friends.

That night as I prayed in Venezuela, the message came through to me loud and clear. It is all about relationships. It is about sharing in ministry together. It is about becoming a global community of Christian leaders. It is about being connected with other Christian leaders who would journey with them. It is about these leaders becoming one in Christ and passing this unity on to their flocks. Over seven years ago, when I first took on the call I felt to be the pastor of missions at my church, God also gave me a Scripture. 2 Corinthians 1:3-5 tells us, “Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves have received from God. For just as the sufferings of Christ flow over into our lives, so also through Christ our comfort overflows.” (NIV 1984)

In this passage, we find a relational God who has compassion for us. In his mercy, God comforts us wherever there is affliction, stress, anxiety or pain. God is the God of “comfort,” that is the Greek word *paraklesis*. The God of comfort encourages us, exhorts us, cares for us, and even instructs us. God does all of this so that we would

comfort others. The comfort we receive from Christ continues to fill us to abundance, is *perisseuo* in the Greek, an abundance that overflows. In other words, God keeps encouraging, exhorting, caring, and instructing until we have an abundance that is overflowing. Moreover, then it becomes our responsibility to let our abundance overflow into others. It was in that time of prayer in Venezuela that this critical question came to me. Why are we not overflowing? Why don't we have an abundance to pour into the lives of others?

As I became connected with more and more Christian leaders around the world amidst the deep faith and genuine joy in their lives, I also saw much emptiness. The best way I can describe it is with the analogy of an empty glass that has water poured into it. That water for us as Christian leaders is the living water of God. According to God's word the only thing of value that we can pour into the lives of others is that which God has poured into us (John 14.4, 15.5). The image I received through 2 Corinthians 1.3-5 is that of a glass being filled. God pours more and more living water into us. God pours it abundantly until we are overflowing, and it is out of that overflow that we pour into others.

In my Christian brothers and sisters around the world, I found a faith and joy that I often did not find in myself or most of my American brothers and sisters. However, by their own admission, I also found many of them to feel spiritually depleted. To use an analogy, they were pouring into others not out of an overflow, but rather they were down to the last drop. As God would pour into them once again, they would faithfully and sacrificially pour out the last drop into someone else. Although I found this kind of

sacrificial life to be most admirable, the image that God had given me through His word was a much different image of overflow and abundance.

### **Statement of the Problem**

The problem researched in this project is why young Christian leaders in challenging international settings experience spiritual deletion or emptiness in ministry. This emptiness can lead to a lack of spiritual health and vitality, and ultimately, ineffectiveness in ministry as well as Christian living. The problem is found not only in those who are ineffective in ministry, but it has often been the testimony of those who are highly effective and are pouring out much more into others than what is being poured into them spiritually, leading to spiritual depletion. If not addressed, this spiritual depletion will lead to an inability to be a sustainable and effective Christian minister over the course of a lifetime.

### **Purpose of the Project**

The purpose of this project is to identify the major causes of spiritual depletion, as well as spiritual overflow of young Christian leaders in challenging settings, so that the findings of this project might be used by Mt. Bethel UMC's Missions ministry to develop a network of churches to provide relationships and resources to young Christian leaders. This project hopes to provide young Christian leaders the tools to be able to serve effectively in ministry over a lifetime through the spiritual overflow in their lives.

### **Research Questions**

#### **Research Question #1**

What are the contributing factors or common denominators that lead to spiritual emptiness in young Christian leaders in challenging settings?

**Research Question #2**

What are the contributing factors or common denominators that lead to spiritual overflow in young Christian leaders in challenging settings?

**Research Question #3**

What are the spiritual practices, resources, and relationships that are most beneficial in assisting young Christian leaders, in challenging settings, to be spiritually full so they might overflow into the lives of others?

**Rationale for the Project**

The first reason this study is of critical need for effective, Spirit-filled Christian leadership is, through communication with Christian leaders in different places in the world, there is an apparent void of effective Spiritual-filled Christian leaders. This void is not speaking merely of visible gifts or necessarily specific measurable results, although that is a factor to be considered. Here it is speaking to the depths of relationship with Jesus Christ and the degree to which one has been empowered through spiritual formation, mentoring, discipleship, as well as any number of other resources that might be used to encourage and prepare leaders for greater ministry resulting in Christian leaders of great character. Many of those who are struggling are faithful, committed men and women who love the Lord. Their spiritual deficiencies appear to be more a result of lack of proper spiritual guidance as well as lack of relationships that create empowered spiritual leaders and strong accountability to enable highly effective fruitful leaders for the kingdom of God.

The second reason this study is of importance is the extreme pressure that is exerted on Christian leaders today due to the rapid change in technology and global

communication resulting in the over-saturation of the external stimuli and ideas. Because of this rapid increase of information created through technology, today's Christian leaders are hit with a barrage of external sources all competing for their attention, making it increasingly difficult to focus on those things that truly matter. Spiritual growth, mentoring, discipleship, as well as the other resources, require real discipline and intentionality, as well as a strong belief in the central ideas of the gospel without being compromised by competing messages and temptations from the world.

Sometimes Christian leaders can simply be overwhelmed by the amount of information they must process and respond to in a way that gives light and life to others. Leaders must resist materialism, power for personal gain, as well as temptations from a sensual world that surrounds them. These temptations make the need for strong personal relationships with people of integrity and spiritual maturity, as well as focused methods and systems, a necessity for young Christian leaders who wish to stay on course and make an impact for the kingdom of God.

The third reason that this study is essential is the void of strong Christian leaders in today's world. It is important to understand the reasons that so many Christian leaders, by their own admission, are weak and much less effective than they would like to be. There are many factors, both internal and external creating this erosion in Christian leadership. With the proper understanding of the roots that lead to Spiritual fullness, one will be able to stand up to the pressures of ministry and provide strong Christian leadership for the people around the world who are desperate for someone to lead them in a way that brings restoration and hope to his or her lives. Because this void of strong Christian leadership is so pervasive, it seems that many Christian leaders have simply



accepted this weak leadership as normative. Rather than aspiring to a biblical view that sees strong Christian leadership, not only as possible but mandatory to accomplish the great purposes that God has in store for his people as well as the powerful redemptive work of His kingdom.

The fourth reason this study is paramount in this day and time is the growth of other religions and ideologies worldwide. With other world religions growing at a record pace, particularly Islam and Hinduism, it becomes essential that strong Christian leaders present a compelling testimony through the Christian witness of leaders. If Christianity is to make this case, Christian leaders must be strong in compassion, in love, and in truth that is consistent and enduring. When religious leaders from other groups display more love and higher standards of ethics and morality than our own Christian leaders, the Church loses credibility. Only when Christian leaders both personally and as a community display an abundant life that exceeds other belief systems in restoring relationships, will the Church be able to make a compelling case for Jesus Christ as the way. One of the strongest witnesses that one can have is not just convincing apologetic arguments, but rather strong Christian leaders who are undeniably set apart from the world, and whose lives witness to the incredible love and eternal truth of Jesus Christ. If Christian leaders fail at this task, other world religions are sure to fill this void. This makes the mission of developing healthy and mature Christian leaders a necessity if Christianity is to fulfill the mission of bringing God's kingdom here on earth.

The fifth reason this study is particularly significant at this time in history is the shift of the gospel to developing nations like Africa and South America, which are quickly becoming the center of the new Christian world. As Christianity is now growing

faster in developing nations than in the Western world, a cataclysmic change is taking place. No longer will Western Christian leaders be the predominant force of evangelism and discipleship throughout the world. If the spread of the gospel becomes increasingly in the hands of our brothers and sisters in these developing nations, Christian leaders with more potential resources owe it to these emerging Christian leaders around the globe to come alongside them and support them in building effective biblical models for raising up new leaders that can serve out of a life of abundance, allowing them to pour into the lives of others. If strong Christian leaders are not developed in these developing parts of the world, as well as other countries outside of the U.S., the Church risks losing the next generation to other religions and non-religious ideologies.

### **Definition of Key Terms**

**Spiritual Formation** – A process of spiritual practices and patterns formed from Scripture that allow one to be inwardly formed through the Holy Spirit into the image of Christ leading one's to outward actions to display the transformation that God has done in one's heart and mind.

**Spiritual Mentor** - One who provides insight, guidance, direction and even correction to one who agrees to be a mentee and be poured into by a more mature Christian leader.

**Living Water** – The source of Spiritual life that God pours into the disciple through His Spirit that will flow out into the lives of others the provides true life. (John 4.14, 7.38)

**Streams of Living Water / Spiritual Traditions** - These represent major Christian Traditions as they are identified in Richard Foster's book, *Streams of Living Water*. Each stream is used to identify historical, spiritual movements or traditions that lead to Spiritual vitality or awakening

**Spiritual Overflow / Fullness** - (synonymous with Abundance) – Through ongoing time spent with God and in Christian community one is filled with God’s Spirit to the extent that not only is one inwardly full but has more than enough to pour into the lives of others in life and ministry without feeling spiritually empty or burned out. (2 Cor. 1.3-5, John 15.5)

**Spiritual Emptiness** - (synonymous with Depleted, Burned Out) – When the output through life and ministry has far exceeded the input that is being poured into one's spirit by God’s Spirit through intimate time spent with God and in His community.

**Spiritual Health** – The right balance of relationships (first God then other mature disciples), spiritual practices, and resources and to maintain a healthy spiritual life so that life and ministry does not become dry or burned out for the Christian leader, but rather has a vibrant spiritual life and is life giving to others.

**Christian Networking** - Using a social network in order to connect people, churches, ministries and Christian organizations so they might benefit through the sharing of information, resources, best practices and partnerships that create a stronger witness and kingdom for the body of Christ.

### **Delimitations**

This research does not include interviews with Christian leaders who have not been highly recommended for their quality as a leader and maturity as a Christian.

Although valuable insights might be gained from adding other leaders, the intention here was to narrow the scope to those who have been identified as great leaders both in gifts and integrity. Since the goal was to discover why what causes spiritual emptiness and

fullness in young Christian leaders, it was helpful to eliminate leaders who may be empty due to character or lack of leadership gifting.

Christian leaders from other cultures who are not able to speak in the English language were excluded from the study. Although valuable insights could be gained from a number of leaders who are non-English-speaking, the risk that too much might be lost in translation, as well as the rudimentary level at which one often has to communicate when translating, might result in information that was inaccurate of the leader's actual beliefs, insights, and intentions. For this reason, they were not included in this study, ensuring the most accurate results.

Although many aspects could be studied as to what makes Christian leaders effective, this study focused on what is of the greatest help to the person's spiritual well-being. Although this meant eliminating a number of areas of study that could assist young Christian leaders, one's spiritual life is foundational to a healthy ministry and life from a biblical perspective and should be the first focus for strengthening and empowering young Christian leaders' effectiveness.

### **Review of Relevant Literature**

From a biblical and theological standpoint, a study of 2 Corinthians 1.3-11 and John 15 provide rich images of God, the Father of compassion, pouring His living water into His children so that these children are able to pour into others. The image of the vine and branches in John 15 is a powerful representation of Christ as the sole source by which His spiritual life is poured into Christians producing fruit in their lives that others can feed from.

In examining the literature for this project, a great deal of material focused on spiritual formation and spiritual practices both historically from the time of the early church until the present day. In searching for literature on what leads to spiritual fullness or emptiness in young Christian leaders in challenging settings, little can be found that addresses this topic specifically. Most of the literature for challenging settings (challenges because of poverty, lack of resources, persecution, isolation, etc.) is focused on how churches and Christian leaders can help these global Christians through resources that largely focus on the betterment of basic needs or resources to provide more opportunities. Therefore, the focus of this project's literature is on spiritual formation in order to see what has helped Christians who have historically faced many challenges to grow spiritually, so that they might overflow with the Spirit of God into the lives of others. Also, books and literature that focused on intimacy with God and how that occurs in a deep way, laying a strong foundation for how to be filled so God might sustain Christian leaders for a lifetime of ministry.

Richard Foster's book *Streams of Living Water* turned out to be the key piece of literature for this research project. This book provided a template of the six streams of living water (Spiritual Traditions) that proved most valuable in evaluating what causes spiritual fullness. This piece of literature also traced these traditions through history and other spiritual leaders who have written on the topic, opening the door to a host of authors from the early church to recent times that were able to add valuable information to the project. Other key literature included: Andrew Murray's *Absolute Surrender*, Gene Edward's *The Secret to the Christian Life*, Brennan Manning's *The Furious Longing of God*, Francis Chan's *Forgotten God*, and Dietrich Bonhoeffer's *Discipleship*,

## **Research Methodology**

Here is an abbreviated look at the methodology that was used to do the research in this project. The detailed research methodology is discussed in Chapter Three.

The purpose of this project was to identify what the major causes of spiritual depletion as well as spiritual overflow of young Christian leaders in challenging settings.

The three questions that guided the project's methodology are:

RQ 1) What are the contributing factors or common denominators that lead to spiritual emptiness in young Christian leaders in challenging settings?

RQ 2) What are the contributing factors or common denominators that lead to spiritual overflow in young Christian leaders in challenging settings?

RQ 3) What are the spiritual practices, resources, and relationships that are most beneficial in assisting young Christian leaders, in challenging settings, to be spiritually full so they might overflow into the lives of others?

Research data will be gathered for this pre-intervention project through semi-structured qualitative interviews and two quantitative surveys. Test pilot interviews were given in the year previous to the actual interviews and changes were made to the way the questions were worded to prevent any bias on the part of the interviewer based on what was learned from these pilot interviews. The research interviewer asked a series of structured questions focused on receiving answers to the three research questions, followed by a number of unstructured questions needed to be asked in order to have a fuller understanding of what causes spiritual emptiness and spiritual fullness, and what spiritual practices, resources, and relationships will assist these leaders to be spiritually full and prevent depletion or emptiness in ministry.

There were twelve interviews given, four in each region in order to represent as much global diversity as possible. Nine of those chosen were young Christian leaders who represented the age group of 18-40. Three women, one from each region was selected to be sure that both genders were represented. Also, three of those chosen for interviews were mature Christian leaders (50+). The methodology here was to have younger leaders and older leaders both be interviewed, so a comparison could be made to see if age makes any difference in being spiritually full.

Also within the methodology was an intentional effort to choose mature and fruitful leaders even among the younger interviewees. This decision was made in order to remove the factor of spiritual emptiness due to immaturity and ineffectiveness. By choosing those who were mature and effective, a much clearer picture arose of what might cause spiritual emptiness. Failure is certainly a factor that can create emptiness in ministry and cloud the problem of emptiness in young Christian leaders. If those who had failed to be fruitful were interviewed, it could focus potential change the findings since those who are in pain usually focus on that pain as the cause of emptiness rather than looking to other factors.

The two quantitative surveys added quantitative data to the qualitative interviews to further give evidence as to what factors led to spiritual emptiness or spiritual fullness, and what practices, resources, and relationships were particularly helpful in causing these young leaders around the world to be full. For the surveys, 45 young Christian leaders were surveyed, 15 from each region in order to be sure the surveys were equally representative of all three regions. The first survey focuses on what causes spiritual depletion and the second survey focuses on what leads to spiritual fullness particularly

focusing on spiritual traditions and practices that are associated with these traditions. The qualitative data allowed for a deeper understanding of all the complex factors that play into causing a young Christian leader to be spiritual full or empty. The quantitative surveys created some hard data to look for statistical patterns that help to answer these questions.

As part of the methodology, three locations from three different regions and cultures were used in order that the findings might provide data that yields factors that would help young Christian leaders across the globe. By doing research that is culturally diverse, representing leaders from diverse religious backgrounds, and using both qualitative and quantitative methods, this study was able to yield results that are representative of young Christian leaders around the world and what they need to be spiritually full.

The scriptural examination, as well as the literature review which focused on spiritual life both personally and in community, gave further evidence to what has created spiritual overflow and emptiness through the historical life of the church. Together these different factors when viewed and examined thoroughly provide a number of conclusions that point to several significant ways one can support, encourage, and assist these young Christian leaders so they might have an impact on the next generation.

### **Type of Research**

The research for this project is pre-intervention, mixed method, qualitative interviews, and quantitative surveys. The data was collected over a six-month period of time through three ILI (International Leadership Institute) conferences in three distinct regions where young Christian leaders in challenging settings live and serve in ministry.



The conferences provided a secure and confidential setting from which to conduct the interviews and surveys with young leaders from diverse backgrounds from different Orthodox Christian settings.

### **Participants**

The participants were both male and female who either have a significant leadership role in their church or Christian setting or are young leaders that were identified by ILI as leaders who show strong signs of gifts and graces for ministry. All were active in the local church. The participants were selected primarily from leaders 18-40 years of age. They had a wide variety of educational levels although most were considered fairly to highly educated in comparison to the overall settings from which they come, primarily developing areas. One fourth of the leaders interviewed were mature leaders ages 50 and older. Although the study was targeted at 18-40, these older participants were surveyed to get comparative results to see if there were any major observable differences between the older leaders and the targeted younger leaders. Although it was more difficult to identify young Christian women to interview due to culture and language in some locations, at least three of the twelve participants were female to ensure representation of both genders as well.

The reason these participants were chosen was that these individuals represent not only the demographic necessary for this project but represent diverse backgrounds in denomination, socio-economics, and culture, while still sharing in a Christian orthodoxy theologically.

## **Data Collection**

The data was collected through semi-structured qualitative interviews in three separate regions of the world: South East Asia, North Africa/Middle East, and South America. The interviews were collected by doing four interviews in each of the three locations. At each location three of the four interviewees were young Christian leaders and the fourth was a mature Christian leader. Three of the twelve were female Christian leaders. The interviews were recorded and written notes were taken during the interview. The audio interviews were transcribed to written transcripts for the purpose of coding and sorting.

Two different qualitative surveys were collected from the same three locations. These surveys were given to forty-five young Christian leaders, 18-40 years of age. Fifteen surveys were given in each of the three separate regions in the world. The first survey focused on what causes spiritual emptiness. This survey listed 12 statements about spiritual depletion or emptiness and asked the participants to rank from one to twelve the statements that one felt most explained what caused spiritual emptiness in the participant's life to the statement that one believed had the least effect. The second survey focused on causes of spiritual fullness and represented the six Spiritual Traditions or Streams of Living Water. This survey had four groups of six statements. The statements identified spiritual practices and participants were asked to rank each group from one to six, most helpful to least helpful.

## **Data Analysis**

The data analyzed was pre-intervention, semi-structured qualitative interviews, recorded on an audio device. The recordings were transcribed, and each transcript was

carefully read. All findings of interest (similarities, differences, uniqueness, patterns, meaningful quotes) were highlighted. All of the highlights were coded with one or more codes depending on the patterns that emerged.

The analysis was primarily issue-focus analysis (Weiss loc. 2759), searching for those issues that related to spiritual fullness or emptiness within the lives the young Christian leaders. Once all the coding was complete, the information was sorted into categories for examination. The next step was local integration by taking the sorted files and determining how they fit together (Weiss loc. 2840-2842). The final step of this process was inclusive integration which led to a few major conclusions or even intersections where conclusions cross one another to create a larger more holistic category (Weiss loc. 2880-2883). The interview analysis was viewed through two lenses. The first was the number of occurrences (quantity), and the second lens was the what was said and the significance that was placed on it (quality).

The two surveys were pre-intervention, quantitative surveys that provided important data regarding what caused spiritual depletion and what caused spiritual fullness or overflow. Survey #1 was divided into 12 distinct categories of depletion. Each category was examined for patterns. On the second survey, the four groups of six represented four groups of the six spiritual traditions, allowing for statistics to be drawn from which spiritual traditions were the strongest and which were the weakest. It was important to remember that participants were rating these not as to how important it was thought to be in general but how the ones being interviewed had experienced these traditions and their related practices personally.

The culmination of the findings was seen in patterns that emerged from both the interviews and the surveys and evaluations based on the quality and the quantity which things rose to the surface as being most helpful to young Christian leaders in being spiritually full for life and ministry.

### **Generalizability**

There was a high probability that someone who is wanting to do research in this area of helping young Christian leaders to be Spiritually full, could accurately repeat this research and in all likelihood find similar results. The fact that three continents were included in the research with slight variations and yet very similar results would increase the odds that a future study in some other part of the world would yield findings much like the findings that were discovered in this research. Because the interviews used a simple template derived from the three research questions with images that proved to be cross-cultural, it would be easy enough to reproduce this type of interview. The surveys were also clear with a number system, one to twelve or one to six, most important to least important, that would be easy to follow in any culture. Because Richard Foster's *Streams of Living Water* gave six categories that were easily understood and were used to develop both interview questions as well as the surveys, it allows for this interview to be easily reproduced.

If someone wanting to do this type of research could not find the same caliber of participants on their own, the same type and quality of participants could be located since the ILI conferences that provide such diverse and quality young Christian leaders have a large number of these conferences every year in various locations in over 70 countries.

## **Project Overview**

Chapter two first examines key biblical passages that address the research topic from a theological perspective, followed by a literature review examining relevant books and literature that address traditions, methods and practices that help young Christian leaders to be spiritually full/overflowing.

Chapter three explains the Research Methodology in detail to validate the method as well as create a recipe for research that could be followed to determine what depletes and fills young Christian leaders in challenging settings.

Chapter four shares the research findings of both the pre-intervention qualitative interviews and the pre-intervention quantitative surveys to provide necessary data to determine the findings as to what causes spiritual overflow and what causes spiritual emptiness.

Chapter five identifies the findings from the research as to what causes spiritual overflow and emptiness in young Christian leaders. Then conclusions are drawn that can be used in the local church and among Christian leaders in the U.S. to help these young leaders across the globe to be spiritual full rather than depleted.

## CHAPTER 2

### LITERATURE REVIEW FOR THE PROJECT

#### Overview of the Chapter

This literature review will identify literary sources in the area of spiritual formation to look for resources that will help young Christian leaders who report a high level of burnout and a low level of support in the area of spiritual formation. The purpose of this literary review is to recognize literature that may help young Christian leaders to become spiritually full and avoid spiritual emptiness in the challenging circumstances that so many of them minister in every day.

First, this chapter will take an in-depth look at key Bible passages that lay a theological foundation for the necessity of an intimate and inseparable relationship with God. Through this relationship, the scriptures will explain that this connection becomes the sources for spiritual infilling that then can create an overflow that pours into the lives of others and ultimately bears fruit for God's kingdom.

After looking at this biblical foundation, key literature will be examined that speaks to the need to the surrender of one's self, and through an emptying out of self, make room for a fresh infilling of God's Spirit so that Christian leaders might be spiritually full rather than empty.

The most significant piece of literature to the project, other than Scripture, is Richard Foster's *Streams of Living Water*. The critical nature of this work can be found in the fact that it tracks spiritual traditions throughout the history of the church and the spiritual vitality that each tradition brings to the Christian faith. With the literary review

of Richard Foster's book, many other classical Christian written works will be examined as examples of the very traditions Foster is highlighting.

Finally, since the purpose of this project is to identify common denominators that help young Christian leaders to be spiritually full, not just in one setting but around the world, literature will be reviewed that speaks to the need for relationship and spiritual formation to take place within one's culture context. By taking into account the cultural environment when working alongside global partners, it places one's spirituality into a time and place that makes it relevant to the person who will receive it.

### **Biblical/Theological Foundational Scriptures**

#### **The Father of Compassion**

The biblical review begins with 2 Corinthians 1.3-11 and its surrounding context. Admittedly there is a bias beginning with this passage since its content has helped to shape the vision of Mt. Bethel as well as the personal vision of this researcher over the last seven to eight years. Paul is speaking to the Corinthians in the midst of affliction about the character of God and the source of not only persevering but abundantly overflowing so that they might overflow to others. In v. 3, God is described vividly using two phrases that identify who God is at his very core. The passage states that He is "the Father of compassion," and that He is "the God of all comfort." God is not merely a God who has compassion, but rather He is the father of it. In other words, compassion is His idea. He is the creator of compassion and thus knows best how to share it with others. In the book of Matthew, God the Father is described as a heavenly Father time and time again (Matt. 5.48, 6.14, 26, 32, 15.13, 18.35). This idea of a heavenly Father primarily focuses on the place where God resides as well as the quality of that place "a heaven of

holiness” (Zodhiates 942). In 2 Corinthians 1.3, the Father is not simply described as holy himself or as one who dwells in a holy place as mentioned earlier, but as one who has compassion and mercy for all. The word here for compassion can also be described as mercy, mercies, or to have pity on (Strong 51). It is clear that He is a Father who feels for the ones He has created, who have found themselves in a fallen world in which they too are part of the fall. This idea of the Father as being a Father of mercy is in fact so significant that it is thought to be a "pattern on the prayer of the synagogue" (Martin 8). This would suggest that the idea of the Father as a Father of compassion had deep roots in Judaism in understanding the nature and character of God.

### **The God of Comfort**

The second vivid image is of the “God of comfort”; this phrase is equally significant. The word comfort, or *paraklesis* in the Greek, can be seen not only as a word that describes one who wants to comfort, but even more, it carries within it the idea of calling, exhorting, or even begging one to be comforted "for the purpose of strengthening and establishing the believer’s possession of redemption" (Rom. 15.4, Phil. 2.1, Heb. 12.5; Zodhiates 944). In other words, God wishes to comfort believers in a way that strengthens their faith in Christ. It is, therefore, important that an understanding of God's character of compassion and comfort, as well as His desire to pour into His followers, must be established to also understand that this is the same model He desires for His people to use in strengthening and building up other believers.

Verse 4 states that this God of compassion and comfort comforts in affliction or tribulation so that all may be able to comfort others with the very same comfort received from Him. The comfort that is identified here from troubles or afflictions is not limited



to affliction that people have caused or affliction that has come upon them “both externally and internally” (Thrall 103). God is not so much concerned about how the hardship comes but instead that people are helped in the way that leads to further their redemption and growth in Christ. Many have suspected that this poetic pattern in vs. 3-4, which seems to contain a litany of comfort received and comfort given as a relief from affliction, might, in fact, have been “hymnic or creedal in the early church” (Porter, “Creeds and Hymns”).

### **Christ Who Overflows into Believers Lives**

Verse 5 is critical to the overall understanding of what Christ has done for humanity. First, it states that the sufferings of Christ are abundant or overflow into those who follow Him, and it also states that Christ's comfort is abundant or overflows into those same people. There is significance in the word ‘abundance’ or ‘overflow.’ It is comforting to view the way it is defined in Strong’s Dictionary of Words in the Greek Testament which describes this word of abundance or overflow as meaning “super abound” (Strong 57). This meaning implies that what is happening is not simply abounding, but it is over-abounding. To use the image of a cup being filled, this abundance would not be just filled to the brim, but a better image would be a cup that is continually overflowing. Here is an image that can be used to illustrate what life in Christ should look like. Life in Christ should not be a life half empty or filled to the brim, but a life that continues to overflow thus allowing for others to benefit from this overflow without depleting one’s self or one’s place in ministry.

The tricky part to this passage is that the overflowing is not merely a super-abounding of comfort, but there is also a super-abounding of affliction or suffering. So,

how is this of benefit since suffering is so often the very thing that depletes those in the Christian life? However, the suffering does not appear to be pointless or without purpose, but this suffering has “a divine purpose...suffering which is borne for the Gospel’s sake” (Martin 10). A truth that the American church often seems to have missed or at least wants to minimize is that to be glorified with Christ is to “suffer with him” (“Dictionary of Paul”, G: Glory, Glorification, 4.3). There is a paradox here in the fact that it is Christ who suffers on behalf of those He loves. However, to benefit from His suffering, then His people must identify with Him by sharing in His suffering.

However, this suffering is a suffering that leads to redemption, as Christians not only identify with Him but also become more and more transformed into His image. This passage contains both “a paradoxical and parallel” aspect as to how to not only survive but thrive in the Christian life (Hawthorne, Martin & Reid 349). Those who have an abundant or overflowing of life in Christ also experience an abundant overflowing of comfort. They are able to “super abound” in the midst of very difficult circumstances. Since vs. 3-4 are tied together in the nature of what is trying to be expressed by Paul, a powerful image emerges from this passage. There is a God of great compassion and mercy who pours into the lives of those who belong to Him, not merely for the sake of receiving comfort but for passing it on.

This receiving and giving of comfort is all possible as a result of the incredible sacrifice of Christ. However, to fully embrace this life in which Christ has made a way, then Christians must also join Him in His suffering and affliction. The suffering will be great, but, as described earlier, the comfort will be “super abounding” so that all can overcome and help others overcome. Jürgen Moltmann came to see Christ as “the

divine brother in distress” (Loc. 102-108). Looking at the remainder of the passage, one can begin to see Paul being for the Corinthians what Christ has been for His followers and this “super abounding” is passed on so the Corinthians might overflow into others. Also in verse 5, it is stated that “the sufferings of Christ flow into our lives” (NIV 1984). This verse shows the very best of what Christ offers in the salvation is the result of His suffering. The most difficult part in becoming partners with Him is suffering and sharing in that suffering with others.

However, the results of that suffering lead to yet another conclusion and that is “through Christ our comfort overflows” (NIV 1984). This verse suggests that true comfort, which comes from God, cannot happen apart from suffering with God. This verse might also indicate that Christians in the Third World, who often face difficulties that many have no knowledge of such as extreme poverty, hunger, disease, and war, have somewhat of an advantage if they have suffered with Christ in all of these extreme circumstances. However, if they experience the suffering without the encouragement of support from strong Christian leadership, suffering can become more than one could bear. In v. 6 Paul provides a model for supporting this suffering for a community and its leaders. Paul makes it clear that whether he is distressed or comforted, it is for the sake of these Corinthians, whom he wishes to encourage and build up.

In the midst of all this suffering, Paul assures the Corinthians in v. 7 that the hope they have is firm. The word for hope here carries with it the understanding of a security that is “unwavering” and “well-founded” (Harris 149). Paul supports this argument by assuring them that as they are sharing together, and even in the sufferings of Paul, they will also share in this comfort that overflows in abundance from Christ. There seems to

be a strong indication here in the scriptures that in the midst of extreme difficulties and hardships, Christ's comfort becomes visible, particularly as they share in that hardship together. This might suggest that when examining the most effective ways to pour into global leaders in difficult circumstances, the first and possibly the best help in strengthening these leaders is by sharing with them whatever their difficulties might be. Having shared together "in a common experience" of suffering, Paul now sees them as "having a share" in the comfort that comes out of suffering in Christ (Martin, "Communion").

In the American mindset, there has been a tendency to try and help others who are perceived as suffering more by removing their suffering, rather than sharing in it. Here, Paul takes the theological position that Christians "need to learn to stand firm in the face of the battle that has reached its outcome in the victory of Christ" (Hafemann Loc. 3174). For Paul, the goal for himself and for these Corinthians he desires to pour into is not that they would receive immediate relief, but that they would have ultimate victory in Christ. If there is any doubt as to what Paul is suggesting here, Paul takes time in vs. 8-10 to point out the extreme circumstances that he is facing in Asia, which he describes as a "death sentence." Paul's life is only spared "through God's direct intervention" (Harris 151).

### **Reliance on God and the Prayers of God's People**

C.K. Barrett points out in v. 9 Paul points out that the ultimate purpose in all circumstances is that they might learn to "rely on God." In order to make it clear that this hope is well founded, he reminds the Corinthians that this God that they can rely on is the one "who raises the dead" (Barrett 67). Paul assures them that not only has God

delivered them, but also He will deliver again. Therefore, as such, He is a God worthy of placing their hope in. Paul finishes this section in v. 11 by letting the Corinthians know that he is thankful for their prayers and that he believes that God has delivered them “in answer to the prayers of many.” This suggests that these “prayers of intercession... help to set in motion the divine activity” that delivered them (Barrett 67). This would suggest another possibility of how to encourage and pour into others in difficult circumstances. Even though Paul is a significant leader, he is happy to accept the help and the prayers of these Corinthians, who struggled at times as a community to live out their faith.

Paul is able to encourage and uplift the Corinthian church by identifying the significant part that they have played and seeing God work in these difficult situations. Once again Westerners too often want to lift themselves up as the only ones who can truly help, and the ones they are helping are dependent on them. This Scripture passage implies that Paul would encourage Christians to not only share in the suffering and comfort together but to realize and acknowledge the significant role young leaders may have in building up the kingdom of God.

### **Sharing in Christ’s Suffering Leads to Overflow**

This passage in 2 Corinthians 1.3-11 would strongly suggest that it is suffering with Christ. As Christians share a relationship in union with Christ, as they place their hope in Christ, that will cause them to be filled with His presence and power so that they will be able to flow into the lives of others. However, a principle that may be equally important is not simply their relationship with Christ alone, but sharing in that relationship with others whether they are in leadership or more of a follower of Christ. It seems sharing in Christ together is one of the greatest things Christians can do to

strengthen our hope in Christ. Although the Scriptures do not suggest that if His people will all pray for something God is obligated to act on our behalf, it is clear, however, that the prayers of many, in the eyes of Paul, have stirred God's heart and motivated God to act on their behalf.

Considerable time has been spent on this passage because of the number of foundational concepts that are found here that also can be found throughout the Scriptures. In 2 Corinthians 1.3-11 it has been identified that God's people serve a God who has great compassion for His children, and He desires to encourage and console His children so they might endure the afflictions and hardships that inevitably come to those who follow Christ. This comfort is not a passive comfort but an active comfort that pursues Christians so that they might continually be redeemed and thus be empowered for ministry. Affliction and suffering have also been identified as things not merely to be endured but as part of the process in building up for the work of ministry. Christ is lifted up as the first example of suffering endured so His life might flow into His followers. Christians were not intended to go through suffering alone or to be able to endure it on their own, but instead, suffering was intended so they might rely on God and His power. Once again it is evident that the filling is originating from God himself.

Finally, Paul mentions several times in this passage the necessity of receiving and giving for the mutual benefit of one another. Christians are comforted so they might comfort others. They are willing to go through affliction for the benefit of others, and as they are afflicted, God brings relief through the prayers of others. God's compassion, God's comfort, God's suffering, and sharing in His suffering, while relying on God's power through the support and prayers of a Christian community, is the formula in 2

Corinthians 1.3-11 for those who will endure and be filled with Christ for the purpose of being used as vessels to all who are in need

This is another passage that is foundational in defining what leads to a life of overflow and abundance while serving Christ. Given the fact that the earlier passage, as well as many other scriptures, strongly supports the idea that suffering is not only part of the Christian life but is essential in developing Christians not only individually but together as a community, what is one to make of how to overflow with Christ? The next foundational passage that is examined will present another image that is identified as the source of an abundant flow into one's life regardless of the circumstances.

### **Connection to the True Vine (Jesus Christ) Leading to Fruit**

In John 15, Jesus gives an image of himself as the vine and his father as the gardener. It is important to begin with the image of Jesus as the vine. This is not placed there as an image to suggest that the Father is not the vine since the Trinitarian theology makes it clear that God is three persons in one—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—and as such, whatever is true of one, is also true of the others. The emphasis of this passage is that Jesus is to be seen as “the true vine in contrast with whatever also claims to be the Vine” (Bultman 529-30). The concept that is helpful consists of essentially two aspects. First, although Jesus is no different in substance than the Father or the Holy Spirit, He is particularly different in His role, as He gave away His life while in the flesh, as a sacrifice for our earthly sins. “The redemptive action of the Son is always that of Mediator, ” and thus, Jesus serves as the vine through which life is able to flow to those who love Him and impart life to the fullest (Martin 272). The second way in which Jesus is the vine can be seen through Jesus as a representative of God who is the source of life

and gives life, as opposed to all other vines that are not the source of life and thus cannot give real life. This relates to the filling of indigenous Christian leaders in that if they are connected to the vine, Jesus Christ, as their mediator and redeemer, they will have a never-ending source for life. The other truth here in this passage is a very simple but even more profound truth. Christ and Christ alone is the source, and anything else that is substituted for Him, even good things, will not allow the Christian leader to be refilled. This truth would suggest that whatever principles and tools that come to light in the remainder of this literature review, the centrality of Christ, not only theologically but even more importantly relationally, is the only foundation on which indigenous Christian leaders can build if they hope to be overflowing, abundant, fruitful leaders.

### **The Father as the Gardener to Create New Growth**

The next image is the image of the Father as the gardener. This image of the Father is unique to the book of John and particularly this passage. There are other places in Scripture where God is seen as having gardener-like characteristics such as Isaiah 44.3, where God “pours water on the thirsty land and streams on the dry ground,” but here the Father is seen as a gardener with a particular task. The gardener is there specifically to cut off branches that do not bear fruit and to prune those that bear fruit so that they might bear more fruit. John uses a play on words here, as the word which is used for pruning can also be used for cleansing (Keener, John 15.1-8). The Father cares for His children in such a way that He does not simply desire to cut off what is unfruitful but wishes to cut back most carefully that which is fruitful so that it might bear more fruit. The Father also does more than cut off and cut back. He wishes to cleanse that which has potential for fruit. If the dirt of the earth is cleansed from its leaves so that the light of the sun can do



its work. Here is a gardener that truly cares for his plants. These two opening verses of John 15 make it clear for those who are attached to the vine that God intends to spend great time and energy helping this grapevine to produce fruit.

### **Old Testament Concept of Israel as a the Vine (Foreshadowing of What Is to Come)**

Although the idea of the Father as a gardener is somewhat unique to John, the image of a grapevine is found in a number of places in the Old Testament. “Israel is frequently represented in the OT as a vine or a vineyard” (Hos. 10.1-2, Isa. 5.1-7, Jer. 2.21, Ezek. 15.1-5, 17.1-21, 19.10-14, Ps. 80.8-18) (Martin 272). A number of biblical scholars identify Israel in the Old Testament as the vine that is to bear fruit for God. This new image would suggest that Israel, as the people of God, is unable to bear fruit apart from the “true vine,” Jesus Christ. It is only “renewed people of God who might come into being and bring forth fruit for God” (Martin 272). Two thoughts arise from this image of a renewed people through Jesus Christ, the true vine, for indigenous Christian leaders and for those who desire to strengthen them. The first thought is the futility of trying to assist global indigenous leaders if both the ones who are assisting and the global leaders who are partnering with them do not understand the necessity of, all who are involved, being attached to the vine. The second thought is the incredible potential that exists if global leaders come together with an equal commitment to being grafted into the vine. While this is certainly an exciting idea, it is important to go further with this passage and examine the other claims of John 15 that can assist Christians in having a better understanding of what it means to be in the vine.

As one looks to the Old Testament for clues between the image of the vine as Israel, one finds a passage in the Psalms that presents this foreshadowing of what is to

come. In Psalm 80.14-18, there is a prayer for Israel, which is described as the vine and is “paralleled with prayer for the man at your right hand of the son of man whom you have raised up for yourself” (Dodd 411). The psalmist calls upon God to revive God's people. In this passage, it is only by the Son of Man that God has raised up His people so that they might be restored. This passage is another strong reminder that what is described here as the Son of Man is the only hope of revival and restoration. In this passage there are several pleas for help: revive us, restore us, make your face to shine upon us all. All these pleas speak to a people who were desperate for the help of the Lord. As global indigenous leaders look for ways to restore their soul and revive their ministry, this passage would indicate that God ultimately responds to those who plead their case with passion. The plea seen here is not merely for the person in need, but the psalmist acknowledges that God has raised up the Son of Man for himself. This is a potential model of a spiritually mature believer not merely wanting themselves saved but wanting the purposes of God lifted up. Indigenous leaders who find themselves in very difficult circumstances might be tempted to simply bleed for their cause, but the one connected to the vine will certainly want what is best for the vine.

There is one more image related to dwelling that strengthens the case for its power that God has intended. “In the Old Testament God had promised to dwell with his obedient covenant people always” (Exod. 25.8, 29.45, Lev. 26.11–12, Ezek. 37.27–28, 43.9; Keener). This image shown here in John 15 of dwelling with God is a theme seen throughout the Old and New Testament as God portrays himself as a God of covenant. In other words, God is constantly promising to dwell with his people and is constantly looking for ways to reconnect despite mankind's continual disobedience and selfishness.

In Christ, there is a mediator or a dwelling place that can bridge the gap and allow for the sharing of a union with one another. This would also imply that when Christian leaders try to join together in a different dwelling place other than the vine found in Jesus Christ, they are destined for disagreement and dissension as the focus becomes on their world rather than His kingdom.

### **Remaining in Christ (A Dwelling Place)**

Looking at John 15.4, the words of Jesus offer followers of Christ yet another promise. “If you remain in me [Jesus], I will remain in you.” In other words, as long as Christians do not turn away from Christ, He promises that He will not turn away from them. This would suggest that even under the most difficult of circumstances they will have the ability to endure because of their attachment to Christ, knowing that He will not depart from them. Depending on which translation one uses, the verb may be translated as remain, abide or “dwell”; in 15.4-10 the verb form is “dwelling place” (Keener “dwelling”). This understanding of the word carries with it the idea of the home. This is a place where one would be intimately familiar and comfortable in the setting, having spent a great deal of time in every part of the house. When talking about being attached to the vine, it implies more than a physical or biological attachment that a branch would need for survival. The image of the dwelling place would suggest a place where one belongs not only for survival but in order to become one with this dwelling and to take on the very nature and character of this place that one was meant for. In the image of the dwelling place, there is yet another reminder to Christian leaders that regardless of where they are from or what their cultural background is, they share a dwelling place that they were all meant for in order to thrive together as the community of believers. While in the

mission field, it is often surprising for Western Christians how comfortable it is to feel as one with other Christian leaders from such diverse backgrounds and cultural practices. This common dwelling place, “in the vine” is one valid explanation as to why, despite many differences, there is a central feeling of oneness with each other since the focus is placed on Christ as opposed to cultural differences. This oneness across culture will be reviewed more closely in the section on cultural principles that may assist in strengthening global leaders.

Starting in vs. 4 through vs. 8, Jesus tells his disciples to remain in Him five different times. Three times in this same passage it is stated that if “we remain in him, He will remain in us.” The third time it is described as The Word, who remains in his disciples. Jesus Christ and the Living Word that He speaks of are inseparable. This section makes the strong argument that Jesus's followers must constantly focus on remaining in Him with the hope and promise that if they are to find their dwelling place in Him, He will certainly make His home in them. The result of this remaining or dwelling is always the same; if Christians remain, God will remain in them as well. Furthermore, if God dwells in them, they will bear fruit in increasing measure. This emphasis might cause the reader to examine a variety of ways that one might dwell with God throughout the day so as to never miss an opportunity to remain in Him. The possible ways of dwelling with God will be explored in the section on spiritual formation tools, resources, and patterns.

The last concept to be examined in this passage starts in v. 9 and goes through v. 17. There is a notable shift starting in vs. 9 from the focus earlier in the passage on dwelling or remaining to remain in now focused on love. Jesus states that if the Father

has loved Him, so He has loved those who follow Him and then reminds them to not simply remain in Him but to remain in His love. Notable here is that same concept seen in 2 Corinthians 1.3-11 where the Father's comfort is shared with those who need comfort, and they in turn comfort others. A similar pattern is seen here where the Father loves and the one who is loved, the Son, now loves another. The image is particularly of love that is received to the measure that there is enough love to pass on. In verse 13, Jesus defines the greatest love, which is to "lay down one's life for his friends." Just as in 2 Corinthians, real compassion and real love manifest themselves in suffering and sacrifice on behalf of another. This entire section is "a command for mutual love" (Martin 275). If the local church desires to help these indigenous leaders by sharing in their comfort and affliction, they must be called out of their comfort zone and be willing to place themselves in the same world that they find many of their Christian brothers and sisters. A world which is often filled with suffering and affliction. As the understanding of what it means to remain in Him is expanded to its fullness, this fullness will express itself not just in more intimacy with God but with true expressions of loving one another.

The scriptural and theological foundation has been laid out through these two key passages as well as the supportive passage in this section. The first with its primary focus on an overflow, overabundance, or "superabounding" that comes from sharing in the sufferings of Christ and one another, as well as the comfort of Christ and the comfort received from one another. Moreover, the second passage established the necessity of remaining in Christ so that the disciple might continually bear fruit. Both passages have strong ties in both the Old and New Testament of the need for a deep relationship with God that leads to overflow and fruit for the kingdom.

## **Review of Literature**

The below literary resources have been identified in two particular ways. First, resources were studied from over twenty-five years of ministry that were gathered from literature that had a profound impact on a number of leaders who have recommended these resources as impactful on the topic of spiritual formation and spiritual renewal. Some of these works have wide acceptance in classic Christian literature, and some are less well known but share compelling information on the research topic.

Different works of literature were also examined that were most meaningful and helpful to the topic of spiritual fullness and spiritual emptiness. They were found through searches and studies on the topic of spiritual formation and range from classical literature to literature that has been recognized on the topic in more recent days for its influence on spiritual growth. Certain books and literary works were focused on extensively due to their relevance to the topic. A number of other works were not reviewed in great detail, mostly classical, but were added because of parts of the works that bring insight to the topic and bring further support to some of the other pieces of literature that were crucial to the research.

Since in the biblical/theological section the significance of Jesus Christ is established as the source that leads to infilling and overflow, as well as the source of fruit bearing through that overflow, there are two books in particular that shared insights that are foundational to this preparing the way for overflow.

### **The Necessity of Being Empty to be Filled to Overflowing**

The first book is by Andrew Murray entitled *Absolute Surrender*. This classic

book has had a profound effect upon so many for a couple of reasons. First, because the writing of this book was birthed in real life experience in ministry, not just from head knowledge. Andrew Murray was an effective pastor, preacher, and writer who was heavily involved in mission work in South Africa, believing “missions to be the chief end of the church” (*7 Classic*, loc. 7278). The combination of the person he was and the books he wrote bear a strong witness to the validity of his writing which mainly focus on an intimate life with God and the power that comes from that life. Andrew Murray writes, “The condition of God's blessing is absolute surrender of all into his hands” (1). If there is any question about this, he reminds us that, “If anyone would come after me [Jesus] he must deny himself. For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me will save it” (Luke 9.23). This passage makes it clear that following Christ is not a partial thing but requires everything. God is “the fountain of life, the only source of existence, and power and goodness, and throughout the universe, there is nothing good but what God works” (Murray 2). Since God is the one who gives everything, the one source, then it is only by Him that anyone can be whom He has called them to be.

Time and time again, Murray implores his readers to look to the one and only who can do all that needs to be done. He writes, “What you must get from Christ is nothing less than a strong inflow of the Holy Spirit” (Murray 102). Through years of ministry and experience, Murray learned “that we must have an in-flowing of love in quite a new way; our heart must be filled with life from above, from the Fountain of everlasting love if it is going to overflow all day” (57). Though there are many books on successful ministry that focus more on methods, programs, and marketing, Andrew Murray and a number of others focused primarily on living out ministry that came through Christ in an

intimate relationship and then it went from God into the lives of others. The simple truth that appears from so many who have taken spiritual formation seriously points to “close fellowship with Christ in secret prayer” as central in that it allows for not only much fruit in ministry but sustainable fruit throughout a lifetime (Murray 103). Murray points out that he is sure that “there are Christians. . . . You sometimes have a great blessing and have at times found a great inflow of heavenly joy and a great outflow of heavenly gladness, and yet after a time, it has passed away” (103). Why is it that these blessings leave? It is because of the simple fact that “they have not understood that close, personal, actual communion with Christ is an absolute necessity for daily life” (Murray 103).

The two profound truths that remain in seeking to understand better how to be filled until flowing into others originated through the writings of Andrew Murray. The first truth is seen in his question near the end of the book: “What is meant by absolute surrender?” (Murray 105). His answer to that question, “As literally as Christ was given up entirely to God, I am given up entirely to Christ” (Murray 105). He points out that some think this too radical a position. However, he rebuts this argument by simply pointing to Jesus who “came to breathe his own Spirit into us, to make us find our very highest happiness living entirely for God, just as he did” (Murray 105). Is it Murray alone who sees absolute surrender as a necessity to experiencing God’s in-filling resulting in God's continual outflow into the lives of others? Before examining that, there is another truth, which this book is focused on with laser intensity. Murray wants Christians to understand that absolute surrender is only possible as they surrender to the one who has absolute power and control. Earlier in this paper, an examination of John 15 identified Jesus Christ as the vine, which is the only source for real life. Murray also



points to John 15 in helping to bring about an understanding of Jesus as the only source so that Christians might overflow with His fruit. He puts it this way, “The Holy Spirit is the life of the heavenly vine, and what you must get from Christ is nothing less than a strong inflow of the Holy Spirit.... So expect Christ to give his own Holy Spirit into your heart, and then you will bear much fruit” (Murray 102). Here the analogy of this source is taken a step further. As Christ is the vine and the Father is the gardener, one can now see the fullness of the Trinity with the Holy Spirit as the sap within the vine. The importance of the Holy Spirit and spiritual formation literature will be examined later in more depth, but for now, Murray gives a Trinitarian understanding of God as the source who allows Christians to produce much fruit upon which others can feed.

### **The Secret to Being Spiritually Full**

Another book on spiritual formation was recommended by an older, wiser pastor and teacher who said that this book had created more of an impact on his ministry than any other book that he had read. This book was *The Secret to the Christian Life* by Gene Edwards. The title of this book seems to be very presumptuous in claiming to offer the secret to the Christian life. However, the insights from this book were not new or unique, as much as they simply highlighted in a unique way the truth of how to become filled spiritually. What was this incredible secret? The author, Gene Edwards, rather than writing the book in a typical format for a book on the deeper Christian life, wrote it more in storytelling form. In this case, it was God's story. The primary question was, “What were you told you were supposed to do to be a Christian?” He goes on to give a long list of things one might think a Christian would do like go to church and serve the Lord (Edwards 3-4). Then he proceeds to ask a question that gets more to the heart of the

matter. “How can I know Jesus Christ, internally, personally, intimately, daily?” (Edwards 5). Throughout the book, Edwards makes it clear that somehow the list of dos and don'ts just do not lead to a fulfilling Christian life. In the storytelling form of a mystery, he lets the reader know that this list of dos and don'ts “all have one inherent flaw” (Edwards 6). The flaw he describes is the belief that one can live the Christian life. He asks the question “Can you live the Christian life?” Moreover, then he responds, “The answer is no, a resounding no!” (Edwards 6). With each chapter, he begins to unravel the mystery as to how to live the Christian life. He begins by identifying “the first visible Christian” (Edwards 9). As he looks to God in the Trinity or what he describes as the Godhead, Father, Son, and Spirit, the decisive moment comes when Jesus Christ “the Eternal Son became incarnate” and lived the Christian life here on earth (Edwards 10). As Edwards unravels the mystery, Jesus Christ is able to live out what he calls the Christian life because he has “an indwelling Lord” since he was “in constant Fellowship with his Father” (Edwards 13). Jesus in the flesh apart from the rest of the Godhead cannot live a life for God apart from the Father. “Without the Father, I can do nothing” (John 5.30, 8.28-29; Edwards 16). Jesus is able to live this life only through the Father and by the power of His Spirit, but is this possible for mere mortals? At this point, Edwards poses an interesting question. Are there two ways to live the Christian life: “a first-class way” which Jesus followed and a “second-class way” for everyone else (Edwards 55)? Christians are told that “his closest followers chose the way of an indwelling Lord and fellowship with that Lord” (Edwards 56). Ultimately, this mystery leads to an exciting conclusion—“Jesus Christ gives his Spirit to you, and his Spirit gives you his life” (Edwards 77). Scriptures state that God fellowships with his followers in

their spirit (Rom. 8.15-16; Edwards 79). Therefore, the conclusion is this: Christians cannot live the Christian life. In other words, only Jesus Christ can live out the fullness of this triune God. “And unless we lay hold of his life and lay hold of him,” they simply can't do it (Edwards 94). This great mystery leads to the same place that followers were led with 2 Corinthians 13-11 and John 15—only in Christ and by his presence and power can they ever expect to live the Christian life. All other efforts are futile since humans, the things of earth, don't have what it takes to live out the ways of heaven apart from the one who made it possible as a mediator and as a source of power. Moreover, Edwards writes, “The Christian life is ... always has been ... and always will be the exclusive territory of the living God” (Edwards 94). The only hope to live it out is through Him. Christians just do not have the right stuff according to Edwards. The importance of this book is the painstaking effort that Edwards takes to walk Christians through this mystery of why they fail to live for Christ in fullness and abundance. Apart from an “intimate, personal experience with Christ” (Edwards 97) that is lived out daily in practical ways, there is no hope of filling up and overflowing since Christians, on their own, have no source that will last.

### **The Secret to Being Spiritually Full through the Body of Christ**

Another portion of Edwards' book talks about the source of an inflowing that leads to an outflowing for indigenous Christian leaders. In his chapter entitled “A Strong Recommendation,” he speaks about the importance of “ecclesia” the body of Christ “in your spiritual walk” (Edwards 99). As was discussed in 2 Cor. 1.11 in looking at the benefits of suffering and being comforted not just with Christ but with one another, Edwards believes, “a large part of your personal relationship with Jesus Christ is

supposed to be corporate and in community, not individual” (99). Just as an intimate relationship with God is critical in filling and overflowing, this author strongly supports community as a most holy and most precious thing “to your Lord” (Edwards 99). He does suggest it may not be held up as a priority in today's church, which is yet another possibility as to why some global indigenous leaders are depleted as a result of the lack of support from within the community (Edwards 100).

### **The Importance of Passionate Meditation**

Another book that speaks particularly to the heart of spiritual infilling through God is Brennan Manning's *The Furious Longing of God*. Manning is an author who touches lives through the emotion and wisdom of his writings. This book gets at the raw emotion and personal nature of spiritual abundance. As previously alluded to, spiritual formation comes directly from God and cannot be attributed to any particular formula or pattern. The reason many are drawn to this literary work because it was birthed out of Brennan's own spiritual retreat that had a profound impact on him. At a spiritual center in Wernersville, Pennsylvania in 1978, Manning spent 30 days in silence under the direction of a Jesuit priest. During those 30 days he focused on a single passage of only ten words: Song of Solomon 7.10. This brief passage reads, “I am my beloved's and his desire is for me.” The fruit of that focused time resulted in this book (21). His desire is that Christians would learn to pray this passage with all of their hearts. Manning says that God's “desire for you and me can best be described as a furious longing” (21). He believes that when Christians come to the fullness of understanding that they are God's beloved and his desire is for each one “a number of beautiful things will come to pass” (22). The “drumbeat of doom” will become “a song in your heart” (21). A believer will

not be so dependent on others because they will have “Emmanuel - God with us” (22). Praise and criticism will not “send your spirit soaring nor plunging you into the pit” (22). There are number of other attributes, but most significantly he wants God to move people from a place of “*I should pray*” to “*I must pray*” (22). The fact that the focus here is on a “furious, passionate, vehement, and aching” longing for God is very attention getting (30). This kind of relationship would lead to a life filled to overflowing. As the other literature previously mentioned identified Christ and relationship with Him as the source of the spiritual overflowing, Manning also sees Christ as the source. He describes it as a union so substantial that the apostle Paul would write: “It is no longer I who lives, but Christ lives in me” (Gal. 2.20 *New American Standard Bible*; Manning 30-31). Manning points out through the Scriptures that, if Christians are willing, “the promise is that we will be filled up with the fullness of God” (36). These ideas are also echoed in Ephesians 3.17-19. The Scriptures describe spiritual fullness as derived from the love of God, which implies a close and intimate relationship with God as a possibility for those who make Him the source and focus of their lives. As Manning looks at Romans 8.15 he lifts up the word “Abba” which reveals God the Father as much more of a daddy (43). This word describes a very relational God. It describes the kind of God where the little one, in this case believers, feels comfortable “climbing up into daddy's lap” (44). Once again Scripture is used to support the idea of a relationship that leaves the child with the feeling of “I belong to you” (46). In the chapter entitled “Union” he states, “love by its nature seeks union” (59). Many have come to believe that a strong union with God, this divine connection, is just for certain kinds of Christians. Jean Vanier, a Christian philosopher and theologian, tells quite a different story:

It is not reserved for those who are well-known mystics or for those who do wonderful things for the poor . . . . (It is for) those poor enough to welcome Jesus. It is for people living ordinary lives and who feel lonely. It is for all those who are old, hospitalized or out of work, who open their hearts in trust to Jesus and cry out for his healing love. (296)

Many Christian leaders live under the illusion, although they would seldom vocalize it, that this deep mystical union with God is for certain kinds of Christians which they just don't happen to be. John 17.22-23 tells a different story. "I have given them the glory you gave to me, that they may be one as we are one. With me in them and you in me may they be so perfected in *unity* that the world will recognize that it was you who sent me and that you have loved them as you have loved me" (NIV 1984). During a time of prayer over this Scripture passage, Manning "came to the inescapable conclusion that the degree of Abba's love for me is in direct proportion to his love for Jesus" (61). Although this idea is quite clear in this passage, as well as in other passages, it may come across as revolutionary to Christian leaders who view themselves based on simply who they know themselves to be, rather than who they are in Christ. As Abba's adopted child, God expresses a special love for this orphaned child. In Manning's work *The Prayers of Catherine of Siena*, it is expressed in this way when speaking of the Father: "You are fire, nothing but a fire of love, crazy over what you have made" (63). Manning also introduces Thomas Brodie's commentary on the Gospel of John. As stated earlier concerning John 15 and the relationship that exists in abiding or remaining in Jesus so believers might naturally bear fruit, one can see Brodie fleshing out this theology a little more in the book of John. Brodie makes the case that "John's theology is *abiding restful*

*union*” (Manning *Prayers* 64). In John 1.1, 18, Jesus is seen as one who is “in the bosom of the Father.” John tells believers to “make your home in me just as I do in you” (15.4 *The Message*). Here one can see the, “Extraordinary picture of the beloved reclining on Jesus' breast” (Manning, John 13.23-25, *Furious* 63). John is portrayed on several occasions as the one “whom Jesus loved” (Manning *Prayers* 64). The Gospel of John is comfortable with this image of Christ as one who has invited close union with those he chooses just as the Father is in close union with Him. The union that Manning suggests here is not a model of spiritual formation formed in rigor and stringent discipline but rather a resting in the Lord. If it is true that as Paul suggests in Gal. 2.20, “it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me,” then the union that is possible with Christ is beyond a natural ability to explain, and it is certainly beyond humans’ power to create. This does not suggest that spiritual practices or disciplines are futile, but rather that no discipline in and of itself can get one closer to God. For the disciplined and undisciplined Christian leader, the goal is no longer what they can accomplish, whether that is works for God or spiritual disciplines with God. Manning points to Psalm 46.10, “Cease striving and know that I am God,” as what God is truly looking for. All of this suggests that the goal is centered exclusively on being in the presence of God and in His presence by His invitation coming to understand more of who He is and ultimately becoming more of who He is through his power. Manning goes so far as to suggest that if he had it all to do over again, “I would devote not one more minute to monitoring my spiritual growth. No, not one” (65). If Christians are not to monitor their spiritual growth then what do they do to receive spiritual infilling so that they might have an abundance that overflows? Referring back to John 15:10, the Gospel tells believers what Jesus is looking for out of them: "If

you keep my commandments, you will remain in my love, just as I have kept my father's commandments and remain in his love." God does not appear to be looking for a set of rules, disciplines, accountability groups, or even patterns and practices, but instead He would like Christians to remain in His love. Manning puts it this way, "If I had it to do all over again ... I would simply do the next thing in love" (65). That is not to suggest that disciplines, practices, and the discipleship community are not helpful, but it is to make the clear distinction that these can only be tools that are selected based on what one is trying to accomplish in their relationship. In the final analysis, only sharing in close union with Jesus will produce a life of abundance, since believers are now in union with the One, the only one who can produce and reproduce fruit time and time again. The biblical scholar John McKinzie explains it this way:

We recognize that we cannot be our own true self except by union with this person [God]. . . . We recognize in His person strength and power which we can sense passing from Him to us. . . . We recognize that in this person we have encountered God, and that we shall not encounter God in any other way.

(Manning 67-68)

It is critical to understand the disciplines that are practiced can be of great value but only when connected to a vital relationship with God who is the source of abundant life.

### **Christ's Presence Found in Community**

One of the things that is closely tied to this love for God is the love that Christians should have for one another. "Love one another as I have loved you" (John 15.12)

Although love of God is primary in the Gospel of John, as well as throughout the New Testament, loving one another is an extension of fully loving God. If believers are to



share in abundance through their relationship with God, there will be an overflow of love that will flow into the lives of others (Manning 89). One last insight from Manning's book, *The Furious Longing of God*, is that Isaiah often paints a picture of the coming Messiah. In Isaiah 62.2 it states, "The nations will see your righteousness, and all the kings your glory; and you will be called by a new name, which the mouth of the Lord will designate" (NIV 1984). To be filled to overflowing, believers need the fulfillment of the prophet to be real in their lives. This prophet did not merely bring a new name but with him the Spirit of God and with it healing power. Isaiah 61.1 states that when the Spirit comes, he will "bind up the brokenhearted...set the captives free...release the prisoners from darkness." In other words, healing will take place. Manning eloquently writes that, "There's only one healer in the new Israel of God and that is Jesus Christ" (103). The only question is will she allow the healing spirit of the risen Jesus flow through her; will she reach out, and touch Him? It is far too often that those who are empty will not reach out to be filled. It may be pride; it may be low self-esteem. It may be cultural norms that don't seem to permit such a vulnerability. Whatever the case, if Christians only have one hope of infilling then they must at all costs teach, preach, admonish, encourage, or do whatever they can to convince their brothers and sisters around the world that the only hope of sustainable, life-giving, fruit-bearing life and ministry is through fierce focus on Christ and abiding in Him in love.

### **Charisma – Spiritual Life through the Holy Spirit**

The next book that gets to the heart of where spiritual fullness comes from and why so many young Christian leaders are empty is a work dedicated solely to the topic of the Holy Spirit by Francis Chan entitled, *Forgotten God*. There are many other books

that focus on the importance of the Holy Spirit, but after a careful review, this book covered the subject with a well-reasoned simplicity and practical authenticity that is most helpful to the topic of the infilling of young Christian leaders. This book while written primarily for an American audience has global application if it is contextualized in different cultures.

Chan starts by pointing out something that is found all over the world but at this time in history is particularly American. In a quote by A.W. Tozer, the problems of a church or for that matter a church leader devoid of the Holy Spirit are obvious: “The whole level of spirituality among us is low. We have measured ourselves by ourselves. . . . We have imitated the world, sought popular favor, manufactured delights to substitute for the joy of the Lord and produced a cheap and synthetic power substitute for the power of the Holy Ghost” (Chan 27). These are some very serious charges, but most people do not seem to refute them. Even in churches of a charismatic bent, there are many abuses which seem to signify a desire to use the Holy Spirit for our purposes rather than God's will and purposes.

The Holy Spirit seems to be much more alive and well in other parts of the world, particularly the Third World, where the needs are often so great on a daily basis that relying on the Holy Spirit and having a deep faith in God are the only true hope they have. The truth is the power of the Holy Spirit through Jesus Christ is the only real hope, but when faced with daily realities, the Holy Spirit often becomes front and center stage. The other danger from a Third World perspective, in particular, is that, in some cases, there is a desire to import what Americans have. There is often the appearance that Americans are more blessed. However, this appearance is superficial. Leaders, trying to

help their people, might easily succumb to the temptations of a new materialistic and worldly theology. When Mt. Bethel began working in Africa in 2007, one of the major concerns quickly became that the community Mt. Bethel came alongside to help have a better economic future might, in the process, be stripped of some of their deep reliance on the Holy Spirit.

Chan's book looks at the weaknesses regarding the Holy Spirit and Christian theology in America. These must be addressed seriously, or American Christians will either intentionally or unwillingly negatively affect our brothers and sisters around the world who have a deep faith and a strong belief in the power of the Holy Spirit in its ability to heal and transform lives. In John 16.7 Jesus tells the disciples, "It is good, but I am going away. Unless I go away, the Counselor will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you" (NIV 1984). Jesus makes it clear that it is far better to have the Holy Spirit within than the incarnate Jesus on earth. The Holy Spirit of the triune God is the best thing that could happen this side of heaven, and for that reason, it is critical to understand it and how God wants to use it as the central means by which He works in the world.

Chan says that "I do not see much of God's presence and power" in the church today. "Do you" (21)? This indictment should be earth shattering to those who care about abundance and overflow in global leaders throughout the body of Christ. The Holy Spirit was released through the sacrifice for sins by the sacrifice of Jesus Christ so that God might be in the world and believer's lives moment by moment. If the necessity of the Holy Spirit is missed, or worse yet, removed from daily living due to fear or misconceptions about the Holy Spirit, then Christian leadership in the church today will

leave our churches, not only without the presence of God, but it will also leave them without any means of being filled up so that they might overflow. Since the scriptures are clear that global leaders need to be filled by the Holy Spirit and the need for intimacy and union between God and believer, it is helpful to understand how significant the Holy Spirit can be in prayer life.

Romans 8.27 states, “He who searches our hearts knows what is the mind of the Spirit because the Spirit intercedes for the Saints according to the will of God.” Chan confesses “so many times in my life I have not known what to pray” (71). Commitment to intimacy with God will allow insights on how to pray and, even more importantly, when there is confusion on how to pray, God intercedes on one's behalf in prayer so that His will might be done. What can often discourage leaders, leaving them feeling depleted, is what they perceive as unanswered prayer, when in fact, God has interceded on their behalf in a way that will cause His will to be done and His kingdom to grow, which will also be in the best ultimate interest of the Christian leader.

### **Streams of Living Water as a Model for Spiritual Fullness**

*Streams of Living Water* by Richard Foster provides a centerpiece for this project. Foster's book examines the spiritual streams throughout history that have created spiritual vitality and revival and, at the same time, examines the people who were instrumental in writing and bringing about this spiritual fullness into the lives of many leaders of generations past. By looking at these streams that have stood the test of time and are birthed out of the scriptures itself, a window is given into history that can be used to look at and measure what God is using in these days to bring spiritual fullness to young Christian leaders.

Richard Foster identifies six different streams of spiritual tradition that provide valuable insights that have been gained down through the ages. It may also be seen through the Scriptures and other literature how the streams cross one another and benefit one another and where streams come together and possibly create a raging river.

The first stream is the “Contemplative Stream, the prayer-filled life.” This is the model of Jesus, who not only teaches the disciples to pray through passages like The Lord’s Prayer but who models it by the “continual practice, not only of prayer itself but of intense times of solitude. (Foster Loc. 115-136)”

The second stream is the “Holiness Stream, the virtuous life,” the idea of purity of heart. This can be seen in the Scriptures time and time again as “Jesus points to an inner life with God that transforms the heart and builds deeply ingrained habits of virtue” (Foster Loc. 171-205).

The third stream is “the Charismatic Stream, the Spirit-empowered life” (Foster Loc. 218-221). Luke 4.1 says, “Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit ... was led by the Spirit into the wilderness”. Charisma leads us into unlikely places, just like how Jesus was led into the wilderness by the Spirit. Unlikely things happen, e.g., how Jesus was tempted by the devil. Moreover, through the power of the Spirit, believers return the power of the Spirit to proclaim the good news of Jesus Christ.

The fourth stream is “the Social Justice Stream, the compassionate life.” Jesus proclaims in the words of Isaiah that He is coming to bring good news to the poor, release captives, cause the blind to see, and make a way for the oppressed to be set free (Foster Loc. 269-271).

The fifth stream is “the Evangelical Stream, the Word-centered life.” Here is a stream where the good news is proclaimed through His word, and He is, in fact, the Word of God that brings life to men. This good news is the good news that “all people can enter into a living and abundant life with God in his kingdom of love” (Foster Loc. 317-321).

The sixth stream is “the Incarnational Stream, the sacramental life.” Incarnation is at the heart of the Jesus story. The same Jesus who walked in the flesh among us lived and breathed as we did and experienced joy and suffering in the full sense of the word. He offered up his life in human form. “He did not regard equality with God something to be exploited, but emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, being born in human likeness” (Phil. 2.6-7). These traditions were birthed out of the life of Jesus in the Word, but just like people and personalities, each has something to offer. However, global leaders encapsulate a wide array of cultures and experiences, so all traditions must be considered. Even more important than the cultural aspect is the fact that, in the brief introduction to these traditions as related to Jesus in the Gospels, it is realized that just as Jesus knew when anger was holy and when gentleness brought about his kingdom, all traditions may be useful at certain times in certain places.

In order to look at the value of these traditions to indigenous global leaders, it will be helpful to take a brief look at each of the streams, since throughout the centuries God has used these streams of living water in the lives of Christian leaders to empower them so they might be abundantly filled until they flow into the lives of others. By identifying these leaders whom history has demonstrated had fruitful Spirit-filled ministries, this will help to see the value of the streams of spirituality.

## **The Contemplative Stream of Living Water**

The first stream mentioned is found in the contemplative tradition. In this tradition, God has moved powerfully in the lives of Christian leaders “through an ever-deepening re-formation of the heart and mind” (Foster loc. 1070). John, the apostle, would be the best example from the original church, and later on, such notable writers and religious leaders as John of the Cross and Brother Lawrence from the 16th and 17th centuries and in more recent times, Thomas Merton and Henry Nouwen (Foster loc. 466). One of the earliest church fathers, Antonius, as well as others like him, found this contemplative life in the desert. He read passages such as, “Go sell all that you have and give it to the poor and you shall have treasures in heaven” (Matt 19.21). These passages were not figurative to Antonius. These words “spoke directly to his heart,” and shortly thereafter he “sold off his parents’ estate and gave money to the poor.” Moreover, so off he went “into the Egyptian desert, seeking God” (Foster loc. 480-483). In the writings of Brother Lawrence, he lived his life believing that the Christian should “seek our satisfaction only in the fulfilling [of] His [God] will” (Lawrence loc. 84). As Brother Lawrence stated it, he wanted to follow God “whether he led us by suffering or by consolation” (loc. 84). This theme is the same recurring theme in 2 Corinthians 1.5-6 where Paul is suffering and being comforted according to whatever is best for the Corinthians. Jesus Christ also suffered and shared his comfort so that he might flow into the lives of others. In Brother Lawrence’s contemplative life, the focus was not in relegating contemplation to certain times of the day but instead focusing continually on God. His desire is that “we ought to act with God in the greatest simplicity ... and imploring His assistance in our affairs, just as they happen” (Lawrence loc. 118). Some

might think that this type of moment-by-moment dwelling on and serving Christ would be monotonous. Brother Lawrence, although realizing that making this the habit of life can be difficult, said that God brings joy to this kind of faithfulness. He realized that “we must at first apply to Him [God] with some diligence: but that after a little care we should find his love inwardly excite us to it without any difficulty” (Lawrence loc. 109). A fountain of life comes from Brother Lawrence’s complete devotion. He writes, “There is not in the world a kind of life more sweet and delightful, than that of a continual conversation with God” (Lawrence loc. 333).

John of the Cross, a Spanish poet, Carmelite friar, and priest who wrote some great spiritual works during the 16th century including the *Dark Night* writes poetically of how the soul must go through suffering in order to reach God. Here again, although God provides tremendous comfort, suffering is a necessary part of the journey. He gives three reasons why it is necessary to go through what he calls “night” to experience union with God. First, “it has gradually to deprive itself of desire for all the worldly things... By denying them to itself... as it were, night to all the senses” (Cross loc. 274). The second, “road along which the soul must travel to this union... His faith and third has to do with the point to which it travels. - Namely, God... Who is dark night to the soul in this life” (Cross loc. 272). John of the Cross helped Christians in the difficult time in which they lived, as well as today, see the suffering they must go through in order to experience the sweet union with God.

Through years of this tradition of contemplation, many saints in the faith have drawn close to God. However, with the busyness of the 20th and 21st century, contemplation has drifted somewhat into the background. More recent contemplatives



have experienced a renewal, as people in their busy driven of lives once again long for meditation and contemplation. Thomas Merton, through his spiritual journey, although cloistered in a monastery in rural Kentucky, has awakened through his writings a great desire in many to dwell deeply upon God. Merton saw the importance of this intimate relationship in the power of God's grace as he understood that "the grace of Christ identifies me with the engrafted word which is Christ living in me" (65). Merton understood the importance of receiving God's grace which flowed into us through Jesus Christ and imports out into the lives of others. As Merton put it, "the greater our capacity to receive His mercy, the greater is our power to give Him glory, for He is glorified only by His own gifts, and He is most glorified by those in whom His mercy has produced the greatest love" (51). Once great love is produced through God's great love, it can then be passed on.

Another contemplative who has had a positive effect on many in recent times is Henri Nouwen. Despite Nouwen's great academic achievements, he found peace in the midst of a community of physically and mentally handicapped people at the L'Arche Daybreak community in Ontario, Canada. In Nouwen's book *In the Name of Jesus*, his radical change to a life of simplicity and contemplation can lead to a true understanding of what Christian leadership and servanthood are all about. As he entered this new community, he came to realize "their liking or disliking me had absolutely nothing to do with any of the many useful things I had done until then" (Nouwen 15). Just as Jesus had offered himself as a humble servant and Paul had offered himself to the community at Corinth, Nouwen had come to discover that "the Christian leader of the future," just like the great Christian leaders of the past, are "called to be completely irrelevant, and you

stand in this world with nothing to offer but his or her own vulnerable self. That is the way Jesus came to reveal God's love” (Nouwen 17).

In the contemplative life, as much as any of the traditions, there is a tradition that offers a great opportunity for leaders around the world to deeply reflect on the one who really matters and through meditation and contemplation, grow in the image of the one who is the source of life.

### **The Holiness Stream of Living Water**

The second stream is found in the Holiness Tradition offers what seems to be an extension of the contemplative life as one “focuses upon the inward re-formation of the heart and the development of “holy habits” (Foster Loc. 1072).

Starting with James the apostle to the 2<sup>nd</sup>–4<sup>th</sup> century church through Christian leaders such as Tertullian and Gregory of Nazianzus, to the 14th and 15th century with influential leaders such as Thomas á Kempis and Ignatius of Loyola, and in more recent times leaders such as E. Stanley Jones and Dietrich Bonhoeffer, all exemplified a deep desire for holiness. In the midst of all of these men of the Holy Tradition, one can find no better example throughout history of this kind of life than the Methodist life of John Wesley. Like many early church fathers of this Holiness Tradition, Wesley had come to understand that all that has been poured into us through Jesus Christ must be poured into others. Gregory of Nazianzus from the fifth century understood that the holiness that had been imparted to him was so precious that he longed to share this truth and the reality of it with all believers. Upon understanding the incredible gift of Jesus’s crucifixion and resurrection by which “today I rise with Him,” Gregory came to a conclusion to “Let us offer ourselves, the possession most precious to God, and most fitting; let us give back to

the image what is made after the image. . . . Let us become like Christ since Christ became like us” (32).

### **Wesley’s Major Contribution to Holistic Holiness**

As John Wesley found his heart strangely warmed, he moved from a place of obedience out of obligation to a place of surrender and passion birthed from his personal encounter of intimacy with God. John Wesley understood the necessity of constant union with Christ. John Wesley did not see life in the way that many see it today where it is subdivided into categories, and often devotion and behavior depend upon which category is operating from that moment. “He never divided his life in the compartments. For him, the essence of life was spiritual. All of it could properly be called devotional” (Harper 18).

John Wesley who was a part of this key in the Holiness Tradition was constantly looking for ways to practice his “spiritual life” throughout the day. He found the way in what he called the “means of grace” (Harper 19). Like the contemplatives, John Wesley saw that the most significant means of grace for drawing close to God was prayer. Wesley described prayer as “the grand means of drawing near to God” (19). Wesley had determined after years of ministry and leadership over numerous pastors that “absence of prayer . . . was the most common cause of spiritual dryness” (19). Just as so many before him, Wesley realized that he must remain in the vine. A life apart from a constant personal relationship was a life cut off from the source of life. As important and central as prayer was to John Wesley, several other priorities need to be mentioned, in order to understand the depth of John Wesley's spiritual life. First and foremost was John Wesley’s love for God and the desire of his heart to demonstrate that love to God.

Wesley's favorite Scripture verse was Matthew 22.37–40, “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all my soul, with all thy mind. This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like unto it. Thou shalt love a neighbor as thyself...” (Harper 12). Throughout John Wesley's literature over the years, one cannot help but notice a theme of love for God coming through his writings.

Another indispensable observation about Wesley is his love for the Word. He often referred to himself as “*homo unis libri* – a man of one book” (Harper 14). For Wesley, no prayer, no means of grace, no acts of service could be separated from the truth of the Word. If it could not be found in the Word, then Wesley would not allow it to become part of his spiritual life.

One other important aspect that was critical not only to John Wesley's spiritual life personally but also to every movement and ministry that Wesley was a part of in his lifetime was that of Christian community or “Christian conference.” Through his societies, classes, and bands, Wesley “viewed this dimension as a means of grace because he saw the principle exemplified Jesus calling together of the disciples and the New Testament emphasis on assembly and *koinonia*” (authentic fellowship) (Harper 54).

One other aspect that made John Wesley's spiritual life so rich was not simply his intentionality about being filled with the word of God and the spirit of God in community, but his intentionality about pouring out into the world what God had poured into him. Wesley believed in means of grace that were inward-focused but also “additional means of grace to the church through which it fulfills the social and relational dimensions of the gospel” (Harper 64). These additional means are what Wesley would consider works of mercy. It was this bringing together of “piety and mercy which gave

Wesley and spirituality its life and its ministry” (65). In a quote, Harper says, “holiness of heart and life remained the twin peaks of vital spirituality” (65). This spirituality seems to be what Wesley understood so well that set his movement apart from others of that day and ultimately led to spiritual depth with an impact on the world that is still being seen today.

Though much more could be said about Wesley through the models and methods he used, it was his love for God, his commitment to prayer and the means of grace, his complete faith in the word of God, his biblical belief in community for spiritual growth and accountability, and his unwavering commitment to let flow out of him into his community that he was a part of which allowed the world to see the love of God.

Another example that is a necessity to understand his idea of pouring into leaders so they might be filled even in the midst of suffering is Dietrich Bonhoeffer. Bonhoeffer was a bright German theologian who participated in the resistance against the Nazis in World War II. Dietrich Bonhoeffer was hanged in camp concentration on April 9, 1945. Many of his writings occurred while he was in prison and reflect his joy in Christ in the midst of suffering in the flesh.

One of the most hopeful theological concepts given on this subject matter is Bonhoeffer’s thoughts on grace. He saw the enemy of the church as cheap grace. For him, this is “grace without a price without cost” (Bonhoeffer 43). It is great that grace is received from God, but if the grace received is of little value, it leaves the world unchanged and what believers pour into others will be of little value as well. Bonhoeffer understood this, opting for a costly grace. He explains it this way, “It is costly because it calls us to discipleship; it is grace because it calls us to follow Jesus Christ. It is costly

because it costs people their lives; it is grace because it thereby makes them live” (Bonhoeffer 45). He sees this grace as the “costly pearl” (Matt. 13.45-46) for which Christians are willing to sell everything because it is worth everything (Bonhoeffer 45). The importance that can be seen in Bonhoeffer’s theology of grace is significant to global indigenous leaders as many of them go through times of great suffering and sacrifice much in the hope that this gospel brings more comfort and more joy than the world. This theology of grace must be part of our theology to offer hope in difficult situations such as Paul’s in 1 Cor. 1.8-11 who considered his situation as a death sentence, but through the power of God there was hope.

### **The Charismatic Stream of Living Water**

The third stream is the Charismatic Tradition. Having looked at an abundant infilling that leads to an overflow that pours into the lives of others, the Charismatic Tradition focuses “upon the power to do,” whereas the Holiness Tradition which focuses more on “the power to be.” Once again, as with all the traditions, the Charismatic Tradition best serves the kingdom when it works in conjunction with other traditions. If the right person inwardly bears little fruit, they have not taken full advantage of what God desires to do through them, but equally true is if they accomplish great things in God’s power but lack holiness, they hurt the witness of Jesus Christ. This Charismatic Tradition focuses on “the empowering charisma was or gifts of the Spirit and the nurturing fruit of the Spirit” (Foster loc. 1721). It is also significant that this Charismatic Tradition speaks to the need to feel the “presence of God among his people” (Foster Loc. 1723-1727).

Among the early Christian leaders to carry on the Charismatic Tradition was St. Gregory the Great. He was the first monk to become pope and was responsible for a great

reform in worship. Also, he “championed the military, political, and economic interests” of the people (Great loc. 41). In addition to all the changes he made in the culture for the church, he spent a great amount of time in “personal study in pastoral supervision” (Great Loc. 41-44). Despite his high level of education and ideas about the modernization of the church and society, he very much believed in spiritual gifts and miracles and encouraged them in trying to spread the word of the gospel. At that time in antiquity, some people identified as “holy men” who had the ability to “exorcise demons, foresee the future, and intercede for the community” (Great loc. 280). Gregory's desire in contrast to others of his day was to have “his priest with the same authority and influence” (Loc. 272-279).

Gregory believed that spiritual directors (those in Christian leadership overseeing others) should be “a compassionate neighbor to everyone and superior to all in contemplation” (Great loc. 961). St. Gregory was motivated by the compassion that was birthed out of much time in contemplation with the Father of compassion. He also resonated with 2 Corinthians 1.3-11 not only in his deep compassion but also in his desire to suffer as Christ did for the sake of others. He believed that one in spiritual authority should “transfer the affirmatives of others to himself by means of intense piety and transcend even his own aspirations for visible things through the loftiness of his meditation” (Great Loc. 968). In other words, Gregory, like Paul, believed the two should take on the sufferings of others as Christ did even at his expense. Like so many others who spent deep time in contemplation on God, Gregory embodied a sacrificial life. St. Gregory also understood the need for infilling before pouring out as he put it, “It is proper that he is first to drink, and then to flow by preaching under others” (Great loc. 2746). As God pours into the spiritual leader, it was their responsibility “to disperse

fountains abroad” (Great loc. 2746). This was always done in humility since he believed we should have “no desire at all to hear praises from others” (Great Loc. 2755).

### **The Compassion Stream of Living Water**

The next of the great traditions of Christianity is the fourth stream, Social Justice Tradition or Compassion Tradition. Here, as much as in any other tradition is displayed the Father of compassion, Jesus Christ who endured suffering for man’s sake, and the Holy Spirit who deep within believers provides comfort and counsel. God’s compassion flows into the believer’s life “full of the Holy Spirit and divine love,” and through God’s overflow are those best equipped to share God’s compassion with others (Foster Loc. 2328-2335).

The life and ministry of Mother Teresa is one of the best examples of the Social Justice Tradition. She was born in Albania, and while she was young “violence erupted not only between the different ethnic groups of the region but also amongst the different religions” (North loc. 83). Agnes’ (Mother Teresa) father died unexpectedly when she was only nine. Although this turmoil and tragedy created sadness in the home, her mother, Drana, in the midst of it all changed the atmosphere of their home from one of politics “toward the safety and compassion of the church” (North Loc. 84-107). Mother Teresa first learned compassion from her mother. Drana told her daughter, “My child, never eat a single mouthful unless you are sharing it with others.” Moreover, that is what Drana modeled in the family throughout those difficult days (North Loc. 119-121). Later on, she became “undone” as she walked the streets of India to the school where she taught, and she discovered that “the people’s plight was worse than anything she could have imagined” (North Loc. 278). All of the orphanages she opened, as well as her home



for the destitute who were dying, were in response to the love she had received from God that she wanted to pass on to others. These writings about Mother Teresa and her legacy of compassion were illustrated on a recent visit to Mother Teresa's Home for the Sick and Dying Destitute in Calcutta, where these people who were close to death were cared for with the greatest of love in a culture where many view them as untouchable. God is comfort is emulated by Mother Teresa and others like her who are an example of servant leaders that are willing to suffer but are filled with the comfort of Christ.

### **The Evangelical or Word-centered Stream of Living Water**

The fifth stream of living water identified by Richard Foster is the Evangelical Tradition that focuses on the word of God. This word-centered life has already been mentioned in the examination of Wesley's more holistic Holiness Tradition. When the traditions are used together, they can strengthen one another, The pure holy love of Christ is one of the most powerful ways to bear witness to Christ, as one proclaims the good news of the gospel (Foster Loc. 3165). Peter is the apostle who fits the mold of the Evangelical Tradition. On the day of Pentecost he proclaimed the pouring out of God's Spirit and Jesus Christ as resurrected as through the power of the Spirit. This tradition contains great revivalists such as Charles Finney during the great awakening of the 18th and 19th centuries. Finney was another Christian leader who believed in the necessity of prayer. In giving a reason for intensive prayer, even agonizing prayer, as Christians sought to see God move, he explained, "it is as if Christ came and poured the overflowing of his own benevolent heart into His people ... so full of compassion for sinners that they cannot contain themselves" (Finney Loc. 4949). To Charles Finney, this infilling and outflowing is what enables God to work powerfully in his people. The combination of

Finney's powerful prayer life and powerful preaching from the word caused him, and others like him, to see God move in powerful ways in this Evangelical Tradition.

### **The Incarnational or Sacramental Stream of Living Water**

The final and sixth tradition is the Incarnational Tradition. This tradition "focuses on making present and visible realm of the invisible spirit" (Foster loc. 4010). This tradition can be seen in sacramental living and helps us see God as a reality and active each and every day of our lives. This is an invaluable mindset for the indigenous leader who can become weary of all the daily responsibilities and unexpected burdens. When they sense that God is near, and though He may not visibly be present in some mystical way is tangibly present, they have great power and joy in serving through the power and presence Jesus Christ.

Of all the traditions this one is at the heart of the gospel as the greatest example from the Scriptures is Jesus himself, God in the flesh, Emmanuel—God with us. In this tradition is an understanding that God feels what the believer feels, suffers as the believer suffers, and shares joy, laughter, and tears just as the believer does.

To highlight this incarnational life is one of God's greatest missionaries: the life of Hudson Taylor. Taylor understood the importance of closeness to God in order to be filled and to pour into others. Taylor put it this way, "nearness to God must count his love as better than wine" (the final product of natural fruit compares to spiritual fruit) (loc. 100). "To win Christ, the Apostle Paul gladly suffered the loss of all things ... for the excellency of the knowledge of Jesus Christ his Lord. Christ himself for our redemption emptied himself and came to seek not his own, but the will of Him that sent Him" (loc. 100-101). In Taylor's life, suffering was part of God's plan. He knew that

through sacrifice for others he would be blessed as well. He understood that “The highest service demands the greatest sacrifice, but it secures the fullest blessing and the greatest fruitfulness” (loc. 104). Taylor was a leader who understood the abundance of suffering and the abundance of prayer. This connection with God was so direct that he expected and received answers to his prayers with abundant regularity. In Taylor's words “I fear there was not much faith in the prayer; but oh! How abundantly it was answered and what a feast God gave me!” (loc. 59).

When looking at each of these Traditions of streams of living water, it is seen how spiritual life flows and the benefits of each stream that through the power and presence of God is available when the streams run together forming a raging river.

There is one more overlooked area; this area is cultural partnerships and relationships. These findings will be shared with brothers and sisters around the world and come alongside them in community and partnership. Therefore, a basic understanding must be gained of the cultural dynamics that, if adhered to, will build bridges and create bonds, but if violated, most likely will separate and divide and potentially undo the work of these streams of living water.

### **The Role of Culture in Relationships that lead to Spiritual Fullness**

A particularly meaning book regarding this topic is Dave Gibbons' *The Monkey and the Fish*. Although the focus of the book was third-culture churches, this concept of a third culture is a powerful insight that opens the door for global leaders to connect with one another regardless of the cultural differences. Since the focus of this paper is global leaders across the continents and not from a particular place, this third culture principle proves most helpful. The definition given for third-culture is “the mindset and will to

love, learn, and serve in any culture, even in the midst of pain and discomfort” (Gibbons loc. 203). In Genesis 12.2 as God blesses Abram, soon to be Abraham, Abram here is blessed to be a blessing. This blessing will not merely be for Abraham's nation but for all nations. A third-culture way of being is not entering into a culture for personal benefit but for the benefit of others. Through the painful process of learning what love looks like in culture, and in sacrificing self for the betterment of others, spiritual growth happens through long-term relationships and healthy partnerships. Concerning how third-culture relates to spirituality and relationships, American Christians need to relearn their way of thinking especially as they move from the West to the East. Gibbons offers a helpful model called “the rhythms model.” The idea behind the model is, according to Gibbons,, “You organize ministry around three intersecting spheres—Christ, cause, and community.” In order for relationships and partnerships to work, particularly among Christian leaders who are passionate about seeing Christ glorified in advancing His kingdom, “you need all three rhythms to be healthy.” This makes particular sense in the “global culture” where there are so many variables in missions and ministries, and these are looked at so differently in different parts of the world (Gibbons 105).

Another book that that is helpful with the issues particularly pertaining to working with global leaders for the primary purpose of abundant spiritual infilling which leads to consistent, sustainable outflow without emptiness or burn out is *Close: Leading Well Across Distance And Culture*. Published in 2013, this book is particularly in tune with these cross-cultural and spiritual issues that exist today. Cochrum understands that “effective spiritual leadership across distance and cultures is a crucial topic for Christian missions right now, as the lines between local and global cultures blur” (Loc. 242).

Communications and technology, as well as fast travel, have brought people together like never before, highlighting both similarities but also escalating attention on differences and tensions. In the Revelation of John, it reads, “after this I looked, and behold, a great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb” (7.9). This scripture makes it clear that it is God’s intention to bring people together globally, and all means possible should be used under His leadership to bring this about. Acts 1.8 reminds us that believers will receive power from the Holy Spirit and then will be His witnesses to all nations. This Scripture is an important reminder that through Him, the source, believers will accomplish his mission as he guides them. Because of the Holy Spirit unity can exist among Christian leaders who are vastly different in life and culture. This unity does not discount those differences, but as has been suggested throughout the paper, spiritual vitality will minimize them and give guidance through them.

Another insight that's most helpful is the “appointment of indigenous leaders in each location minimizing cultural friction” (Cochrum Loc. 397). Leadership first and foremost belongs in the hands of those who are there 365 days a year. Outsiders, who may be leaders in their own culture, should come not to control the new culture but should come alongside the new culture, eager to learn ways to assist in areas of need. Through countless interviews, Cochrum determined the factors most desired by indigenous leaders to be “respect, empathy, honesty and authenticity, vision and desire to share” (Loc. 491-507). Additional factors included practicing genuine care for people, two-way communications, clear focus, and helpful resources (Cochrum Loc. 555-556). Too often in ministry, partners are quick to come in and assume that abundant material

resources equate to greater knowledge or expertise. The observation of a new paradigm is particularly helpful in trying to identify what this new partnership might look like if it is to be helpful. First, the new paradigm involves servant leadership, which includes a global vision, love and humility, listening and understanding, and truly shared leadership. As those in the U.S. church come alongside those in challenging settings to share new knowledge, resources in a relationship are vital not merely to be teachers but learners as well. In order for American Christians to assist young Christian leaders of other cultures to be filled to overflowing, the American Christians must be committed themselves to the same spiritual depth through their own surrender and streams of living water in order to pour into the lives of others around the world.

In the missionary journeys of Paul is a valuable model given of how to enter into cultures that one is not familiar with, to provide leadership and instructions, and to leave these communities to establish and contextualize their own church within their culture. Without this type of model, much of the relationship with the leadership and the church might be damaged over issues related primarily to culture more than genuine differences. Paul was able to lay down core foundations of the faith and to come back from time to time to when necessary and when needed to give guidance, instruction, or even correction. However, in general, Paul left each community to shape and mold what this knowledge and truth would look like within their culture context. “From the beginning to the end it (his letter to the churches) implies that he desires for them more freedom” (Allen 116). Paul does not regret for allowing them to decide how they should lead their own church so it would fit the context.

The new paradigm is distant leadership. Distant leadership calls for mature, stable leaders who value their partner and make the most of face-to-face time to build trust and lead with flexibility, a heart for mentoring, and empathy. It also requires the ability to think globally and build virtual teams whenever possible to fill the gaps when face-to-face time is infrequent. Another element of the paradigm is cross-cultural leadership. Cross-cultural leadership simply means a great self-awareness of cultural values and biases, a great personal interest in other cultures, and sensitivities towards those cultures foster working together as leaders in all arenas where an understanding of cultural nuances that impact the strategy and adjust accordingly occurs (Cochrum Loc. 568-568). The summation of all of this can be seen in guidance through the Spirit and a heart for others that in humility sees all perspectives and desire, not necessarily what brings physical growth, but spiritual growth and fruit for the kingdom through trust, respect, and mutual love.

A last cultural observation that can cause emptiness or depletion in young Christian leaders is emotionally unhealthy people. This is general not highly visible in cultural but has a tremendous impact of how one will interact with the culture. In Peter Scazzero's book *Emotionally Healthy Spirituality*, Scazzero tells the reader that family and churches often have, "generational patterns and culture that negatively shape how I relate and live today" (59). This cultural phenomenon often disrupts one's best efforts to grow spiritually even when one is regular in the spiritual practices one assumes will cause them to grow close to God. Real-time and energy will need to be spent with young Christian leaders understanding any unhealthy emotional patterns they have developed if the person wants to be spiritual full since those patterns often disrupt the ability to truly

grow since they have an internal source that eats away healthy relationships unless one is intentional.

### **Research Design Literature**

Based on the Literature Review there are some special challenges in creating a research design that will accomplish the purpose of this project. By examining the literature on spiritual formation and spiritual practices in the review, it became apparent that it would not be possible to do an exhaustive look at spiritual practices. Even if such a task could be accomplished, it would be even more difficult to try and give all of these options to young Christian leaders to examine for one's consideration about what leads to fullness and what leads to emptiness spiritually. This has led to the researcher to make two decisions about the research design in order to better accomplish the purpose of this project.

First given the vast number of spiritual practices, and the diverse understanding of these practices, it was important that the research design included research methods that allow for informal discussion to be sure that the practices discussed were understood. Although there needed to be some specific questions that all those involved in the research would be asked there also need to be a great deal of flexibility so that a dialogue could bring clarity to the topics. Because of these challenges, qualitative semi-structured interviews provided the best means of having specific topics asked but allow for a number of unstructured questions to be asked to come to a greater understanding of what the person being interviewed was trying to say regarding one's spiritual practices.

(Sensing loc. 2701)



The second decision that was made based on an understanding of the material in this literature review is the need for some pattern or template to take a tremendous amount of material (all of the material on spiritual practices and formation) and put it into a simple form that could be easily explained. The literature from Richard Foster's *Streams of Living Water* that was carefully examined in the literature review provided exactly this type of template. Taking 2000 years of Christian history, Foster was able to break down all of the Spiritual moves of God into six traditions from which these moves were derived. By using these categories, it made it possible to ask questions about a very specific topic and yet, through semi-structured interviews, have an informal and in-depth discussion on what type of spiritual movements most caused them to be filled spiritually.

The literature in this chapter also guided this researcher to a decision to do two different surveys. One survey would use Richard Foster's six streams to create a survey where quantifiable data could be pulled to see which tradition and consequently which practice those participating in the surveys found most filling spiritually. The other survey did not draw from Foster's literature but was a tool to identify emptiness spiritual. Here the literature suggested a number of reasons for dryness, in works such as *Dark Night of the Soul* by Saint John of the Cross. Through the literature and pilot interviews, a list of twelve areas of depletion was created that could rank from one to twelve.

The literature, at the end of the literature review on culture, also proved most helpful in creating a research design. Through books like, *The Monkey and the Fish* and *Close: Leading Well Across Distance And Culture*, it became clear how critical it was to bridge culture when doing interviews and surveys or the data might be adversely affected by cultural misunderstands or miscommunication. Because of this understanding, the

researcher was very intentional about over communicating and asking participants to repeat back what was said to see if the understanding of was the same when repeated back. It also caused the research to call upon indigenous people to explain the survey and for answering questions to avoid any barrier based on language.

In Scazzero's book in *Spiritually Emotional Health*, much was gained that was used by the interviewer in asking questions. This book highlighted the fact that, "Almost all problems in the spiritual life stem from a lack of self-knowledge." (Scazzero 65) As the research methods were designed, the book by Scazzero, made it abundantly clear, if this project was to be helpful to these young leaders it was necessary to be very relational. The relational aspect of interviews allowed the interviews to break through the barriers of self-knowledge and get to the core of these participants. In turn, the participants could trust the interviewer enough to let him in.

The literature in the review proved most helpful in the topics previously mentioned above, in designing research that was able to identify themes that provided spiritual full or emptiness.

### **Summary of Literature**

The literature review began with a biblical/theological foundation. Two passages were chosen as foundational to an understanding of how the scriptures and God Himself view this idea of flowing into us so that one is replenished spiritually and rather than being empty.

In 2 Corinthians 1.4, the God of compassion and comfort comforts his believers in their affliction or tribulation so that they may be able to comfort others with the very same comfort that they received from God. This comfort from troubles or afflictions is

not limited to affliction that believers have caused or affliction that has come upon the believer “both externally and internally” (Thrall 103).

The word “comfort” is defined in Strong’s dictionary of words in the Greek New Testament as abundance or overflow, which is defined as to “super abound” (Strong 57). This implies that what is happening is not simply abounding, but it is overabounding. To use the image of a cup being filled, this abundance would not be just filled to the brim, but a better image would be a cup that is continually overflowing. This image is at the heart of biblical theology that has God pouring into His disciples through a relationship with Christ and the bride of Christ His church that leads to this life-giving overflow.

The second passage was John 15 and had an equally powerful image of Christ flowing into Christians so that they might bear fruit continually without dying off the vine. In John 15 one sees how “The redemptive action of the Son is always that of Mediator” and thus Jesus serves as the vine through which life is able to flow to man and impart life to the fullest (Martin 272). A second way in which Jesus is the vine was seen through Jesus as a representative of God who is the source of life and gives life, as opposed to all other vines that are not the source of life and thus cannot give real life.

A number of biblical scholars identify Israel in the Old Testament as the vine that is to bear fruit for God. This new image would suggest that Israel, as the people of God, is unable to bear fruit apart from the “true vine,” Jesus Christ. It is only “renewed people of God who might come into being and bring forth fruit for God” (Martin 272). Once again as in as 2 Corinthians 1.3-11 the overflow or flow of God can only come through a relational connection to Jesus Christ and in the connection comes the only true way to bear fruit.

What we see in 2 Corinthians 1,3-11 is a theology of God's flow and overflow into lives it is now important to examine the literature in ways in which spiritual practices and connections can allow for this overflow in the lives of young Christian leaders in challenging settings that are so often pouring out so much as a necessity of the circumstances in which they find themselves.

The major threads that ran throughout Scripture and the literature point to the indispensable need for a relationship with God as the source of spiritual fullness. Much of the literature stressed the absolute necessity for Christian leaders to be deeply connected and totally committed to an intimate relationship with God, in the form of three persons—Father (images of compassionate and gardener), Son (images of mediator and vine), and Holy Spirit (images of indwelling counselor and power and presence). Everything must be built around a central relationship with God since that relationship provides what is needed for Christian leaders to be filled abundantly to overflowing.

The literature also suggests the bringing together of Christian traditions throughout history. This interaction would allow for Christian leaders to have the full resources found in Scripture and practice throughout the ages so that these streams might form into a powerful river that flows in and out of one's life through Jesus Christ. When life is filled with deep contemplating prayer and meditation that focus on purity of heart one fully relies on the power of the Spirit. This reliance expresses itself in compassion to those who are in need of God's love. Compassion along with authentic proclamation combine to powerfully convey the word of God to the world. As a result, each moment is lived out as a sacrament.

Throughout the literature, life in Christ was the major theme. Additionally, an important sub-theme which supports this intimate life in Christ is Christian community. Although life comes from God and God alone, the Christian community and fellowship of believers play a major role in encouraging, supporting, and holding one another accountable in order to strengthen the body of Christ.

Lastly, the cultural literature supported the necessity for community, and the fact that communities are becoming more global. Since the focus is global partnerships and the infilling of those leaders, it was suggested communities would best be served by having third-culture people that can bridge the gap between cultures. In order to overcome cultural barriers, a desire to respect, love, learn, and share were major themes working across cultural lines no matter where on the globe believers were serving.

## **CHAPTER 3**

### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY FOR THE PROJECT**

#### **Overview of the Chapter**

This chapter addresses the nature and purpose of researching the spiritual development of Christian leaders across the globe that are serving in difficult settings. The research questions are stated in a way to solicit detailed answers to the issue that is being examined. Next, a description is given of how the ministry setting or context was chosen and how these participants were selected in order to get the best possible sampling to examine the issue of spiritual fullness and emptiness.

A section in this chapter describes pilot test interviews which were done prior to the research-based interviews. A brief description is included as to what helpful information was gleaned from these interviews and what changes were made as a result of these interviews. The next section of Chapter 3 describes step by step the procedure that was used for collecting evidence from the participants. Then follows a description of the procedure that will be used for analyzing the evidence that has been collected through the interviews and surveys. Finally, justification is given as to how the research methods and means that were used provide accurate and valid data as to what creates both "spiritual fullness" as well as "spiritual emptiness."

#### **Nature and Purpose of the Project**

This project was undertaken as a result of observations that many who serve around the world in developing or challenging settings, though serving faithfully and with integrity, often struggle with spiritual depletion or emptiness. This observation is not to suggest that these faithful servants lacked a deep relationship with God, but rather the

severity of this situation created an environment where the amount that pours out of their spiritual reservoir each day far exceeds the amount that is poured into them on a regular basis. This has been this researcher's personal observation through regular contact and conversations particularly over the last eight years since serving as the Pastor of Missions at Mt. Bethel UMC. Having observed a similar phenomenon in multiple settings on five different continents in which Mt. Bethel serves, these observations created a curiosity birthed from love and compassion for these brothers and sisters to discover if there were factors or common denominators that led to their feeling of fullness or emptiness inwardly.

In addition to a curiosity birthed from love, a scriptural study led to the conclusion that God intends to fill, through His Spirit, abundantly, or until Christians are overflowing. With a desire to help brothers and sisters who serve so faithfully in hard places it would be beneficial to understand any factors or common denominators that lead to spiritual fullness or emptiness. Either through outside assistance or their own devices, these findings might be used to put into place those factors that lead to fullness as well as address those factors that lead to emptiness.

Cultural, physical or even chemical factors may lead one to feel depleted. However, this research is designed to evaluate the spiritual factors and understand from a scriptural viewpoint the core or foundation upon which a Christian leader should find themselves full and ready for ministry, or empty and running low in moral, energy or motivation to continue one's leadership responsibilities and calling at peak performance.

## **Research Questions**

### **Research Question #1**

What are the contributing factors or common denominators that lead to spiritual emptiness in young Christian leaders in challenging settings?

The first research question was designed to identify what spiritual factors resulted in young Christian leaders with a feeling of spiritual emptiness or depletion in life and ministry. The two primary research methods that were used for collecting data were a semi-structured qualitative interview and a quantitative survey.

Twelve participants were interviewed, nine young Christian leaders and three mature leaders. In RQ #1, each person interviewed was given an explanation and an illustration of spiritual fullness and emptiness and then asked what caused the participants to be depleted or spiritually empty. Then followed a series of questions that flowed from the first question to have a full understanding of the interviewee's answers of what led to spiritual emptiness.

Survey #1 was also used to answer RQ #1. This survey listed 12 statements about spiritual depletion or emptiness and asked the participant to rank from one to twelve, identifying the statements that caused them to feel most spiritually empty to the ones that caused them to feel the least spiritually empty. This survey was given to forty-five young Christian leaders. Fifteen surveys were given in each of three regions of the world representing different cultures on three continents.

### **Research Question #2**

What are the contributing factors or common denominators that lead to spiritual overflow in young Christian leaders in challenging settings?



The second research question was designed to identify what spiritual factors resulted in young Christian leaders with a feeling of spiritual abundance or overflowing in life and ministry. To answer this question, the two primary research methods that were used for collecting data were a semi-structured qualitative interview and a qualitative survey. Twelve participants were interviewed, nine young Christian leaders and three mature leaders.

In RQ #2 each person interviewed was asked what caused the participant to be most spiritually full. At the beginning of the interview, the interviewee was given a scriptural illustration from 2 Corinthians 1.3-5 and John 15.5. Once the participant had answered the question, it was followed by a series of questions that flowed from the first question to have a full understanding of the interviewee's answers of what led to spiritual abundance or overflow.

Once the participant finished with everything they wanted to say regarding what caused them to be spiritually full, the six *Streams of Living Water* were explained to them. Then the person was asked the question again. It was asked the first time without any additional information so that the participants would answer without any bias. It was asked the second time with the additional information to get their opinion using these spiritual traditions, which the interviewees may or may not have been familiar with or had a vocabulary to express it without this additional information. This method allowed for the most complete answers to RQ #2.

Survey #2 was used in collecting data for RQ #2 as well. This survey had four groups of six statements. The statements identify spiritual traditions that each represented particular practices that are associated with that tradition (Ex. contemplative

tradition—the practice of meditative prayer). Participants were asked to rank each group from one to six, most helpful to least helpful. The same 45 participants that answered Survey #1 also answered Survey #2. This information was useful in identifying what spiritual practices led to spiritual fullness for the individuals who were surveyed.

### **Research Question #3**

What are the spiritual practices, resources, and relationships that are most beneficial in assisting young Christian leaders, in challenging settings, to be spiritually full so they might overflow into the lives of others?

The third research question was designed to identify what specific things, whether it was spiritual practices, spiritual resources or spiritual relationships, proved to be most helpful in leading to spiritual overflow for life and ministry. To answer this question two primary research methods were used for collecting data: a semi-structured qualitative interview and quantitative survey #2.

In RQ #3, each person interviewed was asked what spiritual practices, resources or relationships (spiritual tools) caused the participant to feel most spiritually full. To go deeper into the understanding of their answers, each participant was also being asked to identify one's personal practices and how beneficial these practices were or were not in leading the person to spiritual overflow.

Survey #2 was used to assist in answering RQ #3. Survey #2 was helpful in gathering information for RQ #3 in an indirect way. Although Survey #2 does not go into specifics about spiritual tools but rather identifies spiritual traditions, it allowed the researcher to identify the importance of certain traditions and examine the corresponding

tools that might be associated with it (ex. Word-Centered Tradition—teaching or a resource on Inductive Bible Study).

### **Ministry Context(s)**

This study was unique in the sense that the specific ministry context is located in a variety of places around the world in which Mt. Bethel Church serves in ministry. This project was not focused on how a specific culture views spiritual fullness and their effectiveness but rather with factors or common denominators transcended culture and lead to spiritual fullness regardless of culture. The six traditions of Living Water represent a vast majority of traditions and practices across the globe. Each of these historical traditions give a view of spirituality both throughout history and throughout the world. The analogy of Living Water was a basic template for looking at what leads to spiritual overflow or fullness or spiritual depletion or emptiness.

The context for this research included three distinct cultural settings so that the research would represent a wide enough sampling that the common factors would hold true in any context. Contexts were used where Mt. Bethel UMC was engaged in ministry so that the findings would be useful to the church's ministry after the research was concluded. The first setting chosen was a leadership conference in Colombia which had Christian leaders from 17 different nations. The second setting was represented by four separate leadership conferences in India, which consisted of Christian leaders from a wide variety of cultural contexts. The third setting was in the Middle East. Originally the conference was set for Iraq, but due to security concerns, the conference was relocated to Jordan. This conference represented not only Middle Eastern Culture but persecuted nations the challenges they face.

## **Participants**

### **Criteria for Selection**

After careful consideration of the ministry partnerships and opportunities to collect data that was consistent with the goals of the research, it was determined that ILI (International Leadership Institute) Leadership Conferences represented the best sampling for the intended research. ILI trains Christian Leaders all over the world, providing a large pool of leaders that would represent the global findings that the project was in search of identifying. ILI trains a large number of young leaders, which was particularly important to this study. ILI has indigenous directors in each of these locations which provided a better selection of leaders given that these directors had personal knowledge of these leaders, allowing for the best selection of quality leaders.

This also assisted in helping the data to be more accurate when evaluating Spiritual fullness or emptiness of a leader since the findings were less likely to be affected by ineffective or immature leaders depleted for uniquely personal issues rather than common denominators in all Christian leaders. ILI Christian leaders do not represent a particular denomination or movement. Their leaders represent interdenominational organizations which have a wide spectrum of diverse Christian leaders from various traditions. The only designation that most of these participants had in common is that most would identify themselves as either evangelical or orthodox Christian or both. This was ideal for this study since that is representative of all of Mt. Bethel's partnerships that could benefit from strategies developed from the study's findings.

The actual selection of those to be interviewed came from the recommendations of the in-country director or leader of the ILI conference, helping to ensure results are

representative of quality leaders. The surveys were given to attendees of these conferences who were all personally invited based on a recommendation from a respected in-country leader.

### **Description of Participants**

The participants were both male and female who either have a significant leadership role in their church or Christian setting or are young leaders that have been identified by ILI as those who show strong signs of gifts and graces for ministry. All are active in the local church. The participants were selected primarily from leaders 18-40 years of age, the targeted audience for the research. They had a wide variety of educational levels although most were considered fairly to highly educated in comparison to the overall settings from which they came, primarily developing areas. One fourth of the leaders interviewed were mature leaders ages 50 and older. Although the study targeted 18-40, these older participants were surveyed to gain comparative results to see if there were any major observable differences between the older leaders and the targeted younger leaders.

### **Ethical Considerations**

All those who were involved in interviews were briefed on confidentiality and signed consent forms. The surveys were pre-coded so that no name identification was given except for gender and age category. If participants had any reservation about participating either before or after an explanation of the interview or survey, that person was excused with gratitude for considering participation.

### **Instrumentation**

Written notes using pen and paper were taken during the interviews to identify key thoughts or ideas that the interviewees expressed. In capturing the interview data, an audio recording device was used to be able to create complete transcripts from the interviews. FaceTime was utilized to interview participants from Latin America. Survey Monkey was employed as a tool to gather the survey information from the survey participants from Latin America as well. Transcription software (NCH Express Scribe) was used to transfer the audio interviews into a written transcript.

### **Pilot Test Interviews**

Six pre-interviews were held in March of 2015 (3) and July 2016 (3) in Kenya because of opportunities that presented themselves through ILI conferences that Mt. Bethel was already involved in sponsoring. The 2015 interviews gave some excellent insights as for how to do a more focused interview. After these pre-interviews, though very insightful and encouraging, it was clear that a more focused way of asking the questions needed to be developed if categories were to be associated to represent the major factors of all Christian Spiritual traditions. The Richard Foster book, *Living Water* provided an excellent template that represents the widest spectrum of traditions while allowing for concise categories so that the options were not so cumbersome that they would prove to be more confusing than helpful.

### **Data Collection**

The first step in collecting data from the participants that answered the three research questions began with the selection of the participants themselves. These participants were selected from ILI Leadership Conferences. ILI conferences were used

because they provided the best sampling of young Christian leaders from different regions of the world that represented diversity in denominational background, socio-economics, and culture that are predominantly located in difficult or challenging settings.

At each conference, a conversation between the director of the conference and the researcher took place to discuss which participants would be best for the interviews. The goal was to select three young Christian leaders (between 18-40 years of age) at each conference that exemplified Christian maturity, integrity, and transparency. Also at each conference, with the help of the director, one mature Christian leader was selected to interview as well with the same attributes as the young leaders. Although the focus was on younger Christian leaders, the information mature, older leaders could provide was valuable information since they would have a perspective that draws from years of Christian service, as well as years spent with the Lord and would allow a comparison between young and old leaders to highlight the unique needs of these young Christian leaders.

Once the participants were selected, they were given a brief description of what to expect in the interview. That description explained to the participants that they would be interviewed regarding their spiritual life and what causes to feel filled spiritually in such a way that they are equipped for life and ministry. If the potential participants agreed to take part after this initial explanation, then a more detailed briefing was given prior to the interviewee. First, the briefing discussed the absolute confidentiality of the interview. Next, the need for honesty and transparency was discussed so that the participant understood that without candor and full disclosure in the questions asked the research would be hampered in findings that would be beneficial to young Christian leaders like

themselves. If the participant felt comfortable proceeding, then they were given their written consent form for the interview, and the interview began.

The type of interview questions that were asked were semi-structured qualitative questions. This type was the most effective type of questioning for the interview since the structure provided the outline to find answers to our three research questions. As Sensing says, “the probing is narrowed by a preset protocol that correlates with the project’s problem and purpose (loc. 2703). On the other hand, although there was “a predetermined sequence ...in the protocol,” this less structured interview left one “free to pursue matters as situations dictate” (Sensing loc. 2702). In this way, the thought-provoking, as well as unanticipated responses, could be met with questions that shed more light on the subject. This method of a semi-structured interview allowed for “unique flexibility...leaving room for study participants to offer new meaning to the topic of study” (Galletta loc. 138-140). In using this type of qualitative method in interviewing one might “sacrifice uniformity of questioning,” but the higher goal “to achieve fuller development of the information” would be met, allowing for more meaningful results (Weiss loc.152).

The interview began by first giving the person being interviewed an image to keep in mind (See Appendix 2) as they answered the questions. The image that they were asked to picture was an empty cup or vessel. For reinforcement of the idea, a cup and a pitcher of water were present. Then interviewer began to pour water in the cup and asked them to imagine that it is living water, which comes from the Spirit of God. The water was filled until the cup began to overflow. Using 2 Corinthians 1.3-5 and John 15.5, it was explained that according to scripture, one is to serve and lead out of abundance or overflow rather than being depleted where the cup is not full or empty and where there is



nothing left to give from God. The participants were asked, that if the cup represents them, how full or empty of living water would they consider themselves. This initial question served three purposes. First, to have the participant think about the topic, and second, to help access the validity of the problem that stated the observation that many young Christian leaders around the world find themselves to be spiritually depleted. Third, the initial question verified that the participant understood the subject that was to be discussed.

At this point, the participant was asked to explain the illustration in his or her own words to be sure the concept was understood. If it was well understood, the interview continued. If not, more time was spent discussing the illustration and its meaning until the participant understood.

The first question they were asked in relationship to RQ #1 was: What challenges or demands leave you feeling most depleted or empty spiritually? In response to their answer, a series of questions flowed from their answer to try and determine specifically which factors had the greatest impact in causing Christian leaders to feel spiritually empty. Also, these questions tried to determine whether the emptiness was caused largely by internal struggles, external struggles or a combination of both.

The next question, which relates to the RQ #2 was: What would you say causes you to feel most full spiritually and equipped for life and ministry? Depending on their answer, I asked a series of questions designed to get at the heart of what fills them the most in their spiritual life and leaves them energized or equipped for life and ministry.

Before moving on to questions that would address RQ #3, the same question that was previously asked was asked a second time. RQ #3 was: What would you say

causes you to feel most full spiritually and equipped for life and ministry? However, before asking it a second time, specific information was given to the participants regarding the six spiritual traditions.

Each participant was briefed on the six streams that God has used throughout Christian history to allow living water to flow into the lives of Christians as is found in Richard Foster's *Streams of Living Water*. The original image was given to each person interviewed, except this time, with each of the six streams of living water drawn on to the stream that flowed into the cup.

To avoid confusion that might be caused by the complexity of terms or due to cultural or language barriers, it was explained in a basic manner to represent the major factor of each tradition rather than trying to explain the traditions in their entirety. In its most simplest form, it was described as Focus on Prayer Life (Solitude with God), Focus on Life of Holiness (Holy Habits), Focus on the Spirit-led Life (The Power and Presence of God), Focus on Compassionate Life (Service and Sacrifice), Focus on Word-Centered Life (Biblical Study & Practices), Focus on the Sacramental Life (Connecting the Physical to the Spiritual).

The reason this information was not given before asking this question the first time was so that the participant's response would be from that person's current perspective before introducing these traditions that may affect the participant's answers. It was expected that more time would be needed to be spent verifying that the participants understand the traditions and practices that are most closely associated with these streams of living water.

Next, the participants were asked another structured question, which relates to RQ #3: Describe your own daily or weekly spiritual practices? Other questions were asked to get a better understanding of the practices and if the participants feel that these practices caused them to be spiritual filled with living water and are sufficient. Additional follow-up questions were asked as needed.

The participants were asked: How regular and faithful are you to these spiritual practices? Follow-up questions were asked to get a better understanding of the answer of those interviewed, as well as, asking questions as to why one is faithful to these spiritual practices or find it hard to do them regularly. Once again, additional questions were asked to gain as much insight into their devotional/spiritual life and practices, as well as understand better what is filling up young Christian leaders the most and what is not particularly beneficial from these leaders' perspectives.

The interview was finished by asking each participant if they have any further comments that would be helpful regarding what leads to spiritual fullness and what leads one to be spiritually drained. The only debriefing that took place was to thank them most graciously for giving their time and each participants honesty and transparency in answering the questions. Each person was reminded again of the confidentiality that would be kept regarding any and all information that was shared during the interview.

The surveys provided important data collection at each of the three conferences that were attended. Before any participant took the survey, confidentiality was assured. There were two surveys that were given. One focused on what causes spiritual emptiness (see Appendix 2). This survey listed the 12 statements about spiritual depletion or emptiness and asked the participant to rank from one to twelve the statements that one

feels most explains what causes spiritual emptiness in the participant's life, to the statement which one believes has the least effect. The second survey focused on the causes of spiritual fullness and represented the six Spiritual Traditions or Streams of Living Water (see Appendix 2). This survey had four groups of six statements. The statements identified spiritual practices and participants were asked to rank each group from one to six, most helpful to least helpful.

Both of these surveys were given to forty-five young Christian leaders, eighteen to forty years of age. Fifteen surveys were given in each of three separate regions in the world, representing different cultures on three different continents. Before each survey was given a thorough explanation was given to the participants to be sure there was clear understanding of both the content and the rating system. At the conclusion of the surveys, the participants were thanked for taking the surveys and reassured of confidentiality.

### **Data Analysis**

The analysis began with non-verbal observations about the interviews, and notes of significance were handwritten during the recorded sessions. Then the semi-structured qualitative interviews on audio recordings were later transcribed. The transcripts were carefully read, and all findings of interest (similarities, differences, uniqueness, patterns, meaningful quotes) were highlighted. After the transcripts had been highlighted, all of the highlights were coded with one or more codes depending on the patterns that emerge. Primarily issue-focus analysis (Weiss loc. 2759) searched for the issues that related to spiritual fullness or emptiness within the lives the young Christian leaders that were interviewed. Once all the coding was completed, the information was sorted into categories to be examined together. Copies were made when more than one category was

derived from a particular section. The next step was local integration by taking the sorted files and determining how they fit together (Weiss loc. 284-2842). The final step of this process was inclusive integration leading to a few major conclusion or even intersections where conclusion cross one another to create a larger more holistic category (Weiss loc. 2880-2883). The interview analysis was viewed through two lenses. The first was the number of occurrences (quantity) and the second lens was the what was said and the significance that was placed on it (quality).

In analyzing the two surveys, the process was purely statistical. Since survey #1 was divided into 12 distinct categories of depletion, each category was examined for patterns. On the second survey, the four groups of six represented four groups of the six spiritual traditions allowing for statistics to be drawn from which spiritual traditions were the strongest and which were the weakest. The participants were rating these traditions not as to how important it was thought to be in general, but how the one's being interviewed had experienced these traditions and their related practices personally.

The culmination of the findings was seen in patterns that emerged from both the interviews and the surveys and evaluated based on the quality and the quantity which findings rose to the surface as being most helpful to young Christian leaders in being spiritually full for life and ministry.

### **Reliability & Validity of Project Design**

The pre-interviews mentioned above in the pilot study greatly added to the reliability of this project. Feedback from those interviews resulted in adapting and modifying interview questions. The major insight gained was the need for a historically accurate and biblically consistent way of describing the spiritual practices that would be

easy for those being interviewed to understand. Richard Foster's work *Streams of Living Water* provided the best example of this kind of work. It covers the expanse of Christian history from the early church until today and categorizes these topics in a way that was simplistic enough to explain in the time and language constraints of an interview.

### **Reliability & Validity of the Interviews**

First, interviewees were selected by ILI leaders who knew them personally as mature young leaders who were effective in ministry. This selection process helped to ensure that leaders interviewed were not spiritually empty as a result of ineffectiveness or immaturity. Privacy and confidentiality were a priority so that these participants were comfortable sharing openly, honestly and candidly. Before the interview, time was spent getting to know the interviewee better and helping this person to feel at ease so that they were as comfortable as possible, lending itself to better and more natural conversation. Also, before the interview itself, time was spent explaining the significance of answers expressing their reality, rather than what they wished were true or what they believed is the answer the interviewer was wanting. It was explained that for the findings of the interview to have real value, they must reflect their actual situation.

The questions were semi-structured qualitative questions and were designed to be opened-ended so that the answers would reflect the unvarnished thoughts of the participants. If there was any indication that the participant did not fully understand the questions or the terms, time was spent discussing the question until it was clear the person being interviewed had a firm grasp of the subject matter. Using Richard Foster's *Streams of Living Water* as the categories of Spiritual Traditions to discuss spiritual infilling ensured that all participants heard the same model that reflected traditions

throughout history that have brought spiritual vitality and were rooted in scripture. These traditions were shared in their simplest form to communicate the essence of each tradition and avoid confusion that may happen from a detailed description of these Spiritual Traditions.

The questions were always stated from a neutral perspective, not indicating that the interviewer believed a certain subject matter to be any less or more important than any other. For example, if a participant had indicated how important prayer was, the interviewer would not affirm its importance but rather would ask “why” questions to understand what the participant perceived that practice to be and if it truly was significant to the interviewee.

Voice-intonation, body language, facial expressions, and any other visual cues were observed to assist with determining the interviewee’s actual intent. If non-verbal cues (emotion, confusion, discomfort, etc.) that seemed to reinforce or contradict the answers given, questions were asked to get to understand what these non-verbal signs were communicating. This helped to distinguish between the true meaning of what was being communicated. If for any reason the answers were not clear and the interviewer was not able to get reasonable clarity through further questions, then those answers were not used in the data to ensure that results were not affected by a misinterpretation of the data.

### **Reliability & Validity of the Surveys**

All of the surveys used a numbering system to assist with reliable and valid results. This numbering system on both of the surveys allowed for only one number to be used for each statement in ranking the assertion. For example, in the first survey, there

were twelve statements to be rated from causing the most depletion to causing the least depletion or lack of vitality. If the participant rated the statement as having the most depletion, it would be rated 1. If the statement were the least at causing depletion, it would be a 12 and the other statements in between would each receive a rating accordingly. This method allowed for a greater variance in the findings by causing the participant to choose a distinct rating for each statement. If a number system were chosen where each statement could receive the same number, it would have been much harder to distinguish which statements were more or less significant since under that kind of numbering system statically they were more likely to be a little difference since a many of the statements might receive the same number.

### **Survey 1**

The first survey focused on the things that cause young Christian leaders to be spiritually depleted. These categories were selected as the key elements that caused spiritual depletion after a number of test interviews (six) in Kenya the previous year. The research interviews yielded these results as representing the categories that came up consistently that caused a sense of emptiness and lack of spiritual vitality. This consistency in the causes of emptiness helped to ensure that the statements reflected the most common causes of depletion.

### **Survey 2**

The second survey focused on spiritual traditions/practices and which of these most led to spiritual infilling or fullness. To ensure reliability and validity four groups of six statements were used rather than just one, in order to have a larger sampling. As mentioned already, the Spiritual Traditions of Richard Foster were used for the purpose



of consistency with the interview questions. Each group had one statement representing each of the traditions but was stated differently in each of the four groups. By using the different statements, it helped to validate that those who were going to be surveyed did, in fact, find a certain practice meaningful since they had four different opportunities to select a practice ensuring that those practices were or were not most meaningful to them.

## CHAPTER 4

### EVIDENCE FOR THE PROJECT

#### Overview of the Chapter

This chapter will begin by reviewing the findings of the three research questions laid out at the beginning of this dissertation. The three questions are: 1) *What are the contributing factors or common denominators - that lead to spiritual emptiness in young Christian leaders in challenging environments?* 2) *What are the contributing factors or common denominators that lead to spiritual overflow in young Christian leaders in challenging environments?* 3) *What are the potential tools, resources, or relationships that will assist young Christian leaders to be spiritually full so they might overflow into the lives of others?*

Included first is the process that was used to gain valuable information to answer these three questions. Next, there is a review, by way of explanation, why the process was done in the way that it was carried out, as well as what the purpose for each step. This will assist the reader in understanding the intent behind the questions as the content is examined for clues to identify the answers to the three research questions.



Each question was examined in light of the qualitative research done through qualitative semi-formal interviews, as well as qualitative surveys designed to give numerical results in order to measure the value of different aspects that lead to spiritual depletion or spiritual overflow.

A visual (figure 1) was used before beginning the questioning to illustrate the idea of spiritual overflow and spiritual emptiness. This image was used to minimize any misunderstanding that might have occurred as a result of poor language communication. Although all of the participants were able to understand English and communicate well enough to be understood, some difficulty may have remained based on language accent, as well as various levels of English competency, since English was a second language for all of those who participated in the interviews. The actual questions asked to the interviewees removed any language indicating a “difficult or challenging environment” as stated in the original questions for the purpose of avoiding any possibility of offense by designating their environment as different or inferior to any other environment.

The initial interview research questions were also adapted for the interviews to solicit responses that would yield the most information possible regarding the three research questions, as well as give the most clarity to the questions across cultural lines. The initial qualitative semi-structured questions used with each interviewee were stated as following:

1) In looking at this picture, (figure 1) viewing yourself as the cup or vessel and God as the one pouring His living water into your life, would you consider yourself spiritually empty, spiritually full to overflowing or at what point in-between?

2) What causes you to be most spiritually empty or depleted?

Before asking this question the interviewer first explained that the spiritual emptiness that will be discussed could come from any source, for example, external factors such as people and situations, or internal factors such as time with God, spiritual practices or lack thereof, feelings of community or isolation, etc.

3) What causes you to be most spiritually full and equipped for ministry and life?

Again, the interviewer explained that the source could be internal or external.

4) They were given a brief and simplistic description of the six spiritual traditions throughout history as described in Richard Foster's book, *Streams of Living Water*. Then, they were asked which of these spiritual traditions do you find most meaningful to filling you spiritually?

5) What are your daily/weekly spiritual practices and how regularly to you keep them?

After each one of the preceding questions, a series follow-up questions were given in order to solicit further information that will be useful in answering the three research questions. The initial question would then have follow-up questions when necessary to gain further insight and information regarding the three research questions. All of the questions were given in a natural conversational manner in order to put the participants at ease and build rapport. This method was important so that each person that was interviewed would feel comfortable sharing candidly a truthful response, rather than giving answers that they believe would be most appropriate. If there seemed to be any confusion or misunderstanding with any of the questions, additional time was taken to be sure they understood clearly, especially considering that English was a second language for everyone that was interviewed.

The interviews were used as the best tool to gain personal insight and specific information for the research. Also, two surveys were used to pinpoint areas aspect of the participant's spiritual lives. The first focused on what caused them to be spiritually

depleted. The second looked at what cause them to be spiritual full through spiritual practices.

By looking at the information gained through the interviews, survey #1 focused on spiritual emptiness and survey #2 focused on Spiritual fullness through spiritual practices, triangulation. This combination of research methods offered important perspectives which led to rich insights toward the projects purpose of discovering how young Christian leaders and be spiritual full and equipped for ministry.

### **Participants**

The participants who were interviewed represent three culturally diverse regions of the world. The interviewees were selected with the assistance of International Leadership Institute at ILI Summits in India, Egypt, and Colombia. There were six different countries represented, one country from the North Africa/Middle East region. Two countries were represented from Southeast Asia and three countries from Latin American. In the interviews, twelve Christian leaders, nine young Christian leaders, and three mature Christian leaders to provide additional insights. Four participants were interviewed from each region and at least one female representing each region.

A total of forty-five young Christian leaders completed the surveys; fifteen from India, fifteen from Egypt, and fifteen from Colombia (representing countries throughout Latin America). Each of those who took the survey was given two different surveys. The first survey targeted reasons for spiritual emptiness. The second survey targeted spiritual practices that lead to spiritual fullness. The surveys in Egypt were translated into Arabic, and the ones in Colombia were translated into Spanish to ensure a clear

understanding. The survey in India was given in English with an Indian translator in case there were any questions.

The following charts identify the percentages of those who participated by age, gender, and location for both the interviews and the surveys.

### Interview Ages

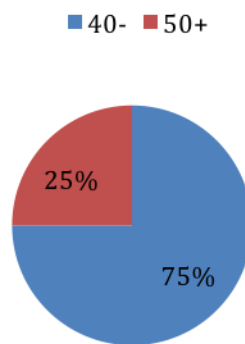


Table 111.1

### Survey Ages

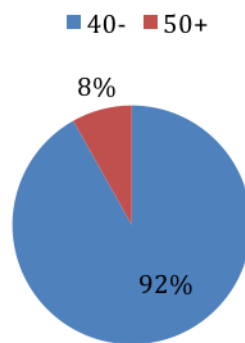


Table 111.2

### Interview Genders

■ Male ■ Female

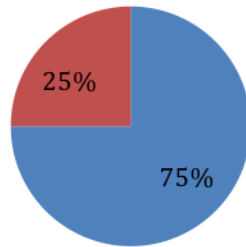


Table 112.1

### Survey Genders

■ Male ■ Female

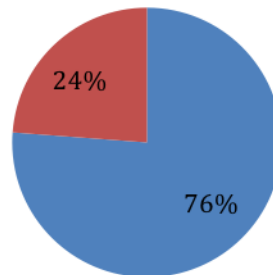


Table 112.2

### Interview Locations

■ Latin America ■ Middle East ■ South Asia

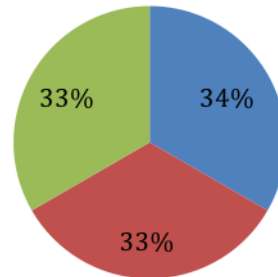


Table 113.1

### Survey Locations

■ Latin America ■ Middle East ■ South Asia

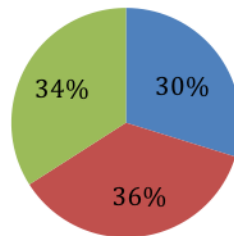


Table 113.2



### Research Question #1: Description of Evidence

1) *What are the contributing factors or common denominators that lead to spiritual emptiness in young Christian leaders in challenging environments?*

#### Qualitative Semi-Structured Interviews

The themes that emerged from the interviews on causes of Spiritual depletion are:

- 1) Lack of Prayer / Lack of Intimacy with God
- 2) Overly Busy / Lack of Time
- 3) Negative Stress Due to Family
- 4) Habitual Sin
- 5) Physical and Emotional Factors
- 6) Lack of Finances Resources

One indicator of the significance of this research topic can be found from the response that was received to the preliminary question that was asked to each of the 12 interviewees. When asked, “Would you consider yourself spiritual empty, spiritual full to overflowing or at what point in-between?” while looking at figure one, ten of the twelve described themselves as less than full. The two that described themselves as full were able to point back to recent spiritual events: one was a spiritual retreat, and the other was a time of prayer and reflection leading to spiritual fullness. Both of these leaders, however, indicated there had been many times throughout their ministry and life where there was much emptiness. Four others interviewed indicated that they were more empty than full. The remaining six described themselves more from a perspective of



being somewhere in the middle. All indicated times of spiritual emptiness due to either internal or external circumstances, and for that reason, all the participants indicated they found real value in exploring the topic.

### **1) Lack of Prayer / Lack of intimacy with God**

One major themes that emerged from the interviews was a lack of prayer contributing to a sense of spiritual depletion. All of those that were interviewed in the research considered prayer to be essential. Although this was unanimous, the participants described their prayer life, how to pray, when to prayer, how often to pray, and how long to pray, in a variety of different ways. Hannah confessed that “usually I do not have more than an hour for prayer and Bible reading, but I wish that I did.” John from Southeast Asia said, “I never pray at a specific time. I pray when the Spirit moves me. Some days I pray a lot and other days not at all.” When asked if he would like a pattern of prayer or regular prayer time, he said, “that would make my prayer time a ritual, instead of being authentic.”

Of the 12 leaders interviewed 8 of them expressed struggling to fulfill all of their responsibilities and still continue to have a rich prayer life. One of the Egyptian Christian leaders put it this way, “I know that prayer is the most important thing, but my church and the leaders over me expect so much I often neglect prayer in order to try and meet the expectations of others. In my heart, I know this is wrong, but it is hard not to when you feel so much pressure.”

### **2) Overly busy / Lack of Time**

A significant pattern that became evident through the interviews was that of too much busyness or a lack of time. In all of the interviews there was some mention of stress

and busyness, although a number of different terms were used to express this, terms such as “high demands,” “too much to do,” “not enough time,” etc.

A mature leader from Egypt, Samir, admitted that he was feeling empty right now. When he shared all that was going on in his life at that time in regard to ministry, it was easy to see why. The level of activity that he was involved in would have worn out any two people in most American church environments. To be around this person, one would never know that he was empty. He was full of joy and kindness. Even in his interview late at night he was animated and full of life. I made a note of the fact that many of the leaders I met appeared outwardly joyful but inwardly were struggling by their own admission.

### **Reasons for Lack of Time**

There were four specific reasons as to why there was a lack of time.

The reasons by those interviewed were:

- 1) lack of process orientation
- 2) commitment to relationships versus productivity
- 3) inability to delegate
  - a) lack of leadership experience
  - b) cultural norms of the role of age and gender
- 4) lack of modern conveniences (do not have or cannot afford)

The first reason, lack of process orientation, was expressed by one young man from Egypt who indicated that his culture was not focused on well-developed processes. He said that “we never do the same thing twice in the same way. It is not our nature to work that way unless we have to.”

The second reason for the lack of time focuses on a priority on relationships versus productivity. All of the cultures where research was done placed a high priority on relationships and time given to relationships based on the interviews. One of the young adults Steve in India said, “Within my culture, particularly within the Christian community, you are expected to give your church members as much time as they need, and the pastor is expected to be at every event the church does.” Although some of the other leaders did not express this view of having to be at every event, almost all talked about the time given to relationships. One pastor said during the interview, “If I run into somebody on the street that is a member of our church, even if I am a great hurry, it is my responsibility to take as much time as they need to see how they are doing and how their family is doing.” He admitted that this created a problem for him that left him feeling drained since he was still expected to fulfill his responsibilities regardless of how much time he spent tending to people's needs. Another one of the pastors, Eddie from Latin America, expressed it in more positive terms saying, “It is a blessing be able to spend time talking with each and every person who goes to my church and caring for their needs, but it takes a great deal of time energy and sometimes does not leave me time to spend with my family.”

The third reason for the loss of time was an inability to delegate. Steve articulated the third reason well. He said that “most of the time I feel like the one-man show. I end up doing everything myself.” This “one man (or woman) show” phenomenon was common among the young Christian leaders. Two specific factors cause this. The first is an inability to delegate based on their youthfulness and inexperience. The second factor is more of a cultural phenomenon. Where older leaders are supposed to have others take

care of responsibilities, younger leaders are often expected to fulfill their responsibilities without question, which often times leaves them doing it by themselves.

The fourth reason identified was a lack of conveniences that save time and energy. One young man simply stated, “it just takes longer to get things done ... transportation takes a long time, and communications can be unreliable.” Although many developing countries, such as the ones that were part of this research, are making great strides in this regard, those interviewed still expressed this as a “time killer” as in the words of David. John, a young man from India, talked about how the physical demands can often affect one spiritually. He explained how his ministry setting is some distance away, and so he often takes a truck. However, a truck is not always available, and many times he has to ride his bike, which limits the number of trips he can make. John said, “I’m taking a bike right now, and it is quite challenging for me with my energy level, but I am still passionate about going as often as I can. But it’s a big challenge!” Others expressed this same kind of concern, especially those from rural settings where much time and energy is expended just taking care of the everyday needs of life. John said, “I hope to have a motorbike someday so I can get to where I need to go quicker and have more time with my family.”

### **3) Negative Stress Due to Family**

John’s comments in the previous paragraph about needing more time with the family highlight a theme that came up in 10 of the 12 interviews. This theme was the negative stress due to family and concerns for family. Many of the interviewees expressed great concern for their family, but especially in Latin America all four of the interviewees talked a great deal about their family. Eddie stated that “I feel very blessed

to have a wonderful family, and I love being home, but my travels for ministry often keep me away, putting stress on my family and me.”

Another reason the family often had an emptying effect on young Christian leaders was that many of them were unmarried and still lived at home due to culture, finances, or both. Steve, one of the young men from India, was the oldest in his family and, as such, still carries considerable responsibility for his younger siblings even though he is in his late 20s and works full time in ministry.

#### **4) Habitual Sin**

Another issue the interviewees identified as contributing to their sense of depletion is habitual sin. All of the leaders, young and old, agreed that any type of habitual sin left them feeling distant from God. Ironically, the most common sin mentioned was not spending time with God. One of the young adults from India expressed it this way, “I know I should spend more time with God, but sometimes I’m just so tired that I don’t feel his presence and then it is hard to pray.”

#### **5) Physical and Emotional Factors**

Joy, a young lady that was interviewed, related her emptiness to physical and emotional ailments first brought about by emotional pain. She described herself as “being very vocal for the Lord.” After questioning her as to what that meant she stated, “I speak my opinions very boldly and I have been strongly reprimanded her for it.” As a result, she has stomach pain whenever she feels too much stress. This physical ailment she described as having a spiritual effect on her relationship with God. Although she is viewed as an effective leader by her peers, she feels ineffective because of her emotional and physical problems that lead her to feel spiritually distant from God.

Joy shared another aspect of how young leaders become depleted emotionally. This idea was shared by half of those interviewed in one form or another. This facet is the depletion they experience by the way they are treated within their Christian culture based on their age and also their gender. Age and gender were mentioned earlier in as a factor leading to lack of time, here the effects of depletion can be seen on the emotional side. Joy put it this way, “I don’t feel like they take me seriously because of my age and even more so because I am female.” Her state is representative of what was seen in all three regions where interviews were done.

Based on the comments of those interviewed this is indicative of most of the developing world which has a much greater respect for age as opposed to the United States. However, the reverse also seems to be true, particularly in India and Egypt, that those who are young are not taken as seriously as leaders. All three of the women interviewed experienced additional stress in their culture as a leader. Hannah put it this way, “My own family does not even take me seriously and thinks I am way too bossy.”

At least half of the males also expressed a challenge with being treated as a leader due to their youthfulness. Not surprisingly the older Christian leaders did not express a lack of respect in leadership but described themselves as being treated as valued. Diego also observed that “older leaders are were more likely to be treated with respect and given responsibility.”

## **6) Lack of Financial Resources**

Another theme that was often tied in with other themes leading to spiritual emptiness was a lack of financial resources. One young man that was interviewed during the conference shared a story about his group of five friends. They had all been very

close during school, but after graduation from university, one by one they became financially independent and moved on. He, however, continued to pray and seek opportunities, and he found himself without his closest friends and without the financial means to support himself. He shared that he felt spiritually empty and was trying to figure out how he failed God and why God was not blessing him. From other conversations, interviews, and time spent in these cultures, it is clear that material blessings are much more aligned to the spiritual blessings of God than is found in Western cultures.

John, who was interviewed in Southeast Asia, shared that he comes from a family that, as he described it, “did menial jobs.” He expressed that the church he worked in also had many “menial job workers.” He also reported that the cost of living had gone up significantly in recent times with some of the political decisions that had been made. He said, “I often feel empty and wonder why God has not provided for my church or me.” Once again, John seemed to keep equating spiritual blessings with material resources and the lack of these left him feeling spiritually empty.

### **7) Isolation in Ministry**

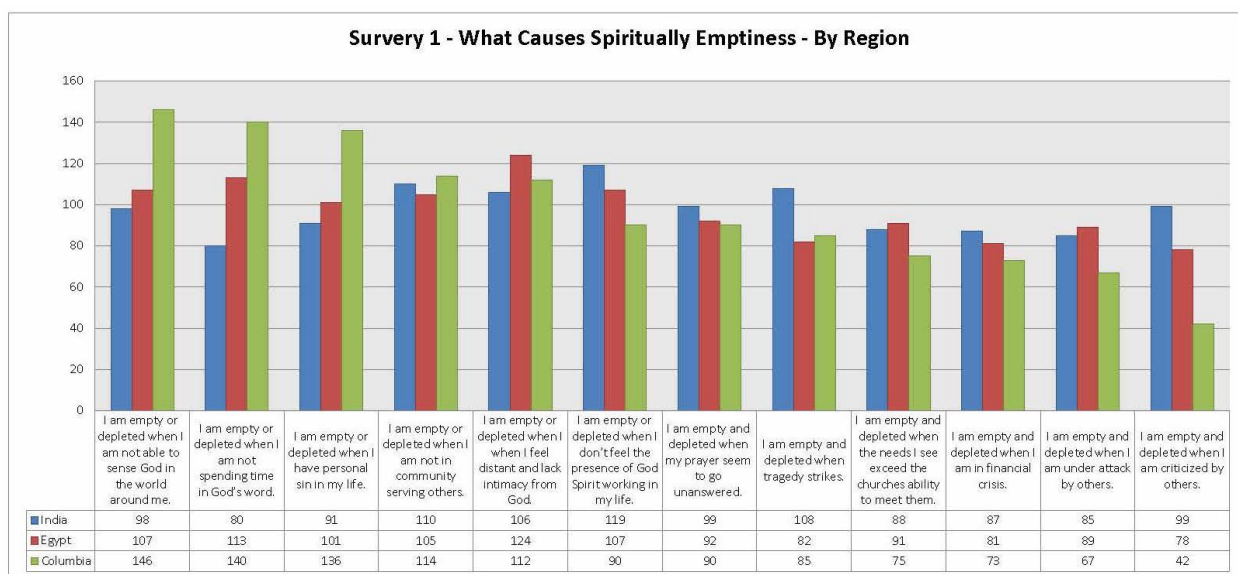
One last theme regarding spiritual depletion which came up several times is isolation. Diego, one of the mature Christian leaders, described it this way, “It is hard to do effective ministry when you feel like you’re on your own.” This type of isolation takes several forms. For some, isolation is not having a strong, mature Christian community to work with, for others, it is the remote setting they find themselves in, and for still others, isolation has more to do with feeling distant from God and not being able to connect to the source they need for ministry.



### Survey Findings

Survey #1 identifies those areas where young Christian leaders are most depleted or empty.

**Table 122.1**

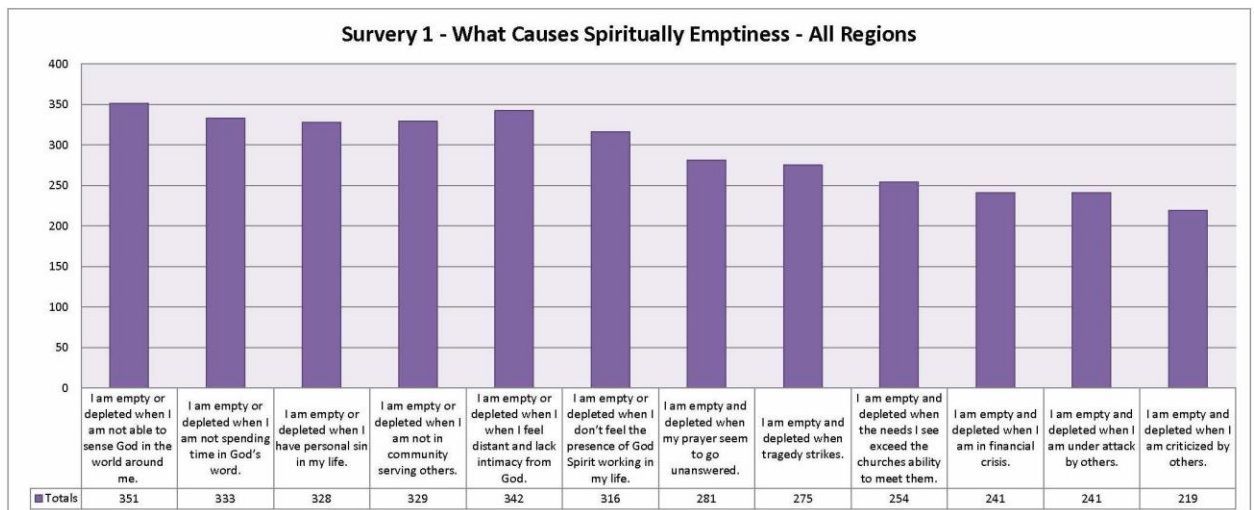


One survey participant said, “I have more than one number one,” in other words, this person had a number of things that they felt or equally depleting to their spiritual life. This was a common sentiment found among those who were surveyed. Some factors seemed to lead to greater depletion than some others. However, the most significant finding is that there is not a huge variance in those things that left young Christian leaders feeling depleted from region to region (see Table 122.1). Latin America shows the greatest variance in top numbers and the bottom numbers, which may point to the fact that culture has an effect on which things our most spiritually emptying. India and Egypt show differences as well, that appear random in nature, which once again pointing to potential cultural differences.

Although these provide good indicators as to what is most depleting in the spiritual life of young Christian leaders the data points to the fact there a large number of factors that cause spiritual depletion. The surveys were done from a random pool of Christian leaders who volunteered at these conferences. The leaders that were interviewed were hand picked as leaders who were mature and effective in ministry. If only mature Christian leaders had been surveyed the results may or may not have shown a greater gap between most and least in terms of depletion in young Christian leaders.

What is most evident from this graph is that all of the categories that were listed as causing depletion could, in fact, be a significant factor in causes spiritual depletion (see Table 123.1).

**Table 123.1**



The overall results found in Table 123.1 number two points to several findings that are useful in determining what leads to spiritual emptiness. The most noteworthy results from this survey which can be visual seen above by looking at the graph from left to right is the fact the first six, which have more to do with the inward life, (sensing God, God's Word, personal sin, Christian community, intimacy with God, God's presence at

work) are all above the 300 level whereas the outward results (unanswered prayer, tragedy, unmet needs, financial crisis, under personal attack, criticized by others) all fall below the 300 mark. Another insight that can be gained when looking at this chart globally across three continents is the fact the highest category was 351, and the lowest was 219. This is a remarkable small margin between the highest and lowest when one considers they are being ranked from one through twelve. If the survey was structured in a way in which a participant could give all of these the same number, the result would be most likely be a smaller margin. The ranking one through twelve was set up that way intentionally in hopes of seeing some factors that were significantly different. Based on this chart that is not the case. Each of the twelve categories received a large number of votes as factors that led to depletion spiritually in young Christian leaders. The finding of this chart indicate that though some factors are slightly greater than other factors, all of these factors are major contributors to spiritual depletion.

Not sensing God's presence in the world, rated as number one with 351 as being most depleting, with lack of intimacy with God with 333 finishing a close second. On the other side of the scale, the criticism of others was ranked lowest with 219, followed by personal attacks by other and financial crisis both with 241.

### **Research Question #2: Description of Evidence**

*2) What are the contributing factors or common denominators that lead to spiritual overflow in young Christian leaders in challenging environments?*

### **Qualitative Semi-Structured Interviews**

The themes that emerged from the interviews on causes of Spiritual fullness are:

1) Spiritual Fruitfulness in Ministry

- 2) Family Spiritual Health
- 3) Deep Personal Relationship with God
- 4) Mentors and Mentoring
- 5) Personal Testimonies and Visions

### **1) Spiritual Fruit in Ministry**

Through the interviews a pattern emerged, in those who participated in the research, indicating that in ministries that produced spiritual fruit, the evidence of that fruit was also a major factor in these young leaders feeling spiritually full.

Daniel said, “ I am excited about the fruit that I am seeing in my ministry. Muslims and unbelievers are coming to faith in Jesus Christ.” Daniel, a young man from Egypt, worked outside of the traditional church, preferring to work in ministry among Muslims and other nonbelievers. He describes the traditional church as “dead and full of sin.” He said he found himself empty in the traditional church. He described his emptiness as related to “unauthentic community.” Emptiness for him was found among believers who seemed to lack compassion and served out of obligation or ritual rather than passion and love. However, he described spiritual fullness as “Authentically loving and serving through God’s Spirit, and seeing God bless your ministry through what He does in the lives of others.” When reviewing all of the interviews, a theme emerges that would best be describe as spiritual fruit. Those interviewed who experienced fruit in their ministry described themselves as having “a spiritual vitality” that the others did not experience. This spiritual emptiness seemed prevalent among those who could not see the fruit of their mission or ministry. This fruit was expressed in many different ways from success in the local church to reaching the lost, to a spiritual awakening. This fruit,

whatever it meant to the individual, was a great source of spiritual infilling. Daniel described it this way, “If I see fruit in my ministry I feel spiritually alive, but when I see nothing happening, it can be discouraging.”

## **2) Family Spiritual Health**

Eddie, a young man from Latin America, kept talking about how much his family means to him. Eddie could not talk about his family enough during the interview and was most excited to show me his daughter, a beautiful little girl, via FaceTime. As he described it: “When I pray with my family, it is such a blessing. When I share ministry with my family, it encourages me.” A number of different Christian leaders, both young and old, describe their family as a real-life source for their ministry and them personally as well.

Eight of the 12 of Christian leaders had families that were highly involved in their ministry. A healthy family that was spiritually alive was a vital link to having fullness in ministry according to William. In response to William, another young Christian leader from Latin America, said, “My family gives me strength to do ministry, and without them, it would be extremely hard.”

Those who were married were very concerned about their wife and children. Samir, one of the mature Christian leaders that were interviewed spoke of his family and particularly of his wife. He said that “I could not do ministry without her support and her gifts in ministry.” Even those who were unmarried still had a great concern about their family at home whom many still lived with.

### **3) Deep Personal Relationship with God**

Another theme running throughout the interviews is related to a strong personal relationship with Jesus Christ. As it was explained to me by one man in India that was interviewed, “Jesus is so important because our belief in Him as the Son of God is what sets us apart from the other religions.” Another man that was interviewed from Egypt said, “There are some who claim to be Christian, but they know nothing of a personal relationship with Jesus Christ and His Spirit that dwells within us.” In fact, all who were interviewed understood and spoke about their personal relationship and the value of it to being spiritually alive.

Particularly the young Christian leaders when interviewed consistently mentioned the personal relationship with God as a necessity to being spiritually full. Steve stated it this way: “It is not about just praying to God or reading your Bible that makes you more spiritual, even a non-Christian can pray or read a book. It is about faith in Jesus Christ. True spirituality is about knowing God not just as a belief but as a person you can have a relationship with every day.”

John from India expressed the importance of a personal relationship but noted that “many of the leaders I know seem to have a lot of head knowledge, but you do not have it in their hearts, it’s not a personal relationship.” When asked why he thought the heart was missing, he said, “many leaders are very judgmental without encouraging. They put many demands on younger leaders but don’t help them with their relationship with God.” Then he was asked why that was the case, “It is part of our culture to be a strong leader, and they forgot that Jesus was strong and yet humble and kind.”

Steve, who is from southeast Asia, painted a compelling image as to the need for a personal relationship Jesus Christ. He put it this way:

If you were married, you would spend much time with your wife, and if you do not spend time with your wife and work on your marriage, then it is meaningless. Since I am a Christian, I am a believer and a follower of Jesus Christ. If I'm not spending more time with Christ and I am really not a follower, then I am not a disciple. The more time I spend with Jesus Christ, the more I walk with him, and the more I prove my love for him, the more I fall in love with him.

As Steve went on to describe his relationship, it was clear that he could not imagine knowing God in all his "love and grace" and not want to have a deeply personal relationship with him. He described this by saying, "That is what makes God so different than gods in other religions."

#### **4) Mentors and Mentoring**

Another dominant theme that was passionately discussed in many of the interviews was mentors and mentoring. One of the mature Christian leaders, who is being called Gordon in this research, shared some thoughts that seemed to bridge the gap between a personal relationship with God and also the necessity for a healthy mentor. He said, "We need to have a mentor, even as an older leader I need a mentor, and I also mentor others, but we must never forget that Jesus is our first mentor, through His word and through His Spirit." He also added a sense of urgency. "God, through His word and through His Spirit, has told me that there is no more time to waste. We must seek Him now and share Him now before it's too late." Then he went on to say, "We are waiting for the right time but Jesus was always on an urgent mission, and if He is our mentor,

then you must have an urgency about our mission, and He will give us mentors here on earth to help us along the way.”

Some of the young Christian leaders, such as John, do not actually have a mentor. However, he said, “I wish I had a mentor person to help me. I need a positive mentor who would be proud to be with me. I believe this will greatly help me to be spiritually full.” He went on to say, “I wish I had someone I could share the situations I face day to day in ministry with. This would help me greatly.” He even expressed much gratitude for the time that was spent with him during the interview. He said that “being able to share my thoughts was a real encouragement.”

Donald from Latin America shared a similar sentiment about how he believed a mentor could impact his life. He said, “I need someone who has more experience than me, that would really help me, someone who would show up for me whenever I need them. It would be a real encouragement to me if I had someone to do that.” These two young Christian leaders, although talking out of what they did not have, clearly felt a mentor would help them to be spiritually full.

Hannah shared the impact a mentor had had on her. She said, “He is now 91 years old. He is like my granddad; not my real granddad, but like a granddad. He is a great example. He goes around to several villages over the hill stations as if he was a young man.” She said, “He is still alive both physically and spiritually. He is such a great example, as he has compassion for people all around.” What she likes best about him is that “not only is he kind, but he is authentic and will correct you when you’re wrong, but he never becomes angry.” To Hannah, this mentor was a real example in both “word and deed.”



Many of the others shared personal stories of how a mentor had impacted their lives. Daniel from Egypt expressed with great passion how much a particular mentor had affected his spiritual life. He described it this way: “He is now 86 years old and is full of much wisdom. He has walked with the Lord for many years now, and his love for God is inspiring to me. He never preached to me but always challenged me and encouraged me. He was a hard-working missionary for over 40 years but always is kind and full of grace.”

David also talked about the significance of the mentor. He said, “Other than my relationship with God, my mentor has the greatest ability to help me spiritually.”

William also spent considerable time talking about his mentor. He called his mentor his ‘supervisor.’ William said, “My supervisor is an example to a friend and me. He helps me when I am down, but he also corrects me when I am wrong.” He talked about how much correction he had received, which led to the question, did the relationship positive or negative encouragement for his Spiritual life? William’s response to this was, “It is about 50-50, but it is very valuable to me to have both, although sometimes the negative discourages me. When he says something positive, I know he really means it.”

Eddie, who placed a high priority on family, also felt having a mentor was invaluable. He had connected several years ago with a missionary family from South Africa. Eddie described the value in not only having a person to mentor him but also the benefit of having an accountability relationship with an entire family. Eddie put it this way, “Without the mentor, I don’t know a lot on my own.” One could tell that this relationship was invaluable to him. He said having this mentor provided him “with

coaching for ministry” and “accountability in life.” Eddie went on to say, “Every morning we (the mentor and him) have a meeting at the coffee shop together, and he asks me a series of questions like How is your family? How are you? How is your relationship with God? How is your soul?” The researcher told Eddie, “This language sounds very similar to the kinds of questions that might be asked in one of the bands that John Wesley developed during his time of ministry. In other words, not so much a Bible study but personal questions of accountability that are intended to get at the heart of a person and hold them accountable so they might mature as a Christian.” Eddie said with excitement, “That is exactly how I would describe my relationship with this man and his family.” Then Eddie was asked if the others he knew in ministry had such accountability partners, and he seemed to indicate that many do not. He was also asked how he connected with this family, and he said, “I went to a missions conference in my country and met them there, and they offered to spend time with me.” It was clear from the conversation with Eddie that he has grown a great deal from this relationship and believes that it would be good for everyone in ministry to have such a relationship.

All of the interviewees describe mentors at least as valuable with most seeing them as invaluable, even critical, to being spiritually full and healthy for ministry and to live the Christian life. Although the young Christian leaders did not like the criticism, they seemed receptive to receiving it. One young female said, “I do not like hearing criticism but I know I must is I want to grow.

##### **5) Personal Testimonies and Visions**

Another theme that emerged from the interviews in causing young Christian leaders to be spiritually full is personal testimonies. These testimonies provided powerful

encouragement during times of emptiness as a reminder that God is working in their lives. Many of them referred back to scripture, mentioning characters that would struggle greatly such as Moses, Abraham, David, Jesus, and Paul. The interviewees received great comfort in knowing many of the key heroes of the Bible had powerful testimonies that were filled with stories of hardship but ultimately revealed God's faithfulness.

One of the mature Christian leaders that were interviewed, Diego, shared a testimony of how during a particular time when things were very hard in his country, God provided a doorway to come to America. He said:

I went through many hardships in my country and when I first arrived in America, but God prepared me through hardships and led me to certain places, ministries, and even accountability groups to prepare me to be sent back to my home country in order to have a deeper richer walk with God and be better prepared to train young Christian leaders. God uses hardship, and it can be a blessing.

It was clear that Diego's personal story of hardship had been powerful in encouraging him throughout his ministry.

One of the more powerful testimonies came from Hannah. She shared a story that when she was three months old she became very sick, and the doctor told her father that he should prepare for his baby daughter's death. She said, "He ran to the pastor's house around midnight and knocked on the door. There was a sister who opened the door and switched the light on and as soon as the room was lit, his eyes were immediately fixed on a wall hanging with the word of God which read, 'Let your hearts not be troubled.'" She then went on to say, "My father told the pastor to prepare a small grave for his daughter but then the words on the wall hanging began to speak to him, and God gave him the

faith to believe his sick daughter would live.” And then Hannah began to get better. At this point, Hannah quoted Matthew 4.4 and said, “Man shall not live by bread alone but by every word of God that proceeds out of the mouth of God. So I (Hannah) am only living by the word of God.” Then she went on to say, “Despite all of my challenges, I know that God has kept me alive for a purpose. That purpose I feel I have to accomplish and that keeps me happy.” She went on to share about having typhoid when she was 13 years of age and should have died again, according to the doctor, but God saved her. One last testimony she shared was from when she was a young adult, and they were in a vehicle traveling in the hills doing ministry. With much passion in her voice, she said, “On our way, we’re going around the bend, and the vehicle started slipping backward, and I could see the deep pit in the valley below. We were going to slide off the hill into the pit, around 15 of us were inside, and I thought my time was coming. This time maybe God was calling me home.” She then went on to say, “I asked God, ‘God, please forgive me for all my sins and take me home,’ and suddenly I felt an angel of the Lord holding the weight at the back, and it came about that the wheel got stuck on a small stone. Otherwise, my bones would not be here.” And then she quoted Psalms 40, “God has pulled me out of the miry pit.” It was clear from her testimonies that the word of God, which she shared so frequently, and her personal testimonies have been a special source of spiritual infilling over the years.

Along with the power of these personal testimonies, several of these young adults and one of the mature Christian leaders shared stories of the visions that God had given them. One of the young ladies shared with me what she called, “Dreams and visions that God has given me.” She described it this way, “In the dream Dad (her name for God)

says, 'I saw you in my dream today, I'll bless you and keep you,' then he laughs and says, 'You, are my child, and I am your heavenly Father.' After the dream, she opened her Bible, and it went immediately to Numbers 6.23-24: "The Lord bless you and keep you, the Lord will make his face to shine upon you." She said that this was a reminder to her that God has a purposeful life for her.

Gordon shared that over the years, "God speaks to me in many different ways; He speaks to me through manifestations of His Spirit, and through revelations of His word and visions of prophecy." As the topic of visions and dreams came up a number of times, all of the people interviewed or talked about visions as a valid expression of God's witness and as a real encouragement to them personally as well as to their ministry.

David, from North Africa, also shared about hearing the voice of God and seeing visions from God. David describes it this way, "God gave me a vision when I was sleeping, it was like a dream, and I could hear his voice. I had a passion to start a small group, and in this vision was a confirmation. From that moment on, I felt God chose me to do things for Him. This moment was a very special moment for me. When I heard this voice, it confirmed my mission." Powerful testimonies of God working in people's lives and great dreams and visions often accompanied one another and always seemed impactful for those who share them, and even those who heard these testimonies and visions.

### Survey Findings

Table 134.1

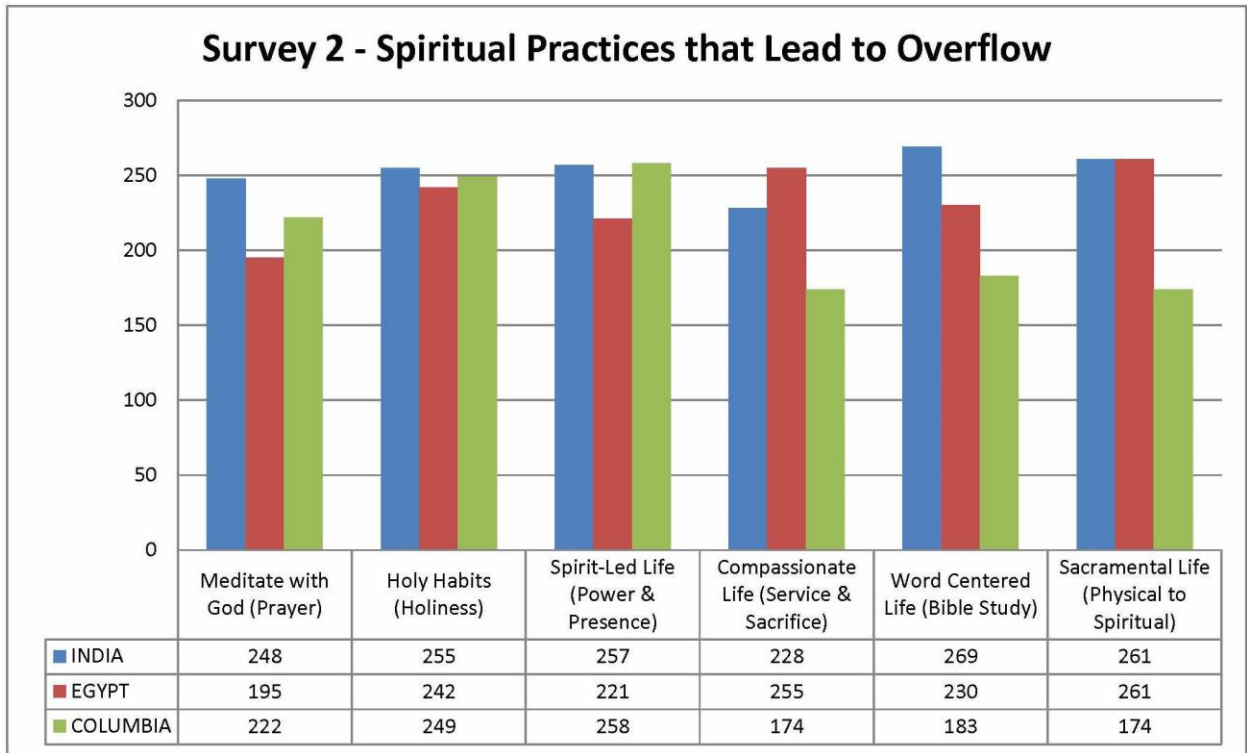


Table 134.1 compares the significance of these Spiritual Traditions in the three countries on three different continents. Since the participants had to choose from high to low on each of the surveys and could not rank the traditions as equally significant one might expect certain traditions to be much more meaningful than other traditions. The results may indicate that culture does have some effect on the result. For example, a lower value is placed on the sacramental life in Latin America compared to the higher value that is placed on meditative prayer life. Those surveyed were predominantly from the evangelical churches. The evangelical church in Latin American has often had a negative view of Catholicism in Latin America which has been associated with a less vibrant spiritual life and more ritualistic practices which have over the years led to dead religion. Also, the Catholic church in Latin America has had a history of mixing

witchcraft or practices outside of the traditional Christian faith. However fair or unfair these stereotypes might be it is not surprising that it has an effect on the psyche of the evangelical church regarding rituals that are also part of the Catholic tradition. The sacrament of baptism and communion are also significant within the evangelical church in Latin America as well, but based on the surveys they do not seem to be as valued as much as the Spirit-Led life that might be associated with a vibrant church within their cultural context.

Although the survey acknowledges some cultural differences, all of the traditions were considered valuable with each cultural context that was surveyed. The interviews and observations yielded findings indicating that by the patterns that emerged certain traditions were of a marginally greater benefit than others. However, Table 134.1 showed that within a cultural context as well as across the globe that all traditions have value of a significant level.

Table 135.1



Table 135.1 provides a comparison of all of the surveys from all three countries put together. The surveys were tallied all together to see if globally any traditions prove particularly beneficial to young Christian leaders around the world. Overall, only 3% difference between exists the traditions young Christian leaders found to be most valuable to those traditions the would consider not as critical to their spiritual well-being. All of the traditions appear to have real value across the world. However, the tradition of prayer and meditation and the tradition of holiness were rated as most significant overall.

### **Research Question #3: Description of Evidence**

3) *What are the potential tools, resources, or relationships that will assist young Christian leaders to be spiritually full so they might overflow into the lives of others?*



## **Qualitative Semi-Structured Interviews**

The themes that emerged from the interviews and surveys as potential tools, resources, and relationships leading to Spiritual fullness in young Christian leaders were identified as:

- 1) Times of Restoration with God
- 2) Technology for Ministry
- 3) Mentoring Program
- 4) Networking and Partnerships

In answering this question, there is some overlap with the previous two questions. The interviews that were given about those things that cause people to be spiritually depleted and spiritually full often brought up potential answers to their problems. With this in mind, this section will share insights from the interviews and surveys, that will shed some new light on those things that might best help Christian leaders, as well as reinforce ideas mentioned earlier as ways to help young Christian leaders to have spiritually to overflow in ministry so they might pour into the lives of others.

This section will begin with illustrations from the interviews, and the surveys that were that will be helpful in highlighting the need for tools, resources, and relationships that will help young Christian leaders to be spiritually full.

The first illustration comes from comments made while doing the interviews with these young leaders in the three different countries with included six different conferences. During the interviews the interviewer was asked by six of those interviewed could they contact the researcher in the future for advice and help. One young leader said, “I am blessed to have this time with you and a hope that you might give me more

and stay in contact. It would be a blessing to my ministry.” These young leaders were very hungry to engage people and resources that were not normally available to them.

The second illustration happened the first time the surveys were handed out. After taking time to explain them and hand them out we had a break and asked them to fill them out when they return. That evening it was discovered that not all of the surveys had been returned. When the group was asked the next day to return the missing surveys, two of the young Christian leaders reluctantly came forward, sharing virtually the same story. Both of them apologized and said they have taken it home with them in hopes of using it at their home church as a resource. Although the surveys would not be a particularly helpful resource in and of itself, it was clear that these leaders were desperate for material that might assist their ministries.

From the interviews, it was obvious that many of the people in these challenging settings did not seem to have a clear view of what tools resources and relationships they needed to be overflowing in ministry. However, through the interviews and surveys, it was possible to identify potential tools by what they shared about their needs and what was or could meet those needs.

The first thing that was obvious was a general lack of resources for ministry and the resources they have they depend upon heavily. When asking William if he had any resources to help with his spiritual life, he said, “I don’t have money for those kind of things, but I would be very excited to have some.” When asked what kind of resources he would like, he really had no idea what was available. When asked what would be most helpful to him, He said, “anything that would help me to understand the Bible better and help me to preach better.” A deeper understanding of the Bible was mentioned by seven

different persons in the interviews. However, a couple of those who were interviewed were resistant to external sources outside of the Bible. One Christian leader said, “If I have the Bible I have enough.” When talking about spiritual traditions people seem most resistant to those things that they were unfamiliar with and had not experienced.

### **1) Times of Restoration with God**

Consistent with the findings from the surveys, tools that helped these Christian leaders to have a richer prayer life were some things were asked about throughout the interviews. Diego from South America describes His current state as spiritual full. When asked why that was the case, he said, “after a very busy time in ministry we (his ministry team) have just finished being on retreat together. We had time to spend together, and I had time to be alone with God and restore my soul.” He describes this time of restoration and retreat as being “invaluable to being refueled in ministry.” At least six of the twelve specifically mentioned times of concentrated restoration with God as invaluable to staying full. They (those that were interviewed) described the ILI Summit that we were a part of as invaluable. One young lady put it this way, “this has been a time for reflection and focus on the things that really matter that encourage us so we can go home ready to do bigger things for God.”

### **2) Technology for Ministry**

Three of the interviews done with young Christian leaders from Latin America that had been identified by the researcher while in Colombia were done through FaceTime from the U.S. to their various countries in Latin America. Although this did prove more difficult than a face-to-face interview the participants see most appreciative and energized by having an opportunity to talk about the subject online with someone

else. Two of the three asked during the interview if it might be possible to do this again sometime. William said, “It would be great to have someone knowledgeable outside of my ministry to call upon from some time.”

Eddie said, “I would enjoy talking with you again, it could help me to get better with my English, but also to learn from your wisdom.” It was apparent from these interviews that technology, like that which was used through FaceTime and the Internet, might be used as a very useful tool in helping young Christian leaders. Dramatic changes have taken place just in the last five years, not only in Internet availability but in cell phones being used as a tool to share in exchanging information. Facebook, Whatsapp, and Twitter all came up during the interviews as ways of communicating in the future.

### **3) Mentoring Program**

Referring to something mentioned earlier in the paper is the significance of mentors. When talking with David, he asked, “Is there a program I can be a part to be mentored by others like yourself.” Earlier the value of face-to-face mentors was mentioned, but David’s inquiry brings up the idea people and resources that might possibly be shared over the Internet. When talking with Donald, he talked about the lack of available books. He said, “When I run into a problem or question in the Scriptures, I have nothing to turn to to help you with answers, other than asking older Christians.” A library or resource room could provide the kind of knowledge that Donald is looking for to be effective communicating God’s word.

### **4) Networking and Partnerships**

Another potential tool is the value of networking. This topic arose during the interview with David. When talking about what help him spiritually, he referred to his

friends in ministry. “Having so many friends to ask to help me and friends to encourage me is a great help. It is great being here at ILI where I am able to make new friends and meet new people I can learn from.”

John said, “I need to others in a similar situation to be able to share with and learn from. It seems like everyone so busy in their own situation that no one has the time help each other.” The isolation John was experiencing in ministry was a common story during the interviews heard at the different locations.

When it comes to spiritual traditions, the surveys indicated, as mentioned earlier, that there is great value in these spiritual traditions across the world. However, no one shared during the interviews having any resources or tools to assist them in enhancing and developing his or her spiritual life through these traditions and practices that are associated with these traditions of spirituality.

Another insight that came from the interviews was the possibility of partnerships. Partnerships are not just about networking but like-minded ministries and ministers working together for the common good. Joy expressed it this way, “I feel like I have another father who shares my love for the heavenly Father and the new family. It would be a blessing if your church could ever work with my church. I thought we were different, but now I see we are more alike.” David who was one of the most spiritually hungry and Christians that was interviewed said, “to be in the community this week with so many other believers has changed my life, if only I can continue when I return home. People I doing so many exciting things here made we could do them together.” He, like so many others, was longing for a way to have deep relationships in his community and partner together with the larger body of Christ.

## **Summary of Major Findings**

After examining the finding in this research paper the weight of the findings on certain topics were used to identify the major findings within this paper. Here the finding that will be shared one at a time below:

- 1) The Significance of Mentors
- 2) Family as a Key in being Spiritual Full or Empty
- 3) The Value of Testimonies, Vision and Purpose
- 4) The Importance Networking Relationships and Resources
- 5) The Importance of a Spiritual Practices and Spiritual Tradition particularly Prayer and a Personal Relationship with God

### **1) The Significance of Mentors**

The first theme or finding in terms of significance is mentors. Every one of the people interviewed put a high priority on it. Also, more powerful positive stories were shared about mentors and their relationship, than any other type of story shared during the interviews. Not only were there a number of stories about mentors, but these stories were also shared with great emotion. Additionally, four of those interviewed expressed a great deal of pain and emotional stress because of not having a mentor currently.

### **2) Family as a Key in being Spiritually Full or Empty**

The second finding, in terms of weight of material from the interviews, was family. First, like mentors, every single person that was interviewed brought family into the conversation, usually without being prompted. Those who talked in terms of a positive family situation and love for family expressed a great deal of joy and fullness. Those on the other hand, who seemed to have a lot of strife in their family struggled

greatly with inner peace and fulfillment. These insights were made during the interviews based not just on what they said, but also on their body language, voice inflection, as well as the amount of time they spent speaking about their family.

### **3) The Value of Testimonies, Visions, and Purpose**

The third finding that came from the research was the vital role that testimonies & visions played in young Christian leaders being spiritual full or empty. Although testimonies and visions are distinct, they were grouped together for two reasons. In the interviews, the interviewees often linked these two together in their conversation when talking about their experience with God. The second reason is that both of these experiences appeared to work in the life of young Christian leaders as spiritual altars, marking a significant time or event. These spiritual altars and the recognition of them provided encouragement in the lives of young Christian leaders during difficult times and provided reminders to them of how God is working in their lives and the purpose that He had for them. All of the young Christian leaders interviewed, as well as more mature ones, shared testimonies of how God had worked in their lives. Five of the twelve shared powerful visions that affirm their call or relationship with God, either while sleeping or sometimes while in a deep time of prayer.

Along with testimonies and visions, God's vision and purpose were significant to the spiritual vitality of young Christian leaders. Without exception, this idea of having a clear calling and believing that one is living into that calling in a meaningful way was significant to those involved in the research as either positive because they had a call and purpose or negative due to lack of one.

The interviewees who by their words were strongest in ministry were the ones whose vision ran like a thread through all of the other significant areas of their lives. The individuals who appeared to have incorporated their vision into every area came across as much more spiritually full and less depleted. Those who seemed to have the greatest struggles or emptiness appeared to be more compartmentalized and wrestled with how to make it all fit together. Also, those who struggled to have a clear vision and purpose in what they were doing were more ill at ease, which seemed leave them with more spiritual emptiness.

#### **4) The Importance of Networking Relationships and Resources**

The next finding is categorized as a desire for outside resources and relationships to learn from and connect with in ministry. This finding helps all of our other findings to become a reality. There was a great desire for more impactful resources and relationships, but most seemed to lack the ability or the answer as to how they might address this on their own.

#### **5) The Importance of Spiritual Practices and Spiritual Traditions particularly Prayer and a Personal Relationship with God**

The last finding is the significance of spiritual practices in being spiritually full. It is listed last, not necessarily because it is of least importance but because of the way that it showed up in the research, particularly in the surveys.

Most of the interviews that had Bible study, or the reading of Scripture, as the practice that was most prominent, not only in terms of what they shared but in terms of the impact they believed that it had on their lives.



When looking at the survey one on spiritual emptiness, as well as looking at survey two, where are they evaluated spiritual practices and how they impact one's spiritual fullness that data supported the idea that all of the practices were of value and were important to a sizable segment. To remove any of the practices from the Spiritual life of those who took the survey would, in fact, have left a segment without a practice that was valuable to their spiritual well-being.

The data from the surveys indicates that all of the practices are meaningful since none of the practices are dramatically high or low in terms of preference for spiritual fullness. The data also indicates in regard to what depletes people at once again there are some peaks and valleys but overall depletion.

As a subset of Spiritual Practices, special attention is given to the importance of prayer and a personal relationship with God. With prayer as a spiritual practice or tradition it belongs under this heading, but due to the interviewees, the significant emphasis put on it during the interview and high overall rating in the surveys it deserved special attention within the spiritual traditions. The interviews displayed a variety of ways Christian leaders experienced this personal relationship. For some, it was through very intentional practices and patterns spirituality, for others their relationship seemed much more conversational less formal. A variety of practices and patterns were used by these leaders, which they found most helpful in having a personal relationship with God. Two specific insights arose about a personal relationships with God from the interviews. First, those who seemed most content, were those, regardless of their patterns and practices, who talked about God very personally. Second, those during the interviews were most discontent with their current spirituality were those who tended not to have

regular patterns of whatever their spiritual practices might be. However, even those who were disciplined in spending regular time with God did not seem that content if they did not feel a close personal connection to God.

## CHAPTER 5

### LEARNING REPORT FOR THE PROJECT

#### Overview of the Chapter

The purpose of this project was to understand why many young Christian leaders in challenging or difficult international settings serve from spiritual depletion or emptiness rather than a spiritual overflowing. As a result, these young leaders can identify what spiritual principles led to a spiritual overflow so that they might be fruitful in ministry through their lifetime. When used to investigate spiritual emptiness and fullness in young Christian leaders, the lenses of data analysis, personal observation, relevant literature, and biblical/theological foundations combined to identify the following significant findings:

- 1) The Significance of Mentors (Mentors)
- 2) The Family as a Key in being Spiritually Full or Empty (Family)
- 3) The Value of Testimonies, Vision, and Purpose (Vision)
- 4) The Importance of Networking Relationships and Resources (Networking)
- 5) The Value of Spiritual Practices and Spiritual Traditions (Spirituality)

The findings gather in categories of relationship with God and relationship with others. By identifying what causes depletion as well as spiritual infilling, the findings point to those things that need to be addressed to avoid depletion. They also highlight those factors that need to be in place so that young Christian leaders would be spiritually equipped for ministry and Christian witness in the world.

## **Major Findings**

### **First Finding - The Significance of Mentors**

#### **Personal Observation Lens**

As I traveled to Columbia, India, and Egypt and saw firsthand the challenges and lack of resources that many of these young leaders faced, I expected much of our discussion to be centered on financial and material resources. Although these topics did come up a number of times, they were brought up far less than I had anticipated. In fact, tangible resources were mentioned so few times that I did not even include them as a major finding. In the actual interviews, mentoring consumed more time and conversation than any topic that was discussed. All twelve participants initiated the topic of mentoring in the context of spiritual fullness. Similarly, those interviewed also brought up that the lack of mentoring left them spiritually depleted. Another noteworthy observation is that most of those who were interviewed expressed a desire to enter into a formal or an informal mentoring relationship with me, believing me to be someone well-trained and well-traveled in mentoring and coaching around the world.

#### **Literature Review Lens**

Much of the literature prioritized people's relationship with Christ as the most significant determiner of spiritual fullness. However, these same resources also identified relationships with others as critical. Fellowship, accountability and mentorship surfaced as important themes both in the literature and during the interviews. Without guidance and accountability from others, in isolation one is likely to become misguided or imbalanced. Edwards puts it this way, "a large part of your personal relationship with

Jesus Christ is supposed to be corporate and in the community, not individual” (99).

Although the primary theme of his book, *The Secret to the Christian Life*, is focused on the connection between God and the individual believer as indispensable, he also understood the mandate in scripture that Christians need one another for one's spiritual life to be complete. Edwards points to the “ecclesia” or body of Christ as significant if we are to have the support and encouragement we need. The overall findings from data analysis, as well as the biblical/theological lens and literature of Chapter two, all point to a strong need for mentors and or mentorship style communities that can nurture young Christian leaders.

One book which proved to be invaluable to both the literature review, as well as the project’s methodology, was Richard Foster's book *Streams of Living Water*. Looking at the stream that focuses on compassion, Foster argues that those who have modeled radical compassion, like Mother Teresa, have proved to be great mentors, inspiring a generation to have compassion to the “poorest of the poor.” (loc. 5994) Therefore, people who have embraced ministry internationally can provide perspective and wisdom to the younger leaders in the field.

### **Biblical and Theological Lens**

In 2 Corinthians 1.3-5, God is described as a father of compassion and mercy. He is not described as just any father, but as a heavenly Father, denoting, “high heaven of holiness” (Zodhiates 942), which would be descriptive of a father who is not only a great example of mentorship but fit to impart great wisdom. God the Father is described as a mentor-like figure who is “the God of all comfort” in v. 3. Christ not only suffers on behalf of His disciples but now His followers suffer with Him, which equips them to

mentor others who have suffered, having already walked that path with Christ. This pattern gives us this image of Christ flowing into His disciples and His disciples pouring into the lives of others; “through Christ, our comfort overflows” (*New International Version*). In John 15, Jesus gives another biblical model of a person who is both filled and depleted spiritually. Christ is the source of leaders’ filling that allows them to produce fruit. However, apart from this source, believers are unable to do anything in ministry that matters.

John 15:4-10 calls all believers to abide or “dwell,” using the verb form for a dwelling place (Keener, John 15:1-8). The Scriptures lend support to the idea that in Christ, Christians share in this intimate dwelling place, regardless of where they are from or how different our backgrounds might be. During the interviews, the young Christian leaders also expressed this strong bond and connection to each other, even though they had little if any contact prior to the interviews, and their cultural settings were very diverse. As noted in the biblical section of the literature review, there is a central feeling of oneness with each other there is a central feeling of oneness with each other when people talk about the things of Christ.

### **Second Finding - Family as a Key in being Spiritually Full or Empty**

#### **Personal Observations Lens**

In the research interviews, those who had family stresses had a hard time focusing on their ministry and often described themselves as depleted in their spiritual lives. Even those such as Eddie, who found his family to be an incredible blessing, experienced a great deal of stress because of travel and the demands of ministry that took him away from the family. A more balanced schedule could help the situation, but the pressure to

do more either from these young leaders' superiors or from a self-imposed desire to be fruitful in ministry seemed to work against a schedule that allows time for investing in family life.

Much like what was observed with the mentoring, the family was both an incredible stress, but also a great blessing to a sense of spiritual health and well-being in the leaders. Those who had their families intricately involved in the ministry, as well as those who participated in spiritual practices at home, such as prayer and Bible study, found the family to be a great source of fulfillment that led to an increased sense of spiritual vitality. From the three different regions globally that were used for this research, the family played an even more significant role than what I have experienced in America, where families are often much more divided and disconnected than the family units in India, Egypt and South America.

### **Literature Review Lens**

Most of the cited literature was written from a Western perspective that tends to be much more individualistic in dealing with spirituality. The lack of substantial material on this topic in the literature is most likely more a product of a Western blind spot than a lack of the importance of the subject. The interviews that come later in this research support this conclusion as well.

One book, in particular, proved invaluable in addressing the issue of true spirituality and how it is effective for the family: Scazzero's *Emotionally Healthy Spirituality*. Spirituality is not simply affected by believers' relationship with God. Believers also have to deal with "generational patterns and culture that negatively shapes how [they] relate and live today" (Scazzero 59). According to St. Teresa of Avila,

“almost all problems in the spiritual life stem from a lack of self-knowledge” (Scazzero 65). In other words, people cannot change what they do not know. This kind of change requires that a person examines how the family has shaped him/her.

In *The Secret to the Christian Life*, the author argues that Jesus Christ, the “Eternal Son” who was incarnate, lived through “an indwelling Lord,” the Holy Spirit, and was “in constant fellowship with his Father” (Edward 13). Here is a spiritual family system that must work together in order for the fullness of spirituality to operate.

### **Biblical and Theological Lens**

In 2 Corinthians 1.3-11 is a model for life in the Christ’s community that would apply equally to the family. In this passage, believers receive comfort from God, and as we receive that comfort, they are to extend it to others. Believers are able to give freely because that love which is given is overly abundant or overflowing. If young Christian leaders are to last, they must be poured into, and they must pour into their families. Since their family is the first God-given responsibility, there is no doubt that a family that is left spiritually hungry will eventually feed off of one another. Although the image is graphic, spiritual cannibalism can happen when all are spiritually empty, leaving only one another to try and meet each others’ needs. Although this pericope does not refer to the family in direct ways, the language used clearly speaks of caring for others much in the same way family members might take care of one another.

### **Third Finding - The Value of Testimonies, Visions, and Purpose**

#### **Personal Observations Lens**

In the midst of numerous interviews, a category emerged which includes three separate categories: Personal Testimonies, Visions, and Purpose. Different leaders would



share testimonies, without being asked, that were described as essential to their faith. These stories served as an anchor in ministry when there were struggles, and the leaders were in need of encouragement. Diego and Hannah, in particular, shared powerful testimonies that were at the center of what they wanted to share with me about how they have remained full in ministry. One testimony highlighted struggles early in ministry; the other testimony expressed situations of early life when only by the hand of God did she survive.

Also, purpose fits well in this category. Those who felt God had given them a vision or a specific purpose relied heavily on this vision, believing God would fulfill their vision if they would stay true to the course. I cannot overstate the degree to which these leaders were kept from feeling empty and depleted by these “encounters” with God, whether through a dream, a real life experience, or a vision that was planted in their minds and hearts. I observed that those who had such an experience had a greater sense of hope and were far less likely to be discouraged by the difficult challenges.

### **Literature Review Lens**

In Brennan Manning’s *The Furious Longing of God*, he shares a testimony similar to the testimonies, visions, and God-given purpose described in the interviews. Manning shares of an experience at a spiritual center in 1978, where he spent 30 days in silence with a Jesuit priest as his guide. During this time he studied a single passage: “I am my beloved’s and His desire is for me” (Ss 7.10). This experience had such a profound impact on this life that it has reminded him of God’s love for Him in the hardest of times and serves to remind him of the love of God when he does not feel His presence. A great number of those interviewed shared great personal experiences, from healings to visions,

to God's unlikely provision, all of which served as significant landmarks in the journey of these Christian leaders.

### **Biblical and Theological Lens**

In the key passage that was examined, 2 Corinthians 1.3-11, a testimonial in vs. 8-11 shares about all of the incredible hardships that Paul and the other disciples endured in the province of Asia. In verse nine the reader is given the reason for this hardship. It is so Paul and others would "not rely on ourselves but on God." Paul adds to this a testimonial from Jesus himself as He describes God as the one "who raises the dead." In this part of the passage, as in many other places in scripture, the testimonial is being used the same way as is described in the participants' interviews: as a witness to what God has done. Through this witness, Paul encourages the believers in verse ten that "He has delivered us... and he will deliver us again." Paul testifies because God is a deliverer: "On him, we have set our hope," because of his faithfulness.

Throughout the Scriptures, passages speak to the power of testimony (John 1.1-4), visions (2 Cor. 12.2-4) and purpose (Gen. 17). The Scriptures provide strong evidence that these experiences are seen within Scripture as not only valid but as strong sources of spiritual encouragement to young Christian leaders.

### **Fourth Finding - The Importance Networking Relationships and Resources**

#### **Personal Observations Lens**

In the observations from the interviews, relationships came up as the most frequent topic mentioned. Also, it was the subject that was discussed with the most depth, as well as passion. Although there are some similarities to mentoring and family because

they are both connected to relationships, networking had certain characteristics that made it unique.

Networking, or a web of interconnected relationships, gave young Christian leaders multiple perspectives, resources, and often assistance that could not be provided by family members or other mentor relationships. David identified an additional benefit of networking with people in similar ministries. Leaders could encourage one another, preventing a sense of isolation from growing. The other positive aspect was the exchange of learning and information. In settings where many of them had little resources, being able to share ideas about their Christian life and ministry encouraged these leaders and strengthened their belief that God was with them as they shared in His work together.

### **Literature Review Lens**

In the book *Close: Leading Well Across Distance and Culture*, the author speaks of a “new paradigm...leading over great distances with less control” (Cochrum Loc. 477). This type of networking encourages face-to-face contact whenever possible, but allows for those in remote places or places where certain expertise is unavailable to benefit from mature, stable leaders who think globally. This model of networking even suggests virtual teams, so people can connect in ways that would not otherwise be possible. Without having read or discussed any of this literature, the young leaders who were interviewed longed for this type of networking. The idea that God could broaden their understanding of ministry through these partnerships was a great encouragement. International Leadership Institute was mentioned both in mentoring and networking as a great resource and of great benefit to their spiritual well-being. The possibility of these

partnerships extending beyond the conference created more enthusiasm than anything else discussed during the interviews.

### **Biblical and Theological Lens**

The best biblical example of networking appears in the missionary journeys of Paul. With each visit to a city, Paul laid down core foundations of the faith and would return, if possible, when the new Christian community needed guidance, instruction, or even correction. However, in general, Paul trained leaders and left each community to shape and mold what this knowledge and truth would look like within their cultural context.

### **Fifth Finding - The Importance of a Spiritual Practices and Spiritual Tradition:**

#### **Prayer and a Personal Relationship with God**

#### **Personal Observations Lens**

As I analyzed the interviews and surveys, I expected that spiritual fullness and emptiness would be primarily measured by one's spiritual life both privately and corporately as it related to a vertical line between people and God. The surveys did, in fact, show the importance of spiritual practices. However, when looking at data on the surveys alongside the information shared in the interviews, an interesting theme developed. In addition to the importance of this vertical line between people and God in spiritual practices, a horizontal line denoting people to people relationships greatly assist growth as the



(figure 2)

participants engaged in spiritual practices and traditions (see figure 2). In other words, spiritual practices between God and individuals proved most effective if they were accompanied by practices or patterns nurtured within the faith community.

Spiritual practices in conjunction with an authentic relationship with God (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit) ranked as the single most significant factor in being spiritually full (or the absence of this relationship resulting in spiritual emptiness). In the surveys, while a number of categories ranked high, prayer and intimacy with God made the top of the list. Although spiritual practices varied from person to person and from culture to culture, it was undeniable that all of the spiritual traditions were essential and foundational to be spiritually full.

Six of the twelve interviewees spoke of a retreat or dedicated time away from ministry as vital to their spiritual health. Although daily practices were undecidedly key to their personal relationships, these times of retreat or restoration also kept a number of these leaders not only from becoming depleted, but filled and prepared them to return to ministry with vigor and enthusiasm.

### **Literature Review Lens**

Andrew Murray identifies several spiritual traditions as crucial to a rich spiritual life. “A good conscience is complete obedience [holiness] to God day by day, and fellowship [compassion] with God every day in His Word [Bible Study] and prayer [meditation and contemplation] – that is a life of absolute surrender” (8). The question that seems to satisfy some of these leaders and perplex others as they sought Spiritual overflow to share in ministry is, “How can I know Jesus Christ, internally, personally, intimately, and daily?” (Edwards 5).

As these leaders sought this answer their very words spoke to the reality that, “unless we lay hold of his life and lay hold of Him... we don’t have the right parts in us [He is what we are lacking on our own] to live the Christian life. The greatest day you will ever live is the day your Lord, by revelation, shows you that you cannot live the Christian life.” (Edwards 94). Edwards is expressing the truth that apart from Christ is us, we cannot live the Christian life, and without an intimate moment by moment relationship with Him, one is sure to become empty and depleted. Christian leaders must surrender completely, as has been mentioned, but ultimately it lies in the hand of God as Manning states from the Song of Solomon 7.10, “I am my beloved’s and His desire is for me.” This spiritual infilling happens only as God releases the flow of love for His beloved.

The Spiritual traditions and the practices that come from Foster’s *Streams of Living Water*, which had their origins in scripture, provide a framework for intimacy with God that leads to spiritual infilling. Intimacy in prayer (contemplative prayer) was found to be the most necessary and rudimentary of spiritual traditions. In the interview, Steve said, “The more time I spend with Jesus Christ, the more I walk with him, and the more I prove my love for him, the more I fall in love with him.” Another interviewee said, “True spirituality is about knowing God, not just as a belief, but as a person you can have a relationship with every day.” The survey confirmed the high priority these young Christian leaders have for the use of spiritual traditions.

### **Biblical and Theological Lens**

The foundational scriptures that this project was birthed out of, 2 Corinthians 1.3-11 and John 15, demonstrate the direct connection of God in His triune fullness

overflowing through His suffering and sacrifice. Believers, in turn, overflow into others without depleting themselves because of the constant streams of living water that God himself pours into them. These young leaders serving in challenging circumstances described this relationship with Christ as painful and hard at times, but also life-giving. John 15 exemplifies what the participants identified in their interviews when those who felt the connection of the vine flowing into them found themselves to be full to overflowing and those who felt cut off if even for a season, began to dry up and wither without the infilling of God's Spirit.

Romans 8.15-16 is a reminder that His Spirit bears witness with people's spirits, so they have a fellowship as children of God. Galatians 2.20 testifies to this pattern of moving from death to life in Christ. Ephesians 3.17-19 notes God's covenant with believers, "where the promise is that we will be filled up with the fullness of God" (Manning 30-31). This is consistent with the description from participants as they experienced spirit-filling and life changing encounters with God, indicating both intimacy as well as infilling for life and ministry. Consistent with John 15, in John 17.22-23 the scriptures says, "I have given you the glory you gave me ... to be perfected in unity that the world will recognize that it was you who sent me and that you have loved them as you have loved me." Here is this exchange of love for God's glory that was the heart blood of these young Christian leaders and what was described as their longing when His infilling was absent from their daily lives.

### **Ministry Implications of the Findings**

The most significant finding from this study to being spiritually full on a consistent basis is a daily, intimate relationship with God the Father, the Son and the

Holy Spirit. Alongside this finding, the surveys and interviews clearly indicated that a wide variety of the spiritual traditions and practices were vital to creating this intimacy and spiritual infilling. Because of the significance of these traditions and practices, an essential follow-up to this research would be the extensive development of in-depth teachings from the six traditions. These teachings would then be used to train young Christian leaders in numerous practices that will enrich their time with God.

Another critical implication of this research, as it relates to how Mt. Bethel UMC supports its leaders overseas, is partnership covenants. Since relational support was such an important need the interviewees identified, Mt. Bethel UMC mission leaders need to invest in covenant partnerships where both parties understand what they can expect from the other. By sharing relational expectations, it can help identify cultural differences that might weaken a partnership, as well as nurture a great understanding of the mutual support required in ministry which will help this covenant to create a deep spiritual bond.

One substantial part of this covenant relationship will be a plan for ongoing spiritual engagements, especially as it relates to relevant spiritual traditions and practices. Mt. Bethel UMC missions can provide training in spiritual formation and our global partners can share their experiences and insights. This mutual relationship benefits both the sending church and the global leaders as well.

Furthermore, the research found that beyond spiritual traditions and practices, relationships are needed in the form of spiritual mentors and strong Christian families. Sharing testimonies of God's faithfulness and networking with brothers and sisters in Christ also can contribute to both the overseas leader's and the church's vitality. With this in mind, it is clear that there is a great need for networking with peer to peer and



mentoring Christian leaders serving away from home. By emphasizing relationships that encourage and build up the body of Christ, young Christian leaders will be much stronger and endure throughout their call to serve God in their family, church, and community.

These networks will best be done within indigenous settings since there will be a greater understanding of cultural context. However, there is also a valuable place for international Christian leaders to come alongside these young leaders. The significance of international leaders can be found in partnering with these indigenous leaders to provide new ideas and resources that would prove helpful. They are there to provide encouragement in ministry, ideas for spiritual formation, relationships to build up the body, resources (generally not financial) to allow for growth and development with the understanding that the indigenous churches provide the foundation, and the international churches act as a role of support.

The interviews also exposed a convincing connection between strong Christian families and spiritual fullness. Stresses on the family often contributed to a sense of spiritual depletion. This depletion would imply that tools and resources to strengthen the family overseas would be most helpful to increase spiritual health and vitality. It would also suggest that when Mt. Bethel is working with global partners there should not only be an interest in the person in ministry but in their entire family. By working with families relationally and providing resources and tools to not only assess the stress on the family but address health practices, the sending church can assist the young Christian leader more holistically.

### **Limitations of the Study**

This study was conducted primarily with young Christian leaders ages 18-40, though some older leaders were included, there were not enough leaders to make a strong conclusion about the patterns and spiritual practices of older Christian leaders. Also, only one-fourth of the young leaders were women, which was not enough representation to draw any conclusion between men and women and their differences.

The study is also limited by the fact that only three cultures and three continents were represented. Though it is believed to cover a wide enough spectrum to draw global conclusions, if other regions had been included, the results might have had an effect on the overall findings.

The interviews with Latin America were done by FaceTime and Skype, making them a little more difficult, given Internet connections and no face to face contact. Some of the surveys had to be discarded due to the fact the findings clearly indicated they did not understand the numbering process. Working through several languages, translators and interpreters has the possibility of misrepresenting not only the instructions but also the data collected.

### **Unexpected Observations**

In going through the literature, most of the resources focused on spiritual formation practices, patterns, and personal habits that create spiritual maturity. When doing the interviews, I was very surprised that most of what the young Christian leaders discussed pointed to a relationship outside of their personal spiritual practices, such as family and friends. When they addressed in the interviews and surveys what caused spiritual emptiness in their lives, a pattern emerged of a vertical relationship with God

and a horizontal relationship with other Christians. If the vertical or the horizontal relationships were missing, they experienced emptiness. If both were present, participants pointed to spiritual strength. This was particularly true of what left them feeling empty. Although there was no doubt the relationship between God and an individual or community was primary, I was surprised that any time there was stress on the horizontal relationship (people) it strongly inhibited the leaders' relationship with God (vertical). When either type of relationship was stressful or unhealthy, spiritual overflow was non-existent.

Another surprise was people's interest in the project's topic. Once word traveled about my research, I had as many or more conversations regarding the topic with those beyond the interviews as I did with those whom I interviewed. Clearly, international workers are hungry for meaningful relationships with God and others.

### **Recommendations**

For those who might be interested in replicating and furthering this research, I recommend several ideas that would strengthen this study.

- 1) Choose settings that represent the same of kind of diversity found in the ILI History Makers Conferences and Summits, including a strong community of effective young Christian leaders, as well as a wide range of diverse ministry settings and religious and denominational backgrounds. As a result, the researcher can be sure the study characterizes the global Christian body, not merely one segment of it.
- 2) Capitalize on insights from the method of participant observation while in the research setting. I did not anticipate the potential value of these observations.

They were useful in confirming what I received from the interviews and the surveys but could not be included in the research since they were not a part of the original Institutional Review Board application.

- 3) Take advantage of reputable online services, such as Survey Monkey. The electronic instruments removed many the factors that lead to errors because they would only allow participants to fill out the survey using the correct numbering system. Although there were enough surveys filled out correct to lead to accurate findings, the electronic method would prove the greatest accuracy in using surveys in gaining data.
- 4) The study might also be strengthened in the future by finding an established instrument that measures factors (family stress, broken relationships, trauma, anxiety, isolation, over-business, etc.) affecting young Christian leaders spiritually. Richard Foster's *Streams of Living Water* provided a template for the spiritual traditions and practices that were focused on the spiritual factors rather than factors that war against these spiritual practices. The factors listed above weighed heavily in the interviews as things that led to spiritual emptiness.

In looking at a central theme, these findings largely focus on the importance of personal relationships with God and others, in its various forms. First, with God, through spiritual experiences and spiritual practices or traditions with a particular focus on prayer and intimacy with God, and then with others through mentoring, family, and relational networking or community. The following recommended actions for supporting Christian leaders serving internationally refer to this

***project's major findings:*** (topic in bold)

- 5) Focus specifically on *intimacy with God* since the findings gave strong support to the significance of this relationship in having Spiritual health. One way to assess this is *through* examining *curriculum* that already exists or in developing resources particular dedicated to Spiritual Practice and Spiritual Formation. Given the lack of financial resources in many of these locations, it would be important to explore cost affordable ways to give these leaders access to spiritual tools that might enhance a personal relationship with Jesus Christ.
- 6) Network with other churches and Christian leaders to provide quality *spiritual retreats* that would give opportunities for times of refreshment. Retreats like “Walk to Emmaus” have been used in different parts of the world to bring spiritual renewal and awakening.
- 7) *Mentoring is a priority*. Develop a global strategy to allow all Christian leaders an opportunity to be mentored by both indigenous leaders, as well as remote mentors using technology and cross-cultural travel to allow for both regular or occasional visits. To provide as many and as diverse mentoring opportunities as possible.
- 8) See the *family as intrinsic* to spiritual infilling. Provide quality time for the family, as well as counseling to strengthen the family.
- 9) Create a *global network of churches* and mission-focused leaders across denominational lines, prayerfully working to use this network to strengthen young Christian leaders (through strategies that focus on strengthening intimacy with God, through networking with spiritual mentors, family counselors, Christian business leadership and, church leaders).

10) Explore all opportunities to make the most of the *technology* and *global travel* to create a support network and spiritual resources.

11) *Initiate the local church partnering with a few indigenous churches* to create a culture of spiritual overflow before expanding it to a large scale to be sure the model is birthed with excellence.

Since each group of Christian leaders within a local body of believers may have different theological perspectives, as well as different organizational structures in place, I would recommend that within this comprehensive model that each component be able to be used by the indigenous church and leaders as “stand-alone” units so leaders can discern which areas have the greatest potential in their context.

### **Postscript**

I have gained more from this experience than I would have ever imagined.

Hearing the powerful stories of so many wonderful young Christian leaders has encouraged my faith. Also, hearing stories of heartache and spiritual burnout, even in young leaders, has increased my desire to partner with others to help these young leaders be spiritually full. I am incredibly grateful to ILI for providing me such a rich community of young Christian leaders so that the research may truly reflect findings that can assist these leaders for the sake of the kingdom and their own Christian journey.

I am thankful for the friendships that have been forged through the sharing of our lives and the life-changing testimonies that remind us God is the same everywhere and that we are strongest as the body of Christ when we are one with Him and one with each other in Christ-like love.

I leave this journey with a strong conviction that suffering and hardship can actually be the very means by which God grows His children when they are fully submitted to Him. Lastly, this project has strong evidence that being spiritually full has less to do with your situation and more to do with absolute dependence on God and with a strong relationship with your family and the body of Christ and God's mandate to love one another and help one another to grow!

## APPENDIX 1 – Informed Consent Letter Templates

*Consent for Participation in a Research Interview*  
*Doctor of Ministry Research – Asbury Theological Seminary*  
*The Spiritual Health of Young International Christian Leaders*

I agree to participate in a research project led by Rev. Carey Akin. The purpose of this document is to specify the terms of my participation in the project through being interviewed.

1. I have been given sufficient information about this research project. The purpose of my participation as an interviewee in this project has been explained to me and is clear.

2. My participation as an interviewee in this project is voluntary. There is no explicit or implicit coercion whatsoever to participate.

3. Participation involves being interviewed by Rev. Carey Akin, who is a doctoral student at Asbury Theological Seminary through the Beeson program. The interview will last approximately 60 minutes. I allow the researcher to take written notes during the interview. I also may allow the recording (by audio) of the interview. It is clear to me that in case I do not want the interview to be taped I am at any point in time fully entitled to withdraw from participation.

4. I have the right not to answer any of the questions. If I feel uncomfortable in any way during the interview session, I have the right to withdraw from answering a particular question or withdraw from the interview.

5. I have been given the explicit guarantees that, if I wish so, the researcher will not identify me by name or function in any reports using information obtained from this interview, and that my confidentiality as a participant in this study will remain secure.

6. I have been given the guarantee that this research project has been reviewed and approved by the IRB (Institutional Review Board) of Asbury Theological Seminary.

7. I have read and understood the points and statements of this form. I have had all my questions answered to my satisfaction, and I voluntarily agree to participate in this study.

8. I have been given a copy of this consent form co-signed by the interviewer.

\_\_\_\_\_

Participant's Signature

\_\_\_\_\_

Date

\_\_\_\_\_

Researcher's Signature

\_\_\_\_\_

Date

For further information, please contact:

Carey Akin

Carey.akin@asburyseminary.edu



**Ranking Question Survey 1 Consent Form**

**Survey Regarding Spiritual Health**

Informed Consent:

Thank you for participating in this survey. Your feedback is important. Please answer the following questions as honestly as possible. These questions are concerning the importance of Spiritual Health as you and you alone view them and not related to how others may view the importance of these practices, or how you might think Christian leaders, in general, might answer these questions.

The purpose of this survey is to help the researcher measure, which Spiritual Health are most beneficial to Christian Leaders’ Spiritual Health. Specific Spiritual Practices are not listed as practices but rather statements are made represent practices. It is important that you understand that ranking these items does not imply that they believe certain practices are more or less important than others, but rather which are most significant to you in terms bringing about spiritual health in your life personally.

I do not anticipate that taking this survey will contain any risk or undue inconvenience to you. Furthermore, your participation is strictly voluntary, and you may withdraw your participation at any time without penalty.

All information collected will be used only for my research and will be kept confidential. There will be no connection to you specifically in the results or in future publication of the results. If you have any questions and wish to contact me for any reason, please ask or contact: Carey Akin, Carey.akin@asburyseminary.edu

By your willingness to take the survey you are verifying that you have read the explanation of this survey as explained in this document and that you agree to participate. You also understand that your participation in this study is strictly voluntary.

_____	_____
Participant’s Signature	Date

_____	_____
Researcher’s Signature	Date

## Ranking Question Survey 2 Consent Form

### Survey Regarding the Significance of Spiritual Practices

Informed Consent:

Thank you for participating in this survey. Your feedback is important. Please answer the following questions as honestly as possible. These questions are concerning the significance of Spiritual Practices as you and you alone view them and not related to how others may view the importance of these practices, or how you might think Christian leaders, in general, might answer these questions.

The purpose of this survey is to help the researcher measure, which Spiritual Practices are most beneficial to Christian Leaders' Spiritual Health. Specific Spiritual Practices are not listed as practices but rather statements are made represent practices. It is important that you understand that ranking these items does not imply that they believe certain practices are more or less important than others, but rather which are most significant to you in terms bringing about spiritual health in your life personally.

I do not anticipate that taking this survey will contain any risk or undue inconvenience to you. Furthermore, your participation is strictly voluntary, and you may withdraw your participation at any time without penalty.

All information collected will be used only for my research and will be kept confidential. There will be no connection to you specifically in the results or in future publication of the results. If you have any questions and wish to contact me for any reason, please ask or contact: Carey Akin,  
Carey.akin@asburyseminary.edu

By your willingness to take the survey you are verifying that you have read the explanation of this survey as explained in this document and that you agree to participate. You also understand that your participation in this study is strictly voluntary.

_____	_____
Participant's Signature	Date
_____	_____
Researcher's Signature	Date

## **APPENDIX 2 – Interview Script & Surveys**

### **Semi-Structured Qualitative Survey Interview Script**

Each participant will be given this briefing before beginning the interview:

Before we begin I want you to know that everything that you share in this interview is confidential and will remain confidential so that the findings of the research will point to the overall findings of the research but in no way will single out any of interviewees out in any way that might make their identity known. I will be taking notes to record specific insights throughout the interview as well as doing a digital recording in order to capture all of the information accurately. The notes both written and digital audio will be secured stored and will be destroyed when the project is complete. If you decide at any time that you do not wish to continue with the interview or you do not wish to answer a particular question then the interview will be stopped at your discretion.

In order for this research to be reliable and valid is very important that the answers you give be honest, candid and answered in the most complete way possible, knowing that all responses will be held with the upmost of confidentiality. If you are comfortable continuing I will share with you specifically about the subject matter of this project.

The questions I am about to ask you will focus on your spiritual life. Specifically they will be geared towards getting a better understanding what causes you to be spiritual full or empty. In other words, what is that causes you personally to be filled to the depleted in ministry so that you are spiritually healthy and not burned so that you are at risk to being unable to effectively continue in ministry.

I now want know want to show you an image to help you understand what I mean. Here is a cup that is empty. Picture yourself as the cup or vessel. God's desire is that you would be filled to overflowing or abundance, in other words more than enough. The water that is poured into you in God's Spirit which is also referred to in scripture as living water. God desires that we would do ministry from an overflow of His Spirit through times of refreshment with Him. Before we begin do you have any questions or comments about this image and do you understand this image as a picture of our spiritual health either good or bad.

If you are still comfortable moving forward I will begin with the interview questions. Remember the image of the cup as you and the water as God's living water poured into you. My first question is this:

As describe it the first question, why would you say that is true?

How would you describe yourself from full to empty? As an example: Are you empty, a few drops, half-full, full, overflowing?

Next, using that same image what would you like your cup to be like?

How, if any would things be different in your life if what you just describe was true?

Next I would like to ask you questions regarding Spiritual emptiness. In others words your thoughts from your own personal experience about the cause of spiritual emptiness.

If you are still comfortable moving forward I will begin with the next questions. Remember the image of you as the cup and the water as God's living water poured into you. My first question is this:

As describe it the first question, why would you say that is true?

How would you describe yourself from full to empty? As an example: Are you empty, a few drops, half-full, full, overflowing?

Why do you believe your cup is at that level?

What challenges or demands leave you feeling most depleted or empty spiritually?

(The rest of the questions regarding spiritual emptiness or depletion will be questions derived from the answer to the previous questions)

How, if any, would things be different in your life if what you just describe was true?

Next, I would like to ask you questions regarding Spiritual emptiness. In others words, your thoughts from your own personal experience about the cause of spiritual emptiness.

Next, I would like to ask you questions regarding Spiritual fullness or Spiritual health. In others words your thoughts from your own personal experience about what causes you to be spiritual healthy.

What do you think causes you to be most spiritually full or healthy? (The rest of the questions regarding spiritual health will be questions derived from the answer to the previous questions to encourage the interviewee to be as specific as possible )

The last thing I want to ask you about is the spiritual practices, resources or relationships that you use personally:

What does your daily, weekly or even annual spiritual practices look like?

What resources do you use to help you grow or stay Spiritually Healthy?

What relationships do you have (friends, spouse, mentor, role model, small group, accountability partner, etc.) that help you to stay spiritually healthy?

(The rest of the questions regarding spiritual health and specific practiced will be questions derived from the answer to the previous questions)

Lastly, before finishing the interview I want to show you one last image. (This is shown last so as not to bias any of the other earlier answers)

Now I want to show you an illustration of God's Spirit flowing into you as a vessel. Notice I have different streams representing different Christian traditions that have lead Christian leaders to be spiritually healthy or mature. I have categorized these streams for simplicity to name each by it's major emphasis:

Focus on Prayer Life (Solitude with God)

Focus on Life of Holiness (Holy Habits)

Focus on the Spirit-led Life (The Power and Presence of God)

Focus on Compassionate Life (Service and Sacrifice)

Focus on Word-Centered Life (Biblical Study & Practices)

Focus on the Sacramental Life (Connecting the Physical to the Spiritual).

(If they have questions about any of these streams I will explain it until they are comfortable with what it means)

Which of these streams have helped you and how?

Which of these streams have helped you the most?

(The rest of the questions regarding Spiritual Streams of Living Water will be questions derived from the answer to the previous questions)

We will finish our interview time by asking each participant if they have any further comments that they would like to make regarding what leads to spiritual fullness

which is poured into them by God or what leads them to be spiritually drained the quickest.

### **Debriefing**

Thank you so much for allowing me to interview you and for your honesty in answering these questions. Once again I want to assure you that your answers will be confidential and this information will only be used in this research project and all transcripts written and digital audio will be destroyed once the project is complete. It is my hope and prayer that the findings from this project may be helpful in assisting International Young Christian Leaders to use the results in forming practices that increase spiritual help. It is also my desire that these findings might assist U.S. partners like Mt. Bethel where I serve to understand better how to come alongside young international Christian leaders in challenging settings to help them to be spiritually healthy so that they might be more effective and have longevity as Christian leaders.

If you are interested in having a copy of this dissertation's findings we will be happy to send you a copy by email.

**Survey #1 – Spiritual Health**

Rank these 12 statements from 1-12 with “1” being the statement which represents you feeling the most empty and depleted and “12” being the statement that represents you feeling the least empty and depleted.

\_\_\_ I am empty or depleted when I when I feel distant and lack intimacy from God.

\_\_\_ I am empty or depleted when I have personal sin in my life.

\_\_\_ I am empty or depleted when I don’t feel the presence of God Spirit working in my life.

\_\_\_ I am empty or depleted when I am not in community serving others.

\_\_\_ I am empty or depleted when I am not spending time in God’s word.

\_\_\_ I am empty or depleted when I am not able to sense God in the world around me.

\_\_\_ I am empty and depleted when the needs I see exceed the churches ability to meet them.

\_\_\_ I am empty and depleted when I am under attack by others.

\_\_\_ I am empty and depleted when I am criticized by others.

\_\_\_ I am empty and depleted when tragedy strikes.

\_\_\_ I am empty and depleted when my prayer seem to go unanswered.

\_\_\_ I am empty and depleted when I am in financial crisis.



**Survey #2 – Spiritual Practices**

Below there are 4 groups of 6 statements. For each group, rank the statements 1-6 with “1” being the most meaningful and important to your spiritual life and “6” being the least meaningful or important to your spiritual life. This ranking does not imply that these statements are not all important to you but is intended to help you see which are most significant and meaningful to you.

**GROUP 1**

- \_\_\_ Spending long hours in prayer and spiritual reflection
- \_\_\_ Asking God in prayer to make you holy and pure
- \_\_\_ Praying until you feel the presence of God fall upon you
- \_\_\_ Experiencing God as you help someone in need on your own time
- \_\_\_ Spending time reading and studying God’s word
- \_\_\_ Experiencing God’s presence in Christian community through communion

**GROUP 2**

- \_\_\_ Meditating on one verse until you sense intimacy with God
- \_\_\_ Spending time in confession until you feel forgiven
- \_\_\_ Worshiping God until you sense you are filled with His Spirit
- \_\_\_ Offering up your possessions to God to benefit someone else
- \_\_\_ Preparing a message from the word of God
- \_\_\_ Looking at God’s creature and seeing His presence in it

GROUP 3

- \_\_\_ Praying several times a day at times you have set aside
- \_\_\_ Asking God to purify you heart and mind
- \_\_\_ Asking God for the gift(s) of the Holy Spirit
- \_\_\_ Using your prayer time to focus on others who are in great need
- \_\_\_ Time spent in small group bible study
- \_\_\_ Seeking God's presence as you go through you daily activities

GROUP 4

- \_\_\_ Praying daily with other believers
- \_\_\_ Meeting with others to hold you accountable to God
- \_\_\_ Experiencing the presence and power of God through worship with others
- \_\_\_ Serving those in desperate need with other believers
- \_\_\_ Committing bible passage to mind and heart
- \_\_\_ Seeing signs of God in all that you do

### Works Cited

- Allen, Roland. *Missionary Methods: St. Paul's or Ours?* N.p.: Lutterworth, 2012. Kindle.
- Barrett, C. K. *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians*. New York: Harper & Row, 1973.  
Logos Library System.
- Beasley-Murray, George Raymond. *John*. Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1999. Logos  
Library System.
- Bonhoeffer, Dietrich. *Discipleship*. Vol. 4. Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2012. Kindle.
- Bultmann, Rudolf. *The Gospel of John. A Commentary*. Philadelphia, PA: Westminster,  
1971. Logos Library System.
- Chan, Francis. *Forgotten God: Reversing Our Tragic Neglect of the Holy Spirit*.  
Colorado Springs, CO: David C. Cook, 2015. Kindle.
- Cochrum, Kenneth Lee. *Close: Leading Well across Distance and Cultures*. North  
Charleston, SC: CreateSpace Independent Platform, 2013. Kindle.
- Cross, John Of the, Bernard Zimmerman, and David Lewis. *The Dark Night of the Soul ;  
and the Living Flame of Love*. London: Fount, 1995. Print.
- Cross, St. John Of the. *The Complete Collected of Works of St. John of the Cross*. Comp.  
Thomas Mauer. N.p.: Christian Today, 2014. Kindle.
- Dodd, C. H. *The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1998.  
Logos Library System.
- Edwards, Gene. *The Secret to the Christian Life*. Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House, 1993.  
Kindle.
- Evans, Craig A., Ginny Evans, and Stanley E. Porter. *Dictionary of New Testament  
Background*. Downer Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2005. Logos Library System.

- Finney, Charles. *The Works of Charles Finney*. Vol. 1. N.p.: n.p., 2012. Kindle.
- Foster, Richard J. *Streams of Living Water: Essential Practices from the Six Great Traditions of Christian Faith*. San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 2001. Kindle.
- Galletta, Anne. *Mastering the Semi-structured Interview and Beyond: From Research Design to Analysis and Publication*. New York: New York UP, 2013. Kindle.
- Gibbons, Dave. *The Monkey and the Fish: Liquid Leadership for a Third-culture Church*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2009. Kindle.
- Great, St. Gregory the. *The Book of Pastoral Rule*. Ed. John Behr. Trans. George E. Demacopoulos. Yonkers, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary, 2011. Kindle.
- Hafemann, Scott J. *Biblical Theology: Retrospect and Prospect*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2002. Kindle.
- Harper, Steve. *Devotional Life in the Wesleyan Tradition*. Nashville, TN: Upper Room, 1995. Print.
- Harris, Murray J. *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians: A Commentary on the Greek Text*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2013. Logos Library System.
- Hawthorne, Gerald F., Ralph P. Martin, and Daniel G. Reid. *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters A Compendium of Contemporary Biblical Scholarship*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2015. Logos Library System.
- The Holy Bible: New International Version*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2005. Print.
- Keener, Craig S. *The IVP Bible Background Commentary: New Testament*. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2014. Logos Library System.
- Lawrence, Brother. *The Practice of the Presence of God*. Comp. Father Joseph De Beaufort. N.p.: RDMc, 2012. Kindle.

- Manning, Brennan. *The Furious Longing of God*. Colorado Springs, CO: David C. Cook, 2009. Kindle.
- Martin, Ralph P. *2 Corinthians*. Waco, TX: Word, 1986. Logos Library System.
- Merton, Thomas. *Spiritual Direction and Meditation*. N.p.: Kiefer, 2013. Kindle.
- . *Thoughts on Solitude*. New York City: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2011. Kindle.
- . *The Wisdom of the Desert*. New York City: New Directions, 1970. Kindle.
- Moltmann, Jürgen. *The Source of Life: The Holy Spirit and the Theology of Life*. London: SCM, 1997. Kindle.
- Murray, Andrew. *7 Classic Missions Texts*. Vol. 3. N.p.: n.p., 2012. Missions Classics Books. Kindle.
- Murray, Andrew. *Absolute Surrender*. 1.1st ed. Grand Rapids, MI: Christian Classics Ethereal Library, 2009. Kindle.
- Nazianzus, Gregory of. *The Orations*. N.p.: Fig, 2013. Kindle.
- North, Wyatt. *Mother Teresa: A Life Inspired*. N.p.: Wyatt North LLC, 2014. Kindle.
- Nouwen, Henri J. M. *In the Name of Jesus: Reflections on Christian Leadership*. New York: Crossroad, 2002. Print.
- Scazzero, Peter. *Emotionally Healthy Spirituality: Unleash a Revolution in Your Life in Christ*. Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2014. Kindle.
- Sensing, Tim. *Qualitative Research: A Multi-methods Approach to Projects for Doctor of Ministry Theses*. Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2011. Kindle.
- Strong, James, and Warren Baker. *Strong's Complete Word Study Concordance*. Chattanooga, TN: AMG, 2004. Print.

- Taylor, James Hudson. *Separation and Service or Thoughts on Numbers VI, VII*. London: Morgan & Scott, 1900. Kindle.
- Thrall, Margaret E. *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on The Second Epistle to the Corinthians*. N.p.: New York: T&T Clark, 2004. Logos Library System.
- Weiss, Robert S. *Learning from Strangers: The Art and Method of Qualitative Interview Studies*. New York: Free, 1995. Kindle.
- Wood, D. R. W., and I. Howard Marshall. *New Bible Dictionary*. Leicester: InterVarsity, 1997. Logos Library System.
- Zodhiates, Spiros, and James Strong. *The Complete Word Study New Testament: King James Version*. Chattanooga: AMG, 2002. Print.

### Works Consulted

- Alexander, T. Desmond., and Brian S. Rosner. *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2000. Logos Library System.
- Augustine. *The Confessions of St. Augustine*. Trans. John K. Ryan. N.p.: Image, 2011. Kindle.
- Barnett, Paul William. *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2008.
- Barry, William A., and William J. Connolly. *The Practice of Spiritual Direction*. New York: HarperOne, 2009. Kindle.
- Bauer, David R., and Robert A. Traina. *Inductive Bible Study: A Comprehensive Guide to the Practice of Hermeneutics*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2014. Print.
- Benedict, and Carolinne White. *The Rule of St Benedict*. London: Penguin, 2008. Kindle.
- Boa, Kenneth. *Conformed to His Image: Biblical and Practical Approaches to Spiritual Formation*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2001. Kindle.
- Bounds, E.M. *E.M. Bounds Essential Prayer Collection: Classic Collection on Prayer*. N.p.: Old LandMark, 2005. Kindle.
- Bridges, Jerry. *The Pursuit of Holiness*. Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 2006. Kindle.
- Buchanan, Mark. *The Rest of God: Restoring Your Soul by Restoring Sabbath*. Nashville, TN: W Pub. Group, 2006. Kindle.
- Bumpus, Mary Rose., and Rebecca Bradburn. Langer. *Supervision of Spiritual Directors: Engaging in Holy Mystery*. Harrisburg, PA: Morehouse Pub., 2005. Kindle.
- Calhoun, Adele Ahlberg. *Spiritual Disciplines Handbook: Practices That Transform Us*. N.p.: IVP, 2005. Kindle.

Collins, Gary R. *Christian Coaching: Helping Others Turn Potential into Reality*.

Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 2009. Kindle.

Earley, Dave, and Rod Dempsey. *Disciple Making Is--: How to Live the Great*

*Commission with Passion and Confidence*. Nashville, TN: B & H Academic,

2013. Kindle.

Edwards, Gene. *The Day I Was Crucified: As Told by Jesus the Christ*. Jacksonville, FL:

SeedSowers, 2010. Kindle.

Evans, Craig A., Ginny Evans, and Stanley E. Porter. *Dictionary of New Testament*

*Background*. Downer Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity, 2005. Logos Library System.

Foster, Richard J. *Celebration of Discipline: The Path to Spiritual Growth*. London:

Hodder, 2008. Kindle.

---. *Money, Sex & Power: The Challenge of the Disciplined Life*. London: Hodder &

Stoughton, 2005. Kindle.

---. *Prayer: Finding the Heart's True Home*. London: Hodder & Stoughton, 2008. Kindle.

Fox, George. *The Journal of George Fox*. N.p.: n.p., 2010. Kindle.

Gallagher, Timothy M. *The Examen Prayer: Ignatian Wisdom for Our Lives Today*. New

York: Crossroad, 2006. Kindle.

Greenleaf, Robert K., and Larry C. Spears. *Servant Leadership: A Journey into the*

*Nature of Legitimate Power and Greatness*. New York: Paulist, 2002. Kindle.

Henderson, D. Michael. *A Model for Making Disciples: John Wesley's Class Meeting*.

Anderson, IN: Francis Asbury, 1997. Kindle.

Holt, Bradley P. *Thirsty for God: A Brief History of Christian Spirituality*. Minneapolis,

MN: Fortress, 2005. Kindle.



- Ingram, Chip. *Living on the Edge: Dare to Experience Tru Spirituality*. Vereeniging: Christian Art, 2012. Kindle.
- Ingram, Chip. *True Spirituality: Becoming a Romans 12 Christian*. New York: Howard, 2013. Kindle.
- Korn, Dan. *Lectio Divina: How to Pray Sacred Scripture*. Missouri: Liguori Publications, 2012. Kindle.
- Kraft, Charles H., Charles Edward Van. Engen, Darrell L. Whiteman, and John Dudley Woodberry. *Paradigm Shifts in Christian Witness: Insights from Anthropology, Communication, and Spiritual Power: Essays in Honor of Charles H. Kraft*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2008. Kindle.
- Law, William. *The Complete Works of William Law*. N.p.: n.p., 2013. Kindle.
- Lawrenz, Mel. *Patterns: Ways to Develop a God-filled Life*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2003. Kindle.
- Lingenfelter, Sherwood G. *Leading Cross-culturally: Covenant Relationships for Effective Christian Leadership*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2009. Kindle.
- Macchia, Stephen A. *Crafting a Rule of Life: An Invitation to the Well-ordered Way*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2012. Kindle.
- Mancini, Will. *Innovating Discipleship: Four Paths to Real Discipleship Results*. Place of Publication Not Identified: CreateSpace Independent, 2013. Kindle.
- Manning, Brennan. *Ruthless Trust: The Ragamuffin's Path to God*. San Francisco: HarperCollins, 2002. Kindle.

- May, Gerald G. *The Dark Night of the Soul: A Psychiatrist Explores the Connection between Darkness and Spiritual Growth*. San Francisco: HarperCollins, 2005. Kindle.
- McCallum, Dennis, and Jessica Lowery. *Organic Disciplemaking: Mentoring Others into Spiritual Maturity and Leadership*. Houston, TX: Touch Publications, 2006. Kindle.
- Mills, Bill, and Craig Parro. *Finishing Well in Life and Ministry: God's Protection from Burnout*. Palos Heights, IL: Leadership Resources International, 2005. Kindle.
- Mulholland, M. Robert, and R. Ruth Barton. *Invitation to a Journey: A Road Map for Spiritual Formation*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2016. Kindle.
- Mulholland, M. Robert. *The Deeper Journey: The Spirituality of Discovering Your True Self*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2016. Kindle.
- Mulholland, M. Robert. *Shaped by the Word: The Power of Scripture in Spiritual Formation*. Nashville, TN: Upper Room, 2000. Kindle.
- Muto, Susan, and Van Kaam Adrian L. *Am I Living a Spiritual Life?: Questions and Answers on Formative Spirituality*. Denville, NJ: Dimension, 1978. Kindle.
- Nouwen, Henri J. M., Michael J. Christensen, and Rebecca Laird. *Spiritual Formation: Following the Movements of the Spirit*. New York, NY: HarperOne, 2015. Kindle.
- Ogden, Greg. *Transforming Discipleship: Making Disciples a Few at a Time*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity 2010. Kindle.
- Ortberg, John, Laurie Pederson, and Judson Poling. *Fully Devoted: Living Each Day in Jesus' Name*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2000. Kindle.

Peterson, Eugene H. *Eat This Book: A Conversation in the Art of Spiritual Reading*.

Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2006. Kindle.

Putman, Jim, Bobby Harrington, and Robert E. Coleman. *DiscipleShift: Five Steps That*

*Help Your Church to Make Disciples Who Make Disciples*. Grand Rapids, MI:

Zondervan, 2013. Kindle.

Rohr, Richard. *The Naked Now: Learning to See as the Mystics See*. New York:

Crossroad, 2015. Kindle.

Ruether, Rosemary Radford. *Gregory of Nazianzus: Rhetor and Philosopher*. Lima, OH:

Academioc Renewal Press, 2003. Kindle.

Smith, David. *Teaching and Christian Practices: Reshaping Faith and Learning*. Grand

Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2011. Kindle.

Sproul, R. C., and Grover Gardner. *The Holiness of God*. Rev. Ed. Carol Stream, IL:

Tyndale House, 2011. Kindle.

Sweet, Leonard I. *So Beautiful: Divine Design for Life and the Church: Missional,*

*Relational, Incarnational*. Colorado Springs, CO: David C. Cook, 2009. Kindle.

Sweet, Leonard I. *Viral: How Social Networking Is Poised to Ignite Revival*. Colorado

Spring, CO: WaterBrook, 2012. Kindle.

Thomas, and Hugh Pope. *On Prayer and the Contemplative Life*. Place of Publication

Not Identified: CreateSpace, 2012. Kindle.

Thompson, Marjorie J. *Soul Feast: An Invitation to the Christian Spiritual Life*.

Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2015. Kindle.

Thrall, Bill, Bruce McNicol, and Ken McElrath. *The Ascent of a Leader: How Ordinary Relationships Develop Extraordinary Character and Influence*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 1999. Kindle.

Tidsworth, Mark, and Ireel Harrison. *Disciple Development Coaching: Christian Formation for the 21st Century*. Macon: Buturing Faith, 2013. Kindle.

Vanier, Jean. *Drawn into the Mystery of Jesus through the Gospel of John*. London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 2004. Kindle.

Webb, Keith E. *The COACH Model for Christian Leaders: Powerful Leadership Skills for Solving Problems, Reaching Goals, and Developing Others*. United States: Active Results LLC, 2012. Kindle.

Whitesel, Bob. *Spiritual Waypoints: Helping Others Navigate the Journey*. Indianapolis, IN: Wesleyan Pub. House, 2010. Kindle.

Willard, Dallas, Bill Thrall, Bruce McNicol, Keith J. Matthews, Bill Hull, Keith Meyer, Peggy Reynoso, Paula Fuller, Bruce A. Demarest, Michael Glerup, and Richard E. Averbeck. *Kingdom Life: A Practical Theology of Discipleship and Spiritual Formation*. CO Springs, CO: Navpress, 2010. Kindle.

Willard, Dallas. *The Spirit of the Disciplines: Understanding How God Changes Lives*. Grand Rapids, MI: Family Christian, 2001. Kindle.

Witherington, Ben. *The Living Word of God: Rethinking the Theology of the Bible*. Waco, TX: Baylor UP, 2009. Kindle.