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TWELVE STEPS IN THE WAY OF CHRIST: A POSTMODERN PATH
FOR SPIRITUAL FORMATION AND LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

A DISSERTATION
SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF THE
SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY
FULLER THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT
OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE
DOCTOR OF MINISTRY

BY

STEVEN H. BRANT
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ABSTRACT

Twelve Steps in the Way of Christ: A Postmodern Path for Spiritual Formation and Leadership Development

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2011

The goal of this paper is to help North American Church leaders stake a claim to postmodern faith by focusing on the celebrity and centrality of Christ and then calling, growing, maturing, and guiding believers into their own God-inspired journeys in the way of Christ. The postmodern Church's decline, leadership crisis, and celebrity culture call forth a renewed emphasis on the Christ story as an ancient faith pilgrimage in order to help people mature and become leaders through the use of a new twelve-step path in the way of Christ. Many churched and unchurched pilgrims find themselves stuck in earlier stages of arrested spiritual development, unable to sustain growth, attain maturity as leaders, and finish their life well—thereby releasing their God-given gifts, passion, and destiny. A more dynamic and visual path of faith pilgrimage is required to capture interest and garner support from postmodern seekers of spirituality.

The Twelve Steps in the Way of Christ draw on ancient pilgrimage and allegoric models, as well as Scripture and the life of Christ, to provide a clear understanding and direction for Christian followers and leaders. Both linear and cyclical, the steps offer distinctive ways to measure spirituality and a useful template for spiritual and leadership development yet allow enough room for one's unique imprint and individual personality, life experience, and journey of faith. Today's church leaders who seek to form faith in tangible, relational, and visual ways that appeal to postmoderns of the next generation will find the Twelve Steps a valuable tool and marker for spiritual assessment. The answer to the North American Church's dilemma lies not in higher forms of worship or more sophisticated programs but in returning to the well-trod paths of becoming a people of pilgrimage and following the steps first made by the Son of God.

Content Reader: Craig Miller, DMin

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INTRODUCTION

The North American Church is facing the biggest shake-up since the Reformation: the end of modernity. Comparing the shifts in religious faith to shifts in the earth's crust or tectonic plate shifts, Leonard Sweet, postmodern expert and author of *Faithquakes*, states with conviction: “‘The Big One’ has already hit. The church is now living in the aftermath of one of the biggest social earthquakes in history—the postmodern reality rift, or the collapse of the Enlightenment Project (The Modern Era) on a world-historical scale.”¹ This new reality comprises nothing short of a whole new way of knowing, seeing, and doing. Eddie Gibbs and Ryan K. Bolger, in their excellent work, *Emerging Churches*, cite the beginnings of the postmodern period: “For many cultural theorists, the modern period ended in the U.S. in the 1950s. In the U.S., the Boomer generation, born between 1946 and 1964, was the last generation formed primarily during the cultural period of modernity.”² In other words, postmodernism is the new cultural reality for the North American Church.

Contemporary mission scholar, Craig Van Gelder, states that the “seemingly rational, objective, and managed world of modernity has undergone deep, significant shifts in recent decades. It is not merely that changes in our world demand new responses from us.

¹ Leonard Sweet, *Faithquakes* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1994), 8.

² Eddie Gibbs and Ryan K. Bolger, *Emerging Churches: Creating Christian Community in Postmodern Cultures* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2005), 21. No one knows exactly when the modern era came to an end, but Sweet dates the beginnings of postmodernism to a series of lectures given between 1947 and 1949 at the Universities of Tübingen and Munich by Monsignor Romano Guardini, entitled “The End of the Modern World.” For more information, see Leonard Sweet, *Post-Modern Pilgrims: First Century Passion for the Twenty-first Century World* (Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 2000), xiii.

The very foundations of society have changed.”³ Two other mission scholars, Michael Frost and Alan Hirsch, describe this tectonic shift as “a shift of epoch proportions.”⁴ Bringing a fresh perspective from their native Australia, Hirsch and Frost concur that this cultural shift is “even more profound and radical than was the shift precipitated by the Renaissance, which took place within the auspices of Christendom.”⁵ Many church scholars, most notably Loren B. Mead in his defining work, *The Once and Future Church*, have documented this “epochal” shift from Christendom—where the Church in the West was center stage—to post-Christendom, where the Church has been pushed to the margins of society.⁶ A new era indeed has dawned for the twenty-first-century Church in North America.

Greg Ogden, former director of the Fuller Theological Seminary Doctor of Ministry Program and longtime pastor, states: “Nearly five hundred years after the Reformation, there are rumblings in the church that appear to be creating a climate for something so powerful that we can call it a New Reformation.”⁷ As the title of his book suggests, this “New Reformation” returns the function of ministry to the whole people of

³ Craig Van Gelder, “Missional Context: Understanding North American Culture,” in *Missional Church: A Vision for the Sending of the Church in North America*, ed. Darrell L. Guder (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1998), 37.

⁴ Michael Frost and Alan Hirsch, *The Shaping of Things to Come: Innovation and Mission for the 21st-Century Church* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2003), 15. See also a cogent summary of modernism versus postmodernism in Appendix A, provided by Dan Kimball, *The Emerging Church: Vintage Christianity for New Generations* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2003), 59-61.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ See Loren B. Mead, *The Once and Future Church: Reinventing the Congregation for a New Mission Frontier* (New York: The Alban Institute, 1991), 8-29.

⁷ Greg Ogden, *Unfinished Business: Returning the Ministry to the People of God*, rev. ed., *The New Reformation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2003), 18; see also Greg Ogden, *The New Reformation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1991).

God and does not reserve it for just a privileged few named “clergy.” Ogden calls this decentralized approach to ministry a movement from “institutional” to “organic” church.⁸

Ogden speaks of a new wind blowing through the North American Church today and clarifies his understanding of “organic” church. He writes: “In the place of ‘clergy’ and ‘laity,’ I propose the use of functional language. Organism implies function, not titles and offices. The hierarchical, top-down orientation of the old, tattered sail of institutionalism will be torn by the new breeze.”⁹ The new styles of “organic” leadership will be more relational, gift-based, and collegial rather than centered on role, office, or job title. For example, newer churches use the terms “lead pastor” and “team ministry” rather than “senior and associate pastors,” which reflects a more hierarchical and vertical view of ministry. Ogden says that the original Reformers never quite finished their job of returning ministry to the people of God, though Martin Luther proclaimed vigorously the priesthood of all believers.¹⁰ Among other things, this new “organic” approach to ministry calls into question the traditional, mainline denominational life, which Ogden asserts is “perhaps fifty years from extinction.”¹¹ He continues, saying, “The basis for denominational life is now in question. It appears that the foundations have already

⁸ Ibid., 94.

⁹ Ibid., 97.

¹⁰ Martin Luther, “The Babylonian Captivity of the Church,” in *Luther’s Works*, vol. 36 of *Word and Sacrament II*, ed. Abdel Ross Wentz (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1959), 282-283.

¹¹ Ogden, *Unfinished Business*, 35.

crumbled.”¹² The current, cultural tectonic shifts consume both society and Church alike; and, both sets of foundations shake to the core long held conventions.

For example, media-driven churches and megachurches dot a landscape previously occupied by high-steeple mainline churches. Media-driven churches often use a moniker of “Church.TV” in their name, video-stream their worship services live via the Internet, generate multi-media resources, and offer blog sites for communal interaction. Life Church.TV in Oklahoma City and North Point Community Church in Alpharetta, Georgia, represent two prime examples of this type of church.¹³ One of America’s largest, fastest growing, and most influential churches, Life Church.TV is pastored by Craig Groeschel and has grown up in my backyard of Edmond, Oklahoma. Groeschel, once a United Methodist youth pastor, preaches via TV to thousands each Sunday on multiple campuses linked by satellite across North America.¹⁴ The recent, special edition of *Outreach Magazine* documents the top one hundred largest and fastest growing churches in America in a survey of eight thousand Protestant churches, and Life Church.TV finishes second with an average attendance of 26,776 on thirteen campuses

¹² Ibid.

¹³ My wife and I attended Life Church in Oklahoma City for about one year, from 2007 to 2008, during my leave of absence from the United Methodist Church. I also attended the Drive Leadership Conference at North Point Community Church in Alpharetta, Georgia, held November 6 to 8, 2006. Pastored by Andy Stanley, this media-driven church with multiple campuses features some of the most cutting-edge media applications I have ever witnessed. This included drama, live-streaming worship video, campus bookstore with sermons on DVD, video hosting of “GroupLink” for get-acquainted sessions, instantaneous downloads, blogs, and other incredible online resources. Of particular interest to the topic at hand, A. Stanley birthed this church through the traditional mainline ministry of his father, Charles Stanley, longtime pastor of First Baptist Church in Atlanta, Georgia.

¹⁴ Life Church.TV, <http://www.lifechurchtv.com> (accessed November 13, 2009).

nationwide.¹⁵ Only Joel Osteen’s Lakewood Church in Houston boasts a larger average worship attendance.¹⁶

Estimates on the size and effectiveness of megachurches vary greatly; but Lyle E. Schaller, the leading demographer of church growth for the past forty years, defines the megachurch as a congregation with an average weekly worship attendance of 1,801 or more.¹⁷ Os Guinness, however, defines megachurches as “churches-for-the-unchurched with congregations over two thousand.”¹⁸ Based on reaching the unchurched, Guinness’ definition is more representative than the merely numerical description of Schaller, though Guinness views megachurches less favorably and sees them as an extension of modernity.¹⁹ On the other hand, Adam Hamilton, pastor of The United Methodist Church of the Resurrection located in Leawood, Kansas—one of the largest and fastest growing mainline churches in the United States—shares his congregation’s story of amazing growth in his book, *Leading Beyond the Walls*. From a church plant in 1990, Church of the Resurrection has grown to an active worship attendance of more than six thousand

¹⁵ Ed Stetzer, “2009 Outreach Magazine/LifeWay Research Special Report,” *Outreach Magazine* (October 2, 2009), <http://67.222.10.11/OutreachMagazine/index.php?news=3158> (accessed October 21, 2009), 1.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ Lyle E. Schaller, *The Very Large Church* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2000), 28.

¹⁸ Os Guinness, *Dining with the Devil: The Megachurch Movement Flirts with Modernity* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1993), 12.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 15.

weekly.²⁰ The entire focus of Hamilton's ministry is to develop a congregation with a heart for the unchurched, as his book's subtitle suggests.

Nevertheless, the emergence and rapid growth of media-driven megachurches can discourage staff and laity alike and deplete the resources of many, more traditional congregations. During the time that I served as an associate minister at Chapel Hill United Methodist Church on the north side of Oklahoma City, the church staff witnessed a mass movement of people to Edmond to worship at one of the four megachurch campuses: two served by Life Church.TV, one by Crossings Community Church, and one by Henderson Hills Baptist Church. Having recently built new campuses in the suburbs, these four megachurches attract scores of people each weekend with their big buildings, ample budgets, exciting worship experiences, and phenomenal programs for all ages. Churches like Chapel Hill, though strong and healthy with a rich tradition of ministry dating back to 1961, found themselves swept up in this "new breeze." Our sails felt a bit tattered as we watched our membership and average worship attendance plummet by nearly 25 percent in the short span of six years. My own senior pastor, Guy Ames, III, a veteran and faithful servant of more than thirty years in the United Methodist Church, lamented one day in his office that "nothing he tried seemed to work anymore."²¹

²⁰ For a more positive and optimistic analysis of megachurch reality and growth, see Adam Hamilton, *Leading Beyond the Walls: Developing Congregations with a Heart for the Unchurched* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2002), 200-201.

²¹ Guy Ames, III, senior pastor of Chapel Hill United Methodist Church, interview by author, Oklahoma City, OK, August 2004.

The denominational mainline churches of North America, however, remain in denial about their precipitous decline, especially among young adults.²² To this day, they are Constantinian in their templates and modern in their programs. Generationally niched, “imbedded in modern culture,”²³ and dominated by clergy, this segment of the Church cares more for its beloved institutions than those for whom Christ died. Even the resilient Southern Baptist Church, a mainstay in Middle America, has experienced a membership drop, both in 1998 and 2007.²⁴ Ed Stetzer of LifeWay Research points out on his April 2008 blog that this discovery “is not a one year blip, this is a 50 year trend.”²⁵ United Methodist Church leadership director Lovett Weems, Jr., confirms Stetzer’s analysis: “Membership decline tends to be a lagging indicator; changes in a denomination are the result of factors that have been present for a while.”²⁶ These analyses confirm the denial of aspects of decline present in most mainline churches in North America today.

For contemporary church leaders to embrace this new postmodern world, leaders must experience a major deconstruction of thought, verbiage, and practice. Instead of expending energy reimagining God, mainline leaders need to reevaluate and reimagine

²² Robert Wuthnow, *After the Baby Boomers: How Twenty- and Thirty-Somethings Are Shaping the Future of American Religion* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2007), 74. Wuthnow states: “In the early 1970s, about one mainline Protestant in six was in his or her twenties, whereas now only one in ten is.”

²³ Gibbs and Bolger, *Emerging Churches*, 45.

²⁴ Ed Stetzer, “A Year is Not a Trend: Decline and the SBC,” Ed Stetzer LifeWay Research Blog, entry posted April 28, 2008, http://blogs.lifeway.com/blog/edstetzer/2008/04/a_year_is_not_a_trend_decline_1.html (accessed December 2, 2009), 1.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Lovett H. Weems Jr., “Learning from Decline of Southern Baptists,” *The United Methodist Reporter* (June 27, 2008), 6B.

what Reggie McNeal calls their “churchianity,”²⁷ substituting church activity for serious spirituality.²⁸ Instead of constantly trying to reinvent church, leaders need to reinvent themselves for a new day of leadership. McNeal says church leaders have been asking the wrong question for five decades: “how to do church better.”²⁹ Instead of reconfiguring tired old models of program-driven ministry, leaders need to reinvest their lives in missional networks and personal relationships.

McNeal draws attention to the painful reality church leaders face due to the postmodern revolution. The feelings of confusion, chaos, and dismay—as my former senior pastor, Ames, has related—are palpable in the North American Church today. Many church leaders seem to have lost their way. McNeal opens his defining work, *The Present Future*, by speaking of the “collapse of the church culture in North America.”³⁰ A former leader in the Southern Baptist tradition for nearly twenty years, McNeal speaks prophetically to the Church stuck in modernity and writes emphatically: “*We have a church in North America that is more secular than the culture.*”³¹ This has touched the Lutheran Church as well, as I recently discovered when I spoke with a local Lutheran pastor who has spent the majority of his ministry in megachurches with two thousand or more people attending worship services, mostly in the Minneapolis area. He agreed

²⁷ Reggie McNeal, *The Present Future: Six Tough Questions for the Church* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2003), 11.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 7.

²⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 1.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 59.

wholeheartedly with McNeal's assessment. When one of his large churches conducted extensive need-based surveys of the congregation and community, the congregation wanted more opportunities for sports and athletic teams, while the community wanted more Bible studies and discipleship opportunities.³² When I was serving at Chapel Hill United Methodist, between 1997 and 2005, our congregational and community surveys yielded similar results.³³

There has been not only a major cultural shift in society and local church experience but also a major shift in the way effective leaders go about their practice of ministry. This is the hardest and steepest part of the un-learning curve for leaders. Effective ministry that carries out the mission of Christ (cf. Matt. 28:18-20; Mark 16:15-18; Luke 24:46-49; John 17:18; 20:21-23; Acts 1:8; 10:42) is no longer about people coming to a church building, to a place and space to have their needs met first, as if stopping to shop at the mall. Missional ministry sends people out on Christ's mission.³⁴ Since missional ministry is all about God's mission, there can be no mission without engagement in cross-cultural ministry, whether those cultures are across the sea or in the North American ocean of postmodern generations. There also can be no cross-cultural ministry without a

³² Wally Swenson, interview by author, Oklahoma City, OK, November 6, 2009.

³³ Chapel Hill United Methodist Church, *ReVision Context 2003 Survey* (Rancho Santa Margarita, CA: Percept Ministries, December 5, 2003). Survey was conducted with the Chapel Hill United Methodist Church located at 2717 West Hefner, Oklahoma City, OK 73120. Community responses focused on a five-mile radius, while congregational responses were based on 185 surveys.

³⁴ According to J. Todd Billings in his article, "What Makes a Church Missional?" *Christianity Today* (March, 2008), 56, the terms "missional ministry" or "missional church" have been around for over ten years and, as of March 2008, had registered more than half a million hits on Google. The Gospel and Our Culture Network (GOCN) has done the most extensive research into the nature of missional churches and has proposed twelve "indicators" of a missional church (see Appendix A).

willingness to sacrifice; deny self; and, experience personal pain, brokenness, and misunderstanding. In reality, this is good news for the North American Church.³⁵

Consequently, in view of the collapsing North American Church culture and the decided bent of the contemporary Church toward secularism—along with the discouragement and disillusionment of current church leaders—this dissertation seeks to challenge and encourage North American pastors and leaders, especially in mainline churches, and help them to stake a claim to postmodern faith by focusing on the celebrity and centrality of Christ and then calling, growing, maturing, and guiding pilgrims into their own God-inspired journeys in the way of Christ. The postmodern North American Church's decline, leadership crisis, and celebrity culture call forth a renewed emphasis on the Christ story as an ancient faith pilgrimage which can be used to help people mature and become leaders through the use of a new twelve-step path in the way of Christ. Jesus Christ, the perfect Son of Man, offers a unique and complete pattern for life, so that leaders and learners alike can understand and engage in these twelve stages or steps of faith maturity and leadership development. The Apostle Paul argues forcefully in several places of the New Testament (Col. 1:28; Gal. 4:19; Rom. 8:29; 2 Cor. 3:18) that his passion, and lifelong goal in God, is to see Christ formed in believers. The hope of this project is the same. Along with reaching out to the unbeliever and unchurched, there can be no greater mission for pastors and leaders than the formation of Christ's character in the people we serve, love, and lead.

³⁵ This argument will be set forth and clearly established in latter portions of this dissertation.

Having spent eighteen years in full-time pastoral service and leadership in the United Methodist Church, I long to see my own denominational leaders embrace a new day of ministry focused on Christ, his character, and his spiritual journey of faith. My own disillusionment, discouragement, and three-year absence from pastoral ministry have challenged me to explore more viable ways to reach generations distanced by current church practices. Programs, insights, events, and numerical indicators alone are not sufficient to elicit changes in behavior and form mature Christian leaders for the twenty-first century. A more dynamic and visual path of faith pilgrimage, which yields clear spiritual markers of maturity, is required to capture interest and garner support from postmodern seekers of spirituality. Before “next generation leaders”³⁶ can be challenged to build their faith on the Word of God, a written source of authority, they must first see faith written larger through life—especially as revealed in Christ.

Chapter 1 will explain the cultural and missional context of the postmodern North American Church. It will focus on the shortcomings of consumerism and today’s celebrity culture, with its concomitant effects on church leaders and contributing factors to the Church’s crisis, most notably revealed in the Protestant mainline churches. The subsequent failure to form faithful followers of Christ will be the subject of Chapter 2, along with discussion of inadequate growth markers presently used to measure spirituality in North American churches. The second part of this dissertation will propose a new path of biblical leadership development based on a return to ancient yet

³⁶ For this phrase, I am indebted to Andy Stanley, *The Next Generation Leader: 5 Essentials for Those Who Will Shape the Future* (Sisters, OR: Multnomah Publishers, 2003). A. Stanley devotes the last section of his book to the discussion of character formation in the leader’s life.

contemporary ways of practicing and forming faith. A review of defining literature and a return to a visual, metaphorical, pilgrim-like approach to faith formation and missional leadership development will be set forth. Also, Catholic and Protestant understandings of the faith journey of Christ will be discussed.

Part Three presents the Twelve Steps in the Way of Christ. Chapters 5 through 7 outline, define, and describe the specific twelve steps or faith stages proposed in three distinct segues: growing in Christ, maturing in Christ, and overcoming in Christ. These twelve steps reflect the faith and life journey first demonstrated by Christ, who became the pattern and model for all subsequent believers. Christ is not only the “firstfruits” from the dead (1 Cor. 15:20, 23) by virtue of his resurrection; he is also the “firstborn over all creation” (Col. 1:15).³⁷ Since these stages emerge directly from the Son of God and the faithful life he lived, they offer his followers a pattern for living their own faith journeys in the most fulfilling yet selfless way possible. As pastors and leaders, the stages also provide a means, process, and way to help challenge and encourage others to be more faithful and fruitful in their commitment to Christ.

³⁷ All Scripture has been taken from *The Holy Bible: New International Version* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1978), unless otherwise noted.

PART ONE

POSTMODERNISM, YOUNG ADULTS, AND THE CHURCH
LEADERSHIP CRISIS

CHAPTER 1

THE CULTURAL AND MISSIONAL CONTEXT

This opening chapter will review briefly the basic tenets of the postmodern revolution and the impact of celebrity culture on the North American Church. The cultural and popular views, behaviors, and preferences of postmoderns regarding the North American Church as well as its lack of relevance to their lives and the subsequent impact on emerging leaders will be addressed. Younger generations are tired of the wars among culture, worship, and church. They reject traditional religion and institutional paradigms in favor of more relational and fluid expressions. The Church is not doing a good job of developing missional leaders who can address these challenges. For such new leaders to emerge, current pastors and church leaders must do a better job of teaching and exemplifying a theology of the biblical “journey” of human transformation based on the life of Christ.

The Postmodern Revolutions

Postmodernism, the new cultural reality of the North American Church, reflects nothing short of a revolution in every major sphere of life. Robert E. Webber presents a

concise summary of the postmodern worldview in his seminal work, *Ancient Future Faith*.¹ He describes this postmodern cultural shift in terms of three distinct “revolutions” in “science, philosophy, and communication theory.”² The postmodern revolutions cut across so many cultural spheres of life—such as work, economics, pleasure, style, art, architecture, dress, entertainment, and religious belief—that it is very difficult to identify the core spheres of influence of the overall movement.³ However, Webber’s three categories introduce the key areas incumbent upon leaders in the North American Church to discover so they can unlock the mysteries of the faith and transmit the gospel winsomely to generations born during postmodernity.

The Scientific Revolution

Two key findings of the new science, otherwise known as quantum physics or quantum mechanics, are the recovery of mystery and the primacy of relationships. These two findings have profound implications for the Church and church leadership in North America. Margaret J. Wheatley says, “Quantum imagery challenges so many of our basic assumptions, including our understanding of relationships, connectedness, prediction, and

¹ Robert E. Webber, *Ancient-Future Faith: Rethinking Evangelicalism for a Postmodern World* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1999), 20-24. See Appendix B for a more complete summation.

² *Ibid.*, 21.

³ For example, there are those categories chosen and noted by Sweet in the table of contents of his first book on postmodernism, *Faithquakes* (earth, mind, home, experience, micro, designer, work, age, color, and mission); see also a particular chapter by Stanley J. Grenz, “The Postmodern Ethos,” in *A Primer on Postmodernism* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1996), 11-38.

control.”⁴ In the ongoing work of quantum physicists, subatomic particles exist only in relationship to one another and not as ‘independent ‘things.’”⁵ The Newtonian understanding of matter as “building blocks” has been discredited completely; and, no longer viewed as the “basic building blocks of matter,”⁶ subatomic particles come and go at what appear to be random intervals, though scientists know better. The ephemeral yet connected nature of these particle interactions at the subatomic level remains a great, unsolved mystery and shakes the foundations of traditional science to the core. Webber states cogently, “The first impact of the new science was to open the door to mystery once again.”⁷

According to Wheatley, the new science represents a significant departure from traditional Newtonian physics with a definitive shift toward quantum physics and chaos theory, which she asserts were bolstered by Albert Einstein’s theory of relativity and Werner Heisenberg’s uncertainty principle.⁸ For nearly five hundred years, since the dawn of the Enlightenment, reason has dominated the cultural landscape. Wheatley, writing as a social scientist, states: “In much of new science, we are challenged by paradoxical concepts—matter that is immaterial, disequilibrium that leads to stability, and now chaos

⁴ Margaret J. Wheatley, *Leadership and the New Science: Discovering Order in a Chaotic World*, 3rd ed. (San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler Publishers, Inc., 2006), 33.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 11.

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ Webber, *Ancient-Future Faith*, 21.

⁸ Wheatley, *Leadership and the New Science*, 36. Heisenberg’s theory states that matter consists of both particle and wave, but both aspects of matter cannot be measured at the same time.

that is ordered.”⁹ Wheatley maintains that the “destructive energy” of chaos “dissolves the past and gives us the gift of a new future. It releases us from the imprisoning patterns of the past by offering us its wild ride into newness. Only chaos creates the abyss in which we can recreate ourselves.”¹⁰ For Wheatley and postmoderns, chaos leads to new creation.

Largely as a result of these groundbreaking findings in the new science, mystery is emerging once again at the forefront of culture, and postmoderns are soul hungry and desperately interested in all forms of spirituality. McNeal beautifully summarizes the spiritual hunger of a postmodern generation seeking earnestly after God. He writes:

Postmoderns are wildly spiritual. It is a spiritualism that reflects a hunger for meaning and connectedness . . . Heaven and hell are here and now in postmodern thought. Life goes on beyond this worldly existence, though what it will be is fairly ill defined. It will be better, and it is a life of connectedness with loved ones. Miracles are expected and common (a direct opposite view of modernity). There are no coincidences.¹¹

McNeal’s words point to a second compelling and germane point that emerges from a study of quantum physics: the central importance of relationships to all of life, as demonstrated in the subatomic world. Wheatley concurs and comments, “In the quantum world, ‘relationship’ is the key determiner of everything.”¹² The subatomic particles, like quarks, exist only in relationship to one another—in other words, in community.¹³ They are not disparate entities unto themselves. McNeal shares Wheatley’s observation and

⁹ Ibid., 118.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ McNeal, *The Present Future*, 57-58.

¹² Wheatley, *Leadership and the New Science*, 11.

¹³ Quarks are elementary particles, such as protons and neutrons.

says, “The quantum universe is not a universe of things but a universe of relationships. The modern mind viewed the universe as a giant machine.”¹⁴ By contrast, the quantum world of the new science offers a world of relationships and connections.

Scientists and church leaders alike agree that the world has shifted from a universe of mechanical physics and machine-like qualities to that of a more natural, organic, and relational order. Bill Easum points out that much of the attitude of the modern church world “stems from the legacy of Frederick Taylor (1856-1915), the father of scientific management, and Henry Ford, the developer of the modern-day assembly line.”¹⁵ According to these pioneers of the modern industrial revolution, efficiency replaced passion, decision making, and creativity. “Ford’s passion for the assembly line took the soul out of work.”¹⁶ This is a telling critique of the modern legacy.

In concert with Easum, Gibbs and Bolger single out “control” as the “primary tool of modernity.”¹⁷ Today’s established generation of leaders, Baby Boomers born between 1946 and 1964, are all too prone to become upset when their generation “can’t count it, control it, or get credit for it.”¹⁸ Contemporary church leaders, especially in mainline churches, fear loss of control more than any other factor. McNeal speaks of the “evil twins

¹⁴ McNeal, *The Present Future*, 57. See also Easum’s excellent summary of “Machine Life Metaphor” vs. “Organic Metaphor” in Appendix B.

¹⁵ Bill Easum, *Leadership on the Other Side: No Rules, Just Clues* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2000), 84.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ Gibbs and Bolger, *Emerging Churches*, 193.

¹⁸ Reggie McNeal, “OD724 Missional Leadership” (lecture, Fuller Theological Seminary, Pasadena, CA, August 2007).

of fear and control that drive most ministry decisions in North America.”¹⁹ Leading church mission scholar George Hunsberger in a recent conversation said his study and research reflect this trend as well. He pointed out that as much as the Natural Church Development’s organic assessment process focuses on church health, founder Christian Schwarz’s classic “barrel” diagram belies a focus on control and quantitative analysis of church growth rather than a measurement based on missional faithfulness and relational quality.²⁰

Moreover, the postmodern world situation argues against this modern form of leadership. After doing his own research, Sweet concludes that postmodern thinkers across the board “are showing how to live and move in an interdependent, relational mind-set, shifting our perspectives from control to flow, from abstract and disembodied reason to embodied and imaginative reason, from representation to participation, from literalism to metaphor, from fixed (or flexible) to fluid.”²¹ Such is the nature of the prevailing postmodern wind currents sweeping across North America and the North American Church.

The Philosophic Revolution

The philosophic revolution, Webber’s second category for describing the postmodern phenomena, points to significant differences with modernity on many fronts as

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ George Hunsberger, phone interview with author, Oklahoma City, OK, December 3, 2009. For a discussion on “The Minimum Factor” and “The Minimum Barrel,” see Christian Schwarz, *Natural Church Development: A Guide to Eight Essential Qualities of Healthy Churches*, 3rd ed. (Carol Stream, IL: Church Smart Resources, 1998), 49-53.

²¹ Sweet, *Post-Modern Pilgrims*, 152.

well;²² however, most instructive for the purposes of leaders in the North American Church are three issues. First, competing narratives of truth from many quarters vie against the traditional understanding of Christ as the way, truth, and life (John 14:6). Second, the cultural and mainline Church's penchant for consumption and success binds faith leaders to a gospel of self-fulfillment and a business philosophy of doing church rather than a counter-cultural movement centered in the radical demands of the kingdom of God. Third, churches stuck in modernity struggle with the great commission to move outward in service to others rather than remaining focused on meeting inward, self-serving needs and desires.

As Webber points out, the postmodern world articulates many “competing narratives, none of which are universal truth” rather than “one, overarching metanarrative that speaks the truth about the world.”²³ Stanley J. Grenz documents the precipitous decline of what he calls the “myths of modernity” and says, “The postmodern outlook entails the end of the appeal to any central legitimizing myth whatsoever.”²⁴ In other words, no single compelling metanarrative or life story applies universally to all people in all places and times. This is the postmodern perspective. Nevertheless, toward the end of the book, Grenz argues forcefully for a return to a grand metanarrative by the Christian community:

²² It is not within the purview of this paper to explore the vast and voluminous writings on the philosophical underpinnings of the postmodern revolution. Other writers, like Sweet and Grenz, have done so for the North American Church community. For more information, see Sweet's books already mentioned—*Faithquakes* and *Post-Modern Pilgrims*—along with Leonard Sweet, *SoulTsunami* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2001) and *AquaChurch 2.0: Piloting Your Church in Today's Fluid Culture* (Colorado Springs, CO: David C. Cook, 2008); see also Grenz, *A Primer on Postmodernism*, which is considered a core text for introducing the specific philosophical aims and constructs of postmodernity.

²³ Webber, *Ancient-Future Faith*, 37.

²⁴ Grenz, *A Primer on Postmodernism*, 45.

We firmly believe that the local narratives of the many human communities do fit together into a single grand narrative, the story of humankind. There “is” a single metanarrative encompassing all peoples and all times. As Christians, we claim to know what that grand narrative is. . . . We boldly proclaim that the focus of this metanarrative is the story of Jesus of Nazareth, who, we testify, is the incarnate Son, the second Person of the triune God.²⁵

It is critical that leaders in the North American Church return to this conviction of a centrally defined God story revealed through the incarnation of Christ.

The grand metanarrative of the North American Church at the present time, however, is consumerism. Consumerism is another way of saying “consumption.” Craig M. Gay defines “consumerism” in this way: “It suggests an inordinate concern—some might even say addiction—with the acquisition, possession and consumption of material goods and services. Even more seriously, consumerism suggests a preoccupation with the immediate gratification of desire.”²⁶ The North American culture of consumption quite literally has consumed the North American Church. McNeal warns leaders and gives an incisive commentary on today’s Church:

Just when the church adopted a business model, the culture went looking for God. Just when the church embraced strategic planning (linear and Newtonian), the universe shifted to preparedness (loopy and quantum). Just when the church began building recreation centers, the culture began a search for sacred space. Church people still think that secularism holds sway and that people outside the church have trouble connecting to God. The problem is that when people come to church, expecting to find God, they often encounter a religious club holding a meeting where God is conspicuously absent.²⁷

²⁵ Ibid., 164.

²⁶ Craig M. Gay, “Sensualists without Heart: Contemporary Consumerism in Light of the Modern Project,” in *The Consuming Passion: Christianity and the Consumer Culture*, ed. Rodney Clapp (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1998), 21.

²⁷ McNeal, *The Present Future*, 59.

McNeal identifies at least three key issues facing the modern North American Church struggling to embrace postmodernity: the adoption of a business model over the kingdom model of Jesus, the elevation of strategic planning as the primary means of gauging the future, and the issue of the Church moving inward in the form of a “religious club” rather than outward in the form of service to others. The business model of church, driven by consumerism and control, does not share the kingdom values of Christ—clearly identified in the Sermon on the Mount, as presented by Matthew 5 through 7 and most notably in Matthew 5:3-16. The Beatitudes, as this passage is commonly called, focus on giving life away and sacrificing for the sake of others—not gaining competitive advantage.

Hunsberger speaks openly of the dangers of consumerism in the North American Church and defines the modern church as “a place [emphasis on place] where certain things happen.”²⁸ Easum and Dave Travis go further and say, “In many cases it’s the property, more than the calling, mission, or opportunity, that dictates the form and amount of ministry a church can provide.”²⁹ In other words, ministry follows the contour of the physical location. In a similar discussion, Dan Kimball likewise contrasts North American Church consumerism with a missional model.³⁰ Kimball shows clearly that consumerism, meeting personal needs first with an inward focus and “me”-centered philosophy, is the driving force behind many of today’s churches. He explains, “Church

²⁸ George Hunsberger, “Missional Vocation: Called and Sent to Represent the Reign of God,” in *Missional Church: A Vision for the Sending of the Church in North America*, ed. Darrell L. Guder (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1998), 83.

²⁹ Bill Easum and Dave Travis, *Beyond the Box: Innovative Churches that Work* (Loveland, CO: Group Publishing, 2003), 13.

³⁰ Kimball, *The Emerging Church*, 95.

is seen as a dispenser of religious goods and services. People come to church to be fed, to have their needs met through quality programs, and to have the professionals teach their children about God.”³¹ Instead of the church being sent, churchgoers come to church for themselves and their families.

Second, the highly touted model of strategic planning works to some degree for churches which are stuck in modernity—that is, they are program-driven—but this model does little to keep pace with the times or prepare leaders for a future time. In a quantum world, leaders are the future because relationships are the medium of the old yet new kingdom message. An emphasis on preparation shifts its focus from projects to people, from strategic planning and program development to personal mentoring or coaching of others. Word-smithing and parsing mission statements for inordinate amounts of time do not reflect a wise use of church resources and only encourages further introspection.

Third, the North American Church cannot afford to remain inwardly focused. In 2007, I attended a Church Discipleship Conference at St. Stephen’s United Methodist Church in Albuquerque, New Mexico, where Brian McLaren was the keynote speaker. In his session on “A Tale of Two Gospels,” McLaren stated that as followers of Christ, “we are to be people taken out of the suck and vortex of self. . . . We have a reduced, flattened, shrink-wrapped Jesus. Even salvation has become a consumer-driven word. This problem cuts across every sector of the Church. The gospel of Christ is not about sin management or

³¹ Ibid.

self-enhancement.”³² When church leaders market Jesus as another product to consumers, they lose all credibility with a curious postmodern world that watches them closely and values authenticity. Sooner or later, in such a commercial environment, consumer-driven churchgoers will move on to something or someone else to soothe their pain and fill the emptiness in their souls; or, finding their faith journey to highly resemble their annual shopping journey, they will drop from the religious “business” altogether.

The Communication Revolution

The last key component of the “postmodern revolution,” as Webber describes it, is the arena of communications, where the postmodern landscape has shifted from conceptual to symbolic, from verbal to visual, from propositional to metaphorical, and from “knowledge as information” to “knowledge as wisdom.”³³ This is a positive development for the North American Church. According to Webber, the shape of communication has “shifted to a more symbolic form. It is knowledge gained through personal participation in a community”³⁴ or what Webber calls “immersed participation.”³⁵ Through the genius of web-based technologies and the emergence of the blogosphere, communication is expanding as rapidly as knowledge once did. Online communities form daily via chat

³² Brian McLaren, “Tale of Two Gospels” (presentation at Christian Discipleship conference, St. Stephen’s United Methodist Church, Albuquerque, NM, February 24, 2007). The phrase “sin management” comes from Dallas Willard, *The Divine Conspiracy: Rediscovering Our Hidden Life in God* (San Francisco: HarperCollins, 1997) 35-42.

³³ Webber, *Ancient-Future Faith*, 37.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 24.

³⁵ *Ibid.*

rooms; and, there is a deepening sense of community among postmoderns, even if that community is largely a virtual one.

Sweet is the recognized authority in the field of postmodern communication and has authored many books on the subject, none more significant than *Post-Modern Pilgrims*. Sweet states, “Postmodern culture is image-driven.”³⁶ Whereas the modern world was based on words and printed texts, images and metaphors have replaced words as the postmodern global currency of communication. Sweet also argues, “Postmodern spirituality is image-based.”³⁷ He refers to this postmodern culture as a “double-ring” culture, in which “metaphors are themselves a double ring.”³⁸ Rather than the traditional either/or, black-and-white categories of modernism, postmodern communication is paradoxical, “both/and” communication,³⁹ as demonstrated earlier by the examples from the fields of chaos theory and quantum physics. A sensate culture necessitates a more sensate gospel, and postmodern seekers of ultimate reality want to experience all of life, especially the mystical and otherworldly. This may account for the incredible popularity

³⁶ Sweet, *Post-Modern Pilgrims*, 86.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 94.

³⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁹ *Ibid.* See also Wheatley, *Leadership and the New Science*, 35-36, where she gives testimony: “We can move away from our need to think in terms of separate, polar opposites. For years I had struggled conceptually with a question I thought important: In organizations, which is the most important influence on behavior—the system or the individual? The quantum world answered that question for me with a resounding ‘Both.’ There are no either/ors. There is no need to decide between two things, pretending they are separate. What is critical is the ‘relationship’ created between two or more elements. Systems influence individuals, and individuals call forth systems. It is the relationship that evokes the present reality.” See also H. Newton Malony, *Living with Paradox: Religious Leadership and the Genius of Double Vision* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1998), 130.

and sales of the *Harry Potter* books and movies.⁴⁰ The *Potter* books topped \$400 million sales worldwide in 2008 and have been translated into sixty-seven languages, since the first *Potter* book was published in 1997.⁴¹ In addition, the *Harry Potter* movie franchise became the highest grossing of all time in September 2007, based on worldwide box office receipts.⁴² Thus Sweet argues, “Metaphors are the medium through which biblical spirituality will be fashioned for this new world.”⁴³ This is precisely why church leaders must return to a historical Christian, ancient-future, mystical/metaphorical understanding of faith as a pilgrimage journey—following in the footsteps of Christ.

The Culture of Celebrity

The postmodern communication revolution has ushered in a whole new way to inspire, escape, guide, and even worship—the culture of celebrity. Carlin Flora wrote a compelling piece for *Psychology Today* entitled “Seeing by Starlight: Celebrity Obsession.” She makes an interesting point when she compares the celebrity-watching obsession to a spiritual form of guidance.⁴⁴ She says that celebrity watching can inspire,

⁴⁰ J. K. Rowling, *Harry Potter Box Set (Books 1-7)* (New York: Arthur A. Levine Books, 2009).

⁴¹ Guy Dammann, “Harry Potter breaks 400m in sales,” *guardian.co.uk* (June 18, 2008), <http://www.guardian.co.uk/books/2008/jun/18/harrypotter.news> (accessed December 9, 2009), 1.

⁴² Warner Bros. Entertainment, “Overview, Core Statistics, Highlights, Events and Brands,” http://www.timewarner.com/corp/businesses/detail/warner_bros/index.html (accessed December 9, 2009), 1-2.

⁴³ Sweet, *Post-Modern Pilgrims*, 92.

⁴⁴ Carlin Flora, “Seeing by Starlight: Celebrity Obsession,” *Psychology Today Magazine* (Jul/Aug 2004), <http://www.psychologytoday.com/articles/index.php?term=20040715-000004&page=2> (accessed March 4, 2009), 2.

motivate, and help people to “muster the will to tackle [their] own problems,”⁴⁵ whether it is Oprah Winfrey overcoming “poverty, sexual abuse and racial discrimination to become the wealthiest woman in media” or Lance Armstrong winning the Tour de France seven times after conquering advanced testicular cancer.⁴⁶ Americans live their lives vicariously through the celebrity stars, seeing their problems through new eyes and lifting their problematic lives to new heights of grandeur and success. It is no wonder fans and followers get pulled so easily into the vortex of celebrity watching and even worship.

One example of worship are groupies who dress like their idols, get makeovers to appear as them, wallpaper their room with the star’s publicity photos, and become hysterically out of control, complete with shouts and tears when being able to see or touch their idol in person. This star worship started with the Beatles and Elvis, moved on to Michael Jackson and Madonna, and now adoring fans crown the current teen sensations: Miley Cyrus, the Jonas Brothers, and Taylor Swift.

Celebrity and fantasy fill the cultural and spiritual void, that ache and emptiness in the human heart. The culture cannot seem to get enough of this “celebrity obsession.” Cooper Lawrence, in her 2009 book, *The Cult of Celebrity*, states: “Celebrity has soaked into every part of our culture. Everywhere you turn you find the faces of celebrities looking at you.”⁴⁷ All one has to do is think of the many applications of Twitter, Facebook, My Space, and personal blogs which enable postmoderns to keep in touch

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Cooper Lawrence, *The Cult of Celebrity: What Our Fascination with the Stars Reveals about Us* (Guilford, CT: The Globe Pequot Press, 2009), 5.

with their favorite celebrities or post their own musings largely for the entertainment of others. Few can resist the allure of these twenty-first-century celebrity “gods and goddesses.”⁴⁸ People worship “not in the house of the Lord, but at the altar of *In Touch Weekly*. For many of us celebrity is, in fact, our Church.”⁴⁹

In their 2007 study of young adults sixteen to twenty-nine years of age, David Kinnaman and Gabe Lyons confirm that for a large majority of North American young people, ages eighteen to twenty-five, wealth and personal fame are top priorities.⁵⁰ From the two thousand Hollywood stars on the sidewalk outside Grauman’s Chinese Theater to the red carpet at the Oscar and Grammy Award ceremonies to the \$40 million, sixty-yard-wide, high-definition screen at the new Texas Stadium (home of the Dallas Cowboys), celebrities in North American culture are idolized and immortalized. Such forms of celebrity entertainment and recognition fill a deep-seated need and hunger in postmoderns for spiritual relationships and meaningful connections, even if they are formed vicariously and virtually through the contemporary media.

If the personalities, myths, and rituals of celebrity culture are taking the place of religious tradition and established church practices, then the great danger to the North American Church culture is that the medium will become the message. Sweet sounded a postmodern prophetic warning in 1994 when he offered this assessment: “TV sculpts our individual and community identities . . . generates the mythology, and gives people the

⁴⁸ Ibid., 4.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ David Kinnaman and Gabe Lyons, *Unchristian: What a New Generation Really Thinks about Christianity . . . And Why It Matters* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2007), 44.

stories and images by which they live, die, and understand their lives. Unfortunately, the medium is not conveying the message, at least not the message of the gospel.”⁵¹ If Sweet is correct and these media-driven assumptions, celebrity values, and consumer benchmarks are wrong, then church leaders face an even more daunting task to recover biblical Christianity.

Grenz also argues convincingly that postmodernism has embedded itself in contemporary North American culture through filmmaking and television.⁵² The film industry is the perfect “art form,” according to Grenz, for the fractured eclecticism of the postmodern reality because it blurs distinctions between “truth” and “fiction,” “reality” and “fantasy.”⁵³ From stunt doubles to filming the end of the story before the beginning, to editing and retaking many scenes, to juxtaposing fictional characters with real people, filmmakers possess complete freedom to weave the tapestry of their plot into a unified whole. Complex and sophisticated, the filmmaking industry represents a technologically driven version of “cut and paste” carried to the extreme.

However, according to Grenz, if filmmaking technology has provided the foundation for postmodern pop culture, television has proved to be “a more efficient vehicle for disseminating the postmodern ethos throughout society.”⁵⁴ Truth and fiction become two sides of the same coin—namely, one cannot tell at times when truth ends and fiction begins. The lead story on the news one night is that the Boston bartender who

⁵¹ Sweet, *Faithquakes*, 110.

⁵² Grenz, *A Primer on Postmodernism*, 31.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 33.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

inspired the hit series, *Cheers*, is being forced to quit his job due to the failing economy.⁵⁵

A confused culture does not know for whom to mourn—the real Boston bartender who lost his job or the iconic entertainment series that ran its course.

In either case, the lines between truth and fiction are certainly blurred. For many people, the canceling of a beloved TV sitcom or drama can elicit real tears and a real sense of loss. As Erica Harrison of *COSMOS Magazine* notes: “As family and community values are crushed by the cult of individualism and an omnipresent media, perhaps fantasy relationships are becoming easier to form than real ones.”⁵⁶ These are “real” people—or at least “real” characters—that have graced, influenced, and formed the lives and values of the North American TV audience community. Kimball agrees, “A major influence on a postmodern person’s ethics and morals is what they learn from the media and what is accepted by their peers.”⁵⁷

It is quite evident that television is the value architect of this generation and the shaping force of character in the North American postmodern culture, including the Church. One Fuller Seminary Doctor of Ministry student stated the problem for church leaders most compellingly: “Hero worship is the idol of the Church, and narcissism is the disease of the

⁵⁵ Steven Rosenberg, “For Boston institution, closing credits roll,” *The Boston Globe*, March 2009, http://www.boston.com/news/local/massachusetts/articles/2009/03/10/for_boston_institution_closing_credits (accessed December 9, 2009).

⁵⁶ Erica Harrison, “Divine Trash: The Psychology of Celebrity Obsession,” *COSMOS Magazine* (February 2006), <http://www.cosmosmagazine.com/node/414> (accessed March 4, 2009), 2.

⁵⁷ Kimball, *The Emerging Church*, 60.

pulpit.”⁵⁸ Rather than the Church in North America influencing the churchgoers to be salt and light in the culture, the culture seems to infect the Church and even the pulpit. Worship professor and theologian Marva J. Dawn agrees, writing: “Celebrities are not heroes; they foster instead narcissistic idealization, spectacle, and passivity.”⁵⁹ In other words, celebrity culture does not promote character development or instill values worthy of imitation or emulation. Not only does this fantasy culture of celebrity instill in church leaders widely accepted values contrary to the message of the gospel, it also leaves postmoderns without clear direction, boundaries, or landmarks by which to guide the course of their lives. As a result, this new postmodern generation possesses a very distinct outlook on the Church.

Postmodern Views of the Church: Outsiders

Postmodern adults, especially young adults, have a very uninspired and negative view of the Church in North America. Scholars like Webber see a “classical/evangelical” response to postmodernism’s view of communication as “education and nurture as character formation.”⁶⁰ However, the consumer-driven, program-driven, and even purpose-driven churches—such as Saddleback Community Church in California—often proclaim a different message. Brad Cecil states the postmodern critique quite emphatically: “North American Christianity has become enamored with the Mazlowian [sic] motivational theory, and many churches think it noble to proclaim, ‘We meet

⁵⁸ Troy Dean, statement made during class discussion in Archibald Hart, “CN705 Minister’s Personal Health” (class discussion, Fuller Theological Seminary, September 22, 2004).

⁵⁹ Marva J. Dawn, *Reaching Out without Dumbing Down: A Theology of Worship for This Urgent Time* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1995), 51.

⁶⁰ Webber, *Ancient-Future Faith*, 37.

people's needs.”⁶¹ All the while, pastors and church leaders market their wares like street vendors at a state fair or carnival and become guilty of what Cecil calls “the commodification of Christ.”⁶²

Brian Sanders, in his important book, *Life After Church: God's Call to Disillusioned Christians*, speaks of the “disturbing defection” taking place in Western churches. This “disturbing defection” is borne out in the grim statistics confronting mainline Christian leaders in North America. Hamilton notes that from 1965 to 2000, mainline denominations are “20 to 50 percent smaller than they were in 1965, a decrease that came while the population in America increased by 69 percent.”⁶³ James A. Harnish adds, “Today less than 50 percent of all church-going Americans worship in mainline churches, while independent Christian congregations are exploding.”⁶⁴ Many more statistics could be cited at this point, but the conclusion would only be this: “For more and more people, church itself is a failed experiment.”⁶⁵

One prominent aspect of this “failed experiment” of the Church is the reality of the church wars and worship wars, which miss the point and discourage postmoderns

⁶¹ Brad Cecil, “I Told You We Weren’t Crazy!” in *Stories of Emergence: Moving from Absolute to Authentic*, ed. Mike Yaconelli (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2003), 178. Maslow is famous for his hierarchy of needs pyramid in Abraham Maslow, “A Theory of Human Motivation,” *Psychology Review* 50 (1943): 370-396.

⁶² Cecil, “I Told You We Weren’t Crazy!” 178.

⁶³ Hamilton, *Leading Beyond the Walls*, 202.

⁶⁴ James A. Harnish, *You Only Have to Die: Leading Your Congregation to New Life* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2004), 191.

⁶⁵ Brian Sanders, *Life After Church: God's Call to Disillusioned Christians* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2007), 17.

from gathering with conventional congregations. Dawn speaks of the church/worship wars in terms of polarizing issues, like “traditional” vs. “contemporary” forms of worship or competing camps divided by age, musical genres, “liturgical styles,” or personal preferences.⁶⁶ A leading voice of church sociology today, Robert Wuthnow says, “One of the saddest developments in recent writing about American religion has been the tendency to view everything as if it were a competitive game, like sports or the business world.”⁶⁷ Wuthnow was asked by a pastor at a clergy gathering about “how to be the church in the community that steals members from other churches instead of losing members.”⁶⁸ Church leaders should be appalled by such selfish, consumerist, and competitive understandings applied to ministry. According to one survey among adults who regularly attend church, conducted in 2000 by George Barna, one half of those surveyed admitted they had not experienced God’s presence in worship in the past year.⁶⁹ Even with a significant margin of error, that represents an astounding number of adults.

The “failed experiment” of the Church in North America shows up also in the attitudes formed by young adults today. A brief survey of comments by some of the young people critical of today’s way of doing church illustrates this. There is a “hostile takeover” of young outsiders who at one time, in 1996, displayed an 85 percent favorable

⁶⁶ Dawn, *Reaching Out without Dumbing Down*, 4. She devotes a small book to the subject in Marva J. Dawn, *How Shall We Worship? Biblical Guidelines for the Worship Wars*, ed. Daniel Taylor (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House, 2003).

⁶⁷ Wuthnow, *After the Baby Boomers*, 87.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

⁶⁹ George Barna, “Worship in the Third Millennium,” in *Experiencing God in Worship* (Loveland, CO: Group Publishing, 2000), 14.

opinion toward Christianity's role in society.⁷⁰ Now, these same young people feel hostile and resentful toward the institutional Church in North America. Kinnaman and Lyons report that these young outsiders (sixteen to twenty-nine years of age) who do not attend church regularly "have lost much of their respect for the Christian faith," that "fewer than one out of ten young adults mention faith as their top priority," and that nearly two of five of these "young outsiders," or roughly 38 percent, have a "bad impression of present-day Christianity."⁷¹ There are many reasons for these tangible feelings. Beyond the cultural shift toward postmodernism already described, these feelings stem from boredom with the same church practices and routines, the lack of hospitality toward outsiders demonstrated by so many churches, and the lack of media connection with an elicited participation by young adults in uninspired worship services.

Sarah Cunningham, a preacher's kid and a twentysomething at the time of her writing of *Dear Church: Letters from a Disillusioned Generation*, says that in her travels across North America, "I half expect twentysomethings to voice some sort of irritation when the word *church* is mentioned."⁷² As discussed earlier, consumer-driven churches can serve as breeding grounds for ugly and unbiblical postures like selfish ambition, "me"-first attitudes, and even unwelcome anger and aggression. Kinnaman and Lyons

⁷⁰ Kinnaman and Lyons, *Unchristian*, 24. This three-year study conducted by Kinnaman (now president of the Barna Research Group) and the Barna Group from 2005 to 2007 reflects thousands of interviews and samplings from different generational groups, including the twenty-four million young adults ages sixteen to twenty-nine, and is one of the most complete studies to date. See also Kinnaman and Lyons, *Unchristian*, 15 and 18.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 23-24.

⁷² Sarah Cunningham, *Dear Church: Letters from a Disillusioned Generation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2006), 23.

shed light on the subject by noting that the “swagger” and “self-importance” of church people in North America repulse those outside the Church.⁷³ Outsiders say that Christians “possess bark—and bite.”⁷⁴ These outsiders feel like churchgoing people possess a level of aggression that “simply matches the oversized opinions and egos of Christians.”⁷⁵ One outsider had this to say about “Christian” people: “Most people I meet assume that *Christian* means very conservative, entrenched in their thinking, antigay, antichoice, angry, violent, illogical, empire builders; they want to convert everyone, and they generally cannot live peacefully with anyone who doesn’t believe what they believe.”⁷⁶

Christians are supposed to be known for such virtues as grace, mercy, forgiveness, generosity, love, and specific fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22-23). However, outsiders observing church behavior from their unique vantage point see a very different picture: one of hypocrisy, excessive judgment, shame-based finger pointing, posing, and posturing. Regardless of one’s political or theological persuasion, these outside observations present a sad commentary on church life in North America today.

There is more from outsiders, though it is painful to hear. Kinnaman and Lyons report that in national surveys, “the three most common perceptions of present-day Christianity are antihomosexual (an image held by 91 percent of young outsiders),

⁷³ Kinnaman and Lyons, *Unchristian*, 26.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

judgmental (87 percent), and hypocritical (85 percent).⁷⁷ These are the “big three” sins of the Church, according to outsiders. Kinnaman and Lyons go on to say that these negative images do not come from the media, as one would expect, but from firsthand experiences with Christian friends (50 percent) and local churches (59 percent).⁷⁸ On average, these young outsider Mosaics and Busters (sixteen to twenty-nine year olds) have at least five Christian friends, according to Kinnaman and Lyons.⁷⁹ They summarize these important findings concerning the views of those outside the Church:

In fact, we discovered that one-fifth of all outsiders, regardless of age, admitted they “have had a bad experience in a church or with a Christian that gave them a negative image of Jesus Christ.” This represents nearly fifty million adult residents of this country—including about nine million young outsiders—who admit they have significant emotional or spiritual baggage from past experiences with so-called Christ followers.⁸⁰

These numbers are staggering, shocking, and saddening. If nearly one in six Americans, and three of ten young outsiders, have had a negative personal experience with Christians, the Church in North America best take note and its leaders should take heed regarding what this reveals about themselves (Acts 20:28). When Paul was writing his final instructions to the Ephesian elders at Miletus, as he was preparing to depart for Rome after three years of effective ministry, his admonition to them was one of “taking heed to themselves”—or guarding their own behavior first—as they sought to influence and oversee the behavior of others entrusted to their care.

⁷⁷ Ibid., 27.

⁷⁸ Ibid., 31.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ Ibid., 31-32.

Church leaders may not welcome the findings of such important postmodern voices as McNeal, Wuthnow, Dawn, and Kinnaman and Lyons; but, they would do well to pay close attention to the results.⁸¹ Clear patterns may be deduced and conclusions drawn from these significant findings. These findings are summarized in Table 1:

Table 1. The North American Church’s Failed Experiment

Patterns Deduced	Conclusions Drawn
Narcissism/Hero Worship in Pulpit	Loss of Leader Humility/Brokenness
Control—Central Tool of Modernism (Fear and Control Drive Ministry Decisions)	Chaos—Central Reality of Postmodernism/Loss of Grace
Consumerism—Driving Force Behind Church	Loss of Presence of God Experience by Worshippers
Competition (Business Model)	Loss of Kingdom Values
Consumption—Focus on Buildings, Budgets, and Programs	Loss of Focus on Building People in Christ’s Way
Club Model of Church	Loss of Awareness of Outsiders
Church Recruitment and Worship Wars	Failed Experiment of Church
Leader Confusion Over Role and Lack of Success with Current Ministry Practices	Loss of Leader Identity Centered in Christ
Church More Secular than Culture	Loss of Focus on Christ and Christ Consciousness
Church Failure to Find Ways to Make Church Better	Loss of Journey/Pilgrimage Motif Not Showing Christ Followers How to Follow Christ

This chart summarizes the results reached thus far regarding the North American Church and its “failed experiment.” The North American Church finds itself mired in the cultural values of modernity: narcissism and celebrity, consumerism, competition, consumption, control, fear, inward “club” focus, leader confusion, secular bent, failure to make church better, frustration over membership recruitment, and worship wars. These

⁸¹ See McNeal, *The Present Future*, 48-68; Wuthnow, *After the Baby Boomers*, 87-88; Dawn, *Reaching Out Without Dumbing Down*, 3-5; Kinnaman and Lyons, *Unchristian*, 24-32.

cultural realities present in the Church result in many significant losses: leaders' humility and identity in Christ; experiences of grace; presence of God in worship; kingdom values; edifying people; awareness of outsiders; a focus on Christ and an intimate spiritual journey with him; and finally, a model, pattern, or pilgrimage steps for disciples of Jesus to follow in order to express faithfulness to the gospel of Christ. In the final analysis, the North American Church's preoccupation with success trumps the biblical call to faithfulness.

Consequently, Kinnaman and Lyons open their book with this: "Christianity has an image problem,"⁸² and "every Christ follower bears some degree of responsibility for the image problem."⁸³ The North American Church responds more to consumer-driven felt needs that titillate desire rather than form faithful, spiritual followers of Christ who embody kingdom values, acknowledge brokenness, and reach out in sacrificial witness and service to others. McNeal brings laser-like clarity to postmoderns' spiritual hunger and expectations:

The postmodern generation seeks a gospel based on the cross and brokenness and not on order and control. . . . Redemption in postmodernism is about loving others and serving others (Hard Rock Café: love all, serve all). Righteousness is not a coming to terms with a perfect God who is concerned about a moral code [read "control"]. It is about getting relationships right with other people. A relationship with God is assumed. . . . The cross is a symbol of brokenness. Brokenness is what unites people in the postmodern world. It is the common ground.⁸⁴

In particular, church leaders need to understand the results and perceptions being produced. Part of the problem has to do with faulty systems of measurement by the Church. This will be the subject of Chapter 2.

⁸² Kinnaman and Lyons, *Unchristian*, 11.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 16.

⁸⁴ McNeal, *The Present Future*, 58.

CHAPTER 2

THE NORTH AMERICAN CHURCH'S FAILURE TO FORM FAITHFUL FOLLOWERS OF CHRIST

The North American Church has failed to form faithful followers of Christ due, in large part, to the prevailing use of inadequate means for measuring spiritual vitality or levels of spirituality. This chapter will identify eight ways the Church in North America typically measures vital spirituality and the consequences which result from such nearsighted and numbers-based benchmarks. In a very real sense, the Church in North America has lost its way, the way of Jesus. Social science models and sociological frameworks have replaced classical biblical pilgrimage or journey motifs for Christian life and leadership development. Programs, budgets, and bottom lines drive results rather than deeper discipleship questions of spiritual life transformation and selfless service. However, hope appears on the horizon for emerging leaders who want to return to the challenge of forming fully devoted followers in the way of Christ.

Eight Ways the North American Church Measures Spirituality

Based on the work of several leading church sociologists and demographers—like Wuthnow, Barna, Kinnaman and Lyons, and Albert L. Winseman—regarding the current

state of the North American Church, eight key points about the ways contemporary church leaders generally measure spirituality can be deduced from their data.¹ The first four involve individual beliefs and practices: the lifestyle perception of “being a good person,” showing unconditional love, honoring tradition versus active faith, and adherence to orthodoxy or right belief versus actual experience. The remaining measurements involve approaches to living collectively as a local church and include institutional strength and support (especially for children and older adults); monitoring attendance numbers at main events such as Sunday school, worship, and small groups; meeting felt needs in a consistent manner; and, visible participation in spiritual practices or disciplines.

A primary way that North American Christians often yet erroneously measure their spirituality is through their lifestyle perception of being a good person. They often repeat the bedrock mantra of the time: “Live a good life, be a good person, and avoid bad habits (formerly called sins).” As I have traveled over the years, and asked fellow travelers in adjacent seats on airplanes what they thought it meant to be a Christian, by far the most frequent response has been this: “Well, I am a good person and I have lived a good life. I haven’t done anything terrible to hurt another human being.” This attitude reflects a certain smugness and complete misunderstanding of a gospel based on the goodness of God and the merits of Christ and not on one’s personal ability to maintain goodness, which the Bible clearly teaches is humanly impossible (cf. Rom. 1:16-17; 3:10-12, 20-24; 6:23; Gal. 3:10-14; Heb. 11:6). After conducting their three-year study

¹ See Chapter 1 of this discussion for first mentions of the work of Wuthnow, Barna, and Kinnaman and Lyons; see also Albert L. Winseman, *Growing An Engaged Church: How to Stop “Doing Church” and Start BEING the Church Again* (New York: Gallup Press, 2007).

from 2005 to 2007 of thousands of Americans, Kinnaman and Lyons encountered the same response. Their respondents were asked this question: “What would you say are the two or three most important priorities for Christians to pursue in terms of their faith?” A significant 37 percent of “Born-again Christians” answered, “Lifestyle—doing the right thing, being good, not sinning.”² This first cultural and current church measurement of spirituality—lifestyle—uncovers an incipient immaturity and a faith which is more works-based than grace-based.

Unfortunately, survey after survey reveals that the lives of believers in the North American Church do not match their beliefs. There are significant lifestyle gaps. Barna and his research group conducted a comprehensive, national survey in 1997, comprising 131 different indicators comparing the “beliefs, attitudes, values, and behaviors of believers with those of nonbelievers.”³ Of forty-two distinct variables or factors surveyed between Christians and non-Christians, only five attributes showed significant variance between the two groups: attitudes of acceptance with respect to pornography, profanity, and abortion; “the need to ‘bend the rules’ to get by in life; and the rejection of absolute moral truths.”⁴

In 2007, ten years after Barna’s comprehensive survey, Kinnaman (now president of the Barna Group) and Lyons published the results of their three-year survey and arrived at similar conclusions. Kinnaman and Lyons comment on these findings: “In virtually every study we conduct, representing thousands of interviews every year, born-

² Kinnaman and Lyons, *Unchristian*, 50.

³ George Barna, *Growing True Disciples: New Strategies for Producing Genuine Followers of Christ* (Colorado Springs: WaterBrook Press, 2001), 75, particularly “Barna Reports for Highly Effective Churches.”

⁴ *Ibid.*, 76.

again Christians fail to display much attitudinal or behavioral evidence of transformed lives.”⁵ Consequently, it is little wonder that those between the ages of sixteen and twenty-nine who do not regularly attend church, or “young outsiders,” view Christians with suspicion and a certain amount of cynicism and disdain. Kinnaman and Lyons describe this fact as “one of the most important findings of our research for this book: among young outsiders, 84 percent say they personally know at least one committed Christian. Yet just 15 percent thought the lifestyles of those Christ followers were significantly different from the norm. This gap speaks volumes.”⁶ In other words, North American Christ followers do not make behavioral or lifestyle choices that reflect any significant difference with the unchurched or non-born-again. Evidently, most North American Christians do not live such “good” lives after all.

A second key measurement of spirituality in North America is the extent to which believers show unconditional love. Many pastors and theologians see the demonstration of unconditional love as the *sine qua non* of the gospel.⁷ In Kinnaman and Lyons’ three-year study, only one of five outsiders viewed churches today as showing unconditional love, regardless of how people look or what they do.⁸ They go on to note that Mosaics (born between 1984 and 2002) and Busters (born between 1965 and 1983), whether churchgoers

⁵ Kinnaman and Lyons, *Unchristian*, 47.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 48.

⁷ See discussions of the *perichoresis* or dance of love of the Trinity by George Cladis, *Leading the Team-Based Church: How Pastors and Church Staffs Can Grow Together into a Powerful Fellowship of Leaders* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1999), 4. See also, Miroslav Volf, *After Our Likeness: The Church as the Image of the Trinity* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1998), 210.

⁸ Kinnaman and Lyons, *Unchristian*, 185.

or outsiders, tend to view such demonstrations of love as “less common” than among older adult responders.⁹ Kinnaman and Lyons summarize by saying, “Outsiders might think of us as friendly or that we have good principles, but we are not known for our love.”¹⁰ This is a far cry from the church at Antioch, where believers first were called “Christians” (Acts 11:22-26), or the Upper Room Discourse of Jesus (cf. John 14-17), or even in the words of this familiar hymn: *They’ll Know We Are Christians by Our Love*.¹¹

A third key spiritual vitality measurement North Americans typically rely on has to do with the honoring of tradition versus the practice of what Kinnaman and Lyons call “active faith.”¹² Tradition shapes values, honors heroes of the past, preserves heritage, and calls persons to remembrance and gratitude for past faithfulness and service to others. However, tradition can be elevated above the role of active faith. This happens by valuing outdated customs for customs’ sake, generational mores, and maintenance and membership over mission and active involvement, as Kennon L. Callahan was one of the first to suggest. He said the Church of North America needed to be a “mission outpost” on the new frontiers of ministry. By mission outpost Callahan implies that the day of the “*churched-culture* local church is over.”¹³

⁹ Ibid., 7 and 185.

¹⁰ Ibid., 185.

¹¹ Peter R. Scholtes, *They’ll Know We Are Christians by Our Love*, FEL S-252, 1968.

¹² Kinnaman and Lyons, *Unchristian*, 122.

¹³ Kennon L. Callahan, *Effective Church Leadership: Building on the Twelve Keys* (New York: Harper and Row, 1990), 22 and 24-25.

Contrary to long-standing traditions that deserve to be honored and perpetuated, stale tradition can turn into boredom, listlessness, and fear of outsiders. In Kinnaman and Lyons' hundreds of interviews, Mosaics and Busters who are outside the church describe Christianity today as "old-fashioned, and seven out of ten believe the faith is out of touch with reality."¹⁴ In fact, two-thirds of them said the faith is "boring" and even "confusing."¹⁵ These are not encouraging marks for North American Christianity. Whether in terms of more adaptive worship styles, overheads versus songbooks, contemporary Bible translations versus the standard King James, or authentic sharing of pain from the pulpit versus "feel good" messages, such survey results show that young outsiders today perceive the Church in North America to be insulated and inbred; slow to respond, adapt, and change; and generally out of touch with the needs and desires of new generations.

Finally, Kinnaman and Lyons drive the point home with a chilling description of outsiders' experience of church. It is the basic Christian hope that newcomers be exposed to the presence and power of God through Christ in church. However, the researchers report, "Despite outsiders' exposure *to* church, few say they have experienced God *through* church. It has no spiritual verve."¹⁶ Today's young people need to witness a church that is full of enthusiasm and vitality and not a dead tradition or inactive faith.

A fourth measure of spiritual vitality in North American Christianity long has been the adherence of believers to orthodoxy or right belief. Adherence and faithfulness to

¹⁴ Kinnaman and Lyons, *Unchristian*, 122.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 122-123.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

orthodox belief requires unquestionable attention and practice from North American Christians who seek to be faithful Christ followers. Darren Marks, assistant professor of theology and Jewish studies at Huron University College at the University of Western Ontario, points out that the “best theology grounds itself in Scripture as the revealed Word of God, not in the religious experiences of ancient people.”¹⁷ Marks argues that “for the past 200 years, many parts of Western Christianity have labored as Schleiermacher’s children.”¹⁸ Friedrich Schleiermacher, a nineteenth-century Enlightenment philosopher and theologian, “built his theological system on the foundation of spiritual experience.”¹⁹ His intentions to be relevant to his age were noble. However, according to Marks, Schleiermacher desired to ground the essence of Christianity in “its spiritual impulse, not its doctrine.”²⁰ For Marks, this focus on internal experience has been with North American Christians ever since. He concludes forcefully, “Many complain that the church has become incapable of cultivating Christian habits in its people. No wonder, when for so many the starting point is not God but spiritual experience.”²¹

However, according to Wuthnow’s landmark study of American young adults, begun in 2003, all age groups currently value personal experience over church doctrine,

¹⁷ Darren C. Marks, “The Mind Under Grace: Why Theology Is an Essential Nutrient for Spiritual Growth,” *Christianity Today*, March 2010, 25.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 27.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 24.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 25.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 27.

with the higher numbers showing up in the younger age groups, as one would expect.²² Interestingly, the notion that orthodoxy has increased among evangelicals and decreased among mainline Protestants is “not supported” by Wuthnow’s research.²³ Furthermore, spiritual commitment does not equate necessarily with right belief (cf. James 2:19).

For these reasons, the challenge of relating to an experience-based culture remains daunting for the North American Church and its leadership. The Gallup Organization has conducted extensive research for many years also on the behaviors, attitudes, and habits of American Christians who practice the faith. In a 2007 survey, only one in seven Americans, or 14 percent, can be described as “fully spiritually committed” Christians.²⁴ The Gallup organization has found that “spiritually committed individuals are doctrinally sound,” yet little distinguishable difference exists in terms of the level of spiritual commitment between those who are “doctrinally sound” and those who are not.²⁵

A fifth component and measurement of spiritual vitality in North America continues to be institutional strength and support, especially among the mainline churches. Wuthnow warns North American leaders of mainline churches and institutions that for too long priority in programming, support, and spiritual vitality measurement have been given to the children and elderly and not to young and single adults. Resources

²² Wuthnow, *After the Baby Boomers*, 133.

²³ Ibid., 110. Winseman, a former United Methodist pastor for fifteen years, challenges the conventional wisdom that the decline of the mainline churches for the past thirty-five years is due to a lack of spiritual depth or uncertainty of beliefs; see Winseman, *Growing an Engaged Church*, 62.

²⁴ Ibid., 59.

²⁵ Ibid., 58.

have been distributed inequitably toward children and the elderly. Hence, as Wuthnow points out, “The proportion of young adults who identify with mainline Protestant denominations is about half the size it was a generation ago.”²⁶ With community-based, nondenominational, association, franchise, and non-traditional churches dotting the landscape of every major city and many rural counties, the historic or downtown “First Churches” may no longer be first in any respect. This “next wave” of young Americans, which makes up half of the U.S. adult population, “is numerically larger than the baby boom generation. Its hundred million members are making the crucial decisions that will affect the rest of their lives and the future of America.”²⁷

The Church in North America no longer can afford to measure its vitality by catering primarily to the needs of older adults, because “they pay the bills.” A whole generation of young people, one hundred million strong, awaits a change of direction and priority from God’s leaders across the Church. The young adults want to be included in the decision making, cultivate respect, receive acknowledgement for their contributions, and garner voice and vote at the table of elders. The older adults and elders, in turn, want the same measure of respect from the young people. In order to move forward, church leaders must lay aside the generational wars and struggles for power, privilege, and position, and find unity of purpose and common ground among all ages and backgrounds in order to pursue effective ministry focused on God’s mission.

²⁶ Wuthnow, *After the Baby Boomers*, 214.

²⁷ Ibid.

A sixth measure of spirituality has to do with monitoring numbers, especially attendance at the weekly “main events” of worship, Sunday School, or small groups. For generations, the North American Church has taken the path of least resistance and measured church vitality by counting people gathered and scattered in worship and mission, Sunday morning classes, mid-week fellowship meetings, ministry volunteering, and even financial contributions. This numerical model of assessment has much more in common with consumer business practices than any kingdom model of spirituality that Jesus may have lauded. Earl Creps writes an impactful chapter on “Assessment: The Discipline of Missional Efficiency” in his celebrated book, *Off-Road Disciplines: Spiritual Adventures of Missional Leaders*.²⁸ Creps states the reality succinctly: “We encourage others to live spiritually while measuring only the practical.”²⁹

Numerical results, based on tangible goals and performance, are much easier to assess than the intangible world of spiritual and life transformation. In the first chapter of this paper, the traps of consumerism, consumption, and competition were discussed at length and sought to remind North American Church leaders that a focus on buildings, budgets, and programs do not take spiritual pilgrims to the next level or even hold the interest of sincere seekers.³⁰ Barna says insightfully, “The axiom, ‘you get what you

²⁸ Earl Creps, *Off-Road Disciplines: Spiritual Adventures of Missional Leaders* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2006).

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 90.

³⁰ From 1991 to 2004, there was “a 92 percent increase in the number of unchurched Americans. . . . in 1991 there were thirty-nine million, compared with seventy-five million in 2004,” according to Jonathan S. Campbell and Jennifer Campbell, *The Way of Jesus: A Journey of Freedom for Pilgrims and Wanderers*, A Leadership Network Publication (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2005), 37.

measure' is certainly true for the Christian body in the U.S. Until we start to think about, pursue, and measure genuine spiritual transformation in individual lives, we will continue to get what we've been getting, as unsatisfying as that is, for years to come."³¹ "What we've been getting," to repeat Barna's words, is a church full of stagnant and declining pilgrim souls, bottle-fed on spiritual milk, unable and untrained to discern God's voice or God's Word for themselves (cf. Heb. 5:11-14).

If the North American Church wishes to move beyond performance, new avenues, models, patterns, and ways of evaluating spiritual growth and maturity must be developed. Spiritual measurement, being essentially qualitative and subjective, differs greatly from quantitative "performance-based" measurement. Notwithstanding, missional church scholars like Creps and McNeal are developing a whole new language of "missional efficiency," beckoning leaders toward a new day in church leadership.³² This "new day" is much more about putting God and people first rather than institutions, quotas, programs, or statistical numbers. McNeal states emphatically that church leaders must move away from the obsession of measuring "how many, how often, how much."³³

In his latest book, McNeal announces the advent of a "missional renaissance" with a new "missional scorecard."³⁴ A missional renaissance may be defined in three

³¹ George Barna, *State of the Church 2005* (Ventura, CA: Barna Group, 2005), 52-53.

³² Creps, *Off-Road Disciplines*, 95-96.

³³ *Ibid.*

³⁴ Reggie McNeal, *Missional Renaissance: Changing the Scorecard for the Church*, A Leadership Network Publication (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2009), xvii. Most of this information came from McNeal, "OD724 Missional Leadership," which formed the basis for *Missional Renaissance*.

dimensions: ministry beyond the walls of the church; ministry based on the gifts and calling of people, rather than placing people strictly according to the needs of the institution; and raising up “apostolic leaders” who are sent rather than “church-based” leaders.³⁵ Apostolic leaders, in turn, share seven characteristics, according to McNeal. They are “spiritual, visionary, kingdom focused, mission minded, entrepreneurial, team based, and risk takers.” By risk takers, McNeal means that leaders “morph to the challenge.”³⁶ In other words, they can plan as they go, adjust, adapt, correct course, maintain flexibility, and respond appropriately to the ever-changing landscape of ministry in North America today. This is a key component of apostolic leadership.

The “missional scorecard” McNeal describes “champions” people³⁷ and adjusts itself to what God is already doing in the missional context (both congregation and community, local and global), rather than measuring results based on predetermined, institutional goals. In one Evangelical Covenant congregation of 1,400 people, trained lay interviewers spent eight months conducting conversations with everyone in the church from those of junior high ages to older adults.³⁸ They asked five key questions:

1) What do you enjoy doing? 2) Where do you see God most at work now (street, workplace, home, life)? 3) What would you like to see God do in the next six to twelve months? How can we help? 4) How would you like to serve other people? How can we help? and 5) How can we pray for you?³⁹

³⁵ McNeal, “OD724 Missional Leadership.”

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Ibid.

In other words, a missional scorecard champions people more than causes, measures success by “how people are doing,”⁴⁰ and seeks to observe what God is already doing. God’s grace precedes the ministry of God’s faithful people.

Creps offers further suggestions for questions to guide a “missional efficiency scorecard” as a way to challenge leaders to “think, pray, and act in a way more noticeably identified with Jesus.”⁴¹ He asks, “How many spiritual conversations have we had this month with unchurched (marginalized) people?” . . . “What proportion of our largest group meeting (and our leadership) is present because of a significant faith experience, rather than by transfer?” . . . “Who is growing spiritually among us, and how do we know this?”⁴² These kinds of questions focus attention and effort away from doing church better to becoming a spiritual presence after the example of Christ in the ministry context.

Identification with Christ and his spiritual journey is the key to the future for the North American Church. Such bold calls for action from leaders like Barna, Creps, and McNeal do not resolve many of the questions and concerns of attempting to measure spirituality; but, they do point the Church of North America in a new direction that inherently moves people in more relational, missional, spiritual, and ultimately transformational ways of walking in faith.

A seventh measure of spiritual vitality among North American congregations continues to be whether or not people’s felt needs are being met in a consistent manner.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Creps, *Off-Road Disciplines*, 95.

⁴² Ibid.

Robert H. Schuller put this concept on the map of the North American Church with his mottoes: “Find a hurt and heal it . . . find a problem and solve it . . . find a need and fill it.”⁴³ This has been the driving force behind the emergence of megachurches for several decades. If relational ministry and personal and community transformation are the new scorecards for missional leaders, then simply offering a cafeteria smorgasbord of ever-expanding programs based on niche-marketing and popular brand-selling of Christian consumer products is not the way to approach people development nor the best way to meet people’s felt needs. Addressing felt needs in this way leads to the danger of imitating culture rather than imitating Christ through what McNeal calls “mass-customization, like the 87,000 combinations possible at Starbucks.”⁴⁴ The needs of consumers are never-ending and therefore never fully satisfied, no matter how many programs and possibilities church leaders offer their constituents. This is particularly true with current media and technology constantly feeding the market frenzy.

Moreover, the needs of nearly half of church-going North American Christians are not being met. Winseman writes: “So it is a great cause for concern that nationally, only 55% of members strongly agree that their spiritual needs are met in their churches. If members’ spiritual needs are not met within their congregations or parishes, they will look elsewhere.”⁴⁵ Postmodern consumers today are not brand loyal, especially when it comes to religious experience. The Gallup Organization has developed congregational engagement questions that form twelve links to four outcomes that are the most relevant

⁴³ Robert H. Schuller, *Turning Hurts into Halos* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1999), 12. As an indication of the popularity of Schuller’s focus and teaching, this is Schuller’s thirty-second book.

⁴⁴ McNeal, “OD724 Missional Leadership.”

⁴⁵ Winseman, *Growing An Engaged Church*, 86.

indicators of a church's spiritual health: life satisfaction, inviting, serving, and giving.⁴⁶ These twelve items are vitally important for one reason, according to Winseman: "More than any other factor, engagement drives a congregation's spiritual health. Only 29% of the members in most U.S. congregations are engaged, which means over two-thirds aren't really sure why they are there—or whether they want to be there at all."⁴⁷ Passion propels effective and fulfilling ministry and mission. Without clearly identified, interests, inclinations, and service opportunities linked to passion, people will not engage soul and body for the sake of others and, certainly today, will not engage out of a sense of duty.

The hard work of church renewal begins at this very juncture: turning unmet needs into met needs through Christ. However, a leader must be careful not to "buy in" to the cultural bondage of "another satisfied customer." Church leaders are not called to "satisfy customers." Congregants are not consumers; they are co-laborers in Christ's vineyard (1 Cor. 3:5-9). They are called and voluntarily come (Matt. 22:14; Rom. 11:29). Those who pastor and lead them are tasked with proclaiming the good news of Jesus Christ, so people might respond in this voluntary fashion (Rom. 10: 12-15).

The goal of church leadership, according to the Apostle Paul (and Jesus as well, in Matthew 5:48), is to present everyone perfect or mature in Christ. Paul writes to the believers at Colossae: "We proclaim him [Christ], admonishing and teaching everyone with all wisdom, so that we may present everyone perfect in Christ. To this end I labor, struggling with all his energy, which so powerfully works in me" (Col. 1:28). Paul even

⁴⁶ Ibid., 80-81.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 110-111.

compares his struggle to mentor others in the way of Christ to that of a mother preparing to give birth to her child, until “Christ is formed in you” (Gal. 4:19). Christlikeness is the goal of every Christ follower, and the scripturally stated priority of every Christian leader is to help bring spiritual pilgrims to their complete maturity in Christ and not simply meet their felt needs (Eph. 4:11-15).

The eighth and final measurement of spiritual vitality typical of North American congregations has to do with spiritual practices and disciplines. From the beginning days of the Church, spiritual practices have formed the bedrock of growing spirituality. From the ancient writers to the twentieth century’s most visible North American Protestant leaders in spiritual formation—namely, Richard Foster and Dallas Willard,⁴⁸ whom McLaren calls “key mentors for the emerging church”⁴⁹—to the twentieth-century giants of Catholic spirituality, Thomas Merton and Henri J. M. Nouwen,⁵⁰ spiritual disciplines continue to be a passion in North American spirituality.

Classically, the disciplines are grouped into two categories: “disciplines of abstinence” and “disciplines of engagement.” Disciplines of abstinence include such practices as “solitude, silence, fasting, frugality, chastity . . . [and] sacrifice,” while disciplines of engagement involve “study, worship, celebration, service, prayer,

⁴⁸ See Richard Foster, *Celebration of Discipline* (New York: Harper & Row, 1978) and Dallas Willard, *The Spirit of the Disciplines: Understanding How God Changes Lives* (San Francisco: Harper, 1988).

⁴⁹ Brian McLaren, interview with Andy Crouch, “The Emergent Mystique,” *Christianity Today*, November 2004, 40.

⁵⁰ See Thomas Merton, *New Seeds of Contemplation*, with introduction by Sue Monk Kidd (1962; repr., New York: New Directions, 2007) and *A Book of Hours*, ed. Kathleen Deignan (Notre Dame, IN: Sorin Books, 2007). Also, see Henri J. M. Nouwen, *Spiritual Direction: Wisdom for the Long Walk of Faith*, ed. estate of Henri J. M. Nouwen, with Michael J. Christensen and Rebecca J. Laird (New York: HarperOne, 2006) and *The Way of the Heart*, Epiphany ed. (New York: First Ballantine Books, 1983).

fellowship, confession, [and] submission.”⁵¹ Even youth-oriented writers and theologians like Tony Jones are exploring what he calls *The Sacred Way: Spiritual Practices for Everyday Life*. Contemporary young people seek to recover ancient practices such as pilgrimage, icons, the daily office, labyrinth, the Stations of the Cross, the centering prayer, and the Jesus prayer,⁵² not to mention the Lord’s Supper (Luke 22:14-20) and weekly observance of Sabbath in worship (Heb. 10:25).

While Jones simply says, “God will personally meet us in the midst of these disciplines,”⁵³ United Methodists know these disciplines as “means of grace.”⁵⁴ The practice of the spiritual disciplines serve many purposes: intimacy with God (James 4:8); guidance through Scripture and prayer (Ps. 119:105; Ps. 32:8; Phil. 4:6-7); encouragement (Isa. 50:4); humility (Ps. 51:17); conviction of wrongdoing, leading to confession and healing (Ps. 32:2-6; James 5:16); cleansing (1 John 1:9); strength and trust in God through solitude (Isa. 30:15), joy and delight to the heart (Jer. 15:16), courage and success in living (Josh. 1:7-8); assurance (1 John 5:14-15); faith through prayer (Jude 20); and refreshment and filling of God’s continual presence through praise and thanksgiving (Eph. 5:18-20). These blessings represent but a small sampling of the sustained, consistent release of benefits through daily devotion and spiritual practice.

⁵¹ Willard, *The Spirit of the Disciplines*, 158.

⁵² Tony Jones, *The Sacred Way: Spiritual Practices for Everyday Life* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2005), 5. Of particular interest is the fact that Jones’ book is published by the Youth Specialties division of Zondervan. In her foreword to this book, Phyllis Tickle calls the book “sturdy.”

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 18.

⁵⁴ John Wesley, “Sermon XVI: The Means of Grace,” in *Wesley’s Doctrinal Standards, Part I: The Sermons, with Introductions, Analysis, and Notes*, ed. N. Burwash (1746; repr., Salem, OH: Schmull Publishing, 1988), 149-162.

Unfortunately, the current research on the spiritual practices of North American Christians yields a less than favorable result. In his important book, *Growing True Disciples*, Barna indicates that a majority of born-again adults are failing to set any kind of goals for their spiritual development. “Only four out of every ten churched believers responded that they had set personal spiritual growth goals for themselves.”⁵⁵ However, without setting positive goals, productive growth will be limited. The 2007 Reveal Survey conducted at Willow Creek Community Church near Chicago makes a similar point.⁵⁶ The survey shows five segments of the congregation in terms of spiritual development: “Exploring Christianity, Growing in Christ, Stalled, Close to Christ, and Christ-Centered.” More than 25 percent of those surveyed at Willow Creek describe themselves as “stalled” or “dissatisfied” in their Christian growth.⁵⁷ With the evidence of these recent surveys, one can see that while the practice of the spiritual disciplines is indispensable to Christian growth, many North American believers are not engaging in such practices, which leaves them stunted and stalled in their faith journeys.

The North American Church’s Necessity of Character Formation

In view of less-than-effective means of measuring spiritual growth and commitment across the North American Church, leaders need a new way, approach, and

⁵⁵ Barna, *Growing True Disciples*, 36. This 2001 survey reflects participants numbering from 417 to 882 born-again American Christians, depending on the questions asked.

⁵⁶ See Greg L. Hawkins, Cally Parkinson and Eric Arnson, *Reveal: Where Are You?* (Barrington, IL: Willow Creek Resources, 2007). The analysis done for *Reveal* included one-on-one interviews along with emailed survey results from nearly five-thousand congregants using fifty-three sets of questions, resulting in 1.4 million “data points” from seven “geographically and culturally diverse churches.”

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 47-48.

pattern to assess spirituality and cast vision for spiritual growth and maturity in Christ followers. Susanne Johnson, Christian Education expert and long-time faculty member at Perkins School of Theology in Dallas, argues persuasively:

Perhaps out of respect for pluralism, Christian religious educators seem to have shied away from contributing a partisan, explicitly biblical or theological understanding of human transformation. Because contemporary psychology purports to be an empirically verifiable science, biblical metaphors for transformation may seem imprecise, parochial, and primitive. Yet in the human-divine encounter with the primal narrative from which these metaphors emerge, we experience time and again an impact that is particular, concrete, radical, and transformative.⁵⁸

In other words, North American Church leaders have been afraid to propose a theology of human transformation based significantly and substantially on biblical texts, Christian tradition, and the life of Christ.

“We seem to over-rely on social science,” observes Johnson. “In its approach to character and virtue, theological ethics has tended to be overlooked as an important resource to Christian education and to theological anthropology.”⁵⁹ She makes a very key point here. While leaning too heavily and/or solely on social science does not yield spiritual transformation, theological ethics or character formation provide an indispensable foundation to the pilgrim path in Christ; and, much in these two areas cross into the realm where social science can prove helpful. Effective Christian leaders in North America today would be wise to employ an “*interdisciplinary* understanding of

⁵⁸ Susanne Johnson, *Christian Spiritual Formation in the Church and Classroom* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1989), 118.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 119.

Christian change and transformation,”⁶⁰ as Johnson suggests, benefitting from the wealth of research but filtering it first through the lens of Scripture and the life of Christ.

In October 2005, as part of an interview with Agnieszka Tennant, Willard and Foster spoke to this issue of character formation and spiritual formation.⁶¹ Willard linked this character formation directly to Christ as well as the Holy Spirit and the Bible as the Word of God. He emphasized the following:

Spiritual formation in a Christian tradition answers a specific human question: *What kind of person am I going to be?* It is the process of establishing the character of Christ in the person. That’s all it is. You are taking on the character of Christ in a process of discipleship to him under the direction of the Holy Spirit and the Word of God.⁶²

Thus, spiritual formation is Christ formation, whereby the believer begins to reflect and act decisively on the basis of the character, actions and words of Christ.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Richard J. Foster and Dallas Willard, interview with Agnieszka Tennant, “The Making of the Christian,” *Christianity Today*, October 2005, 42-44.

⁶² Ibid. The phrase “spiritual formation” and the word “discipleship” are similar in meaning, but they represent different strands of tradition. The spiritual formation language derives more from the classical writers of Christianity in the contemplative/mystical tradition, whereas the discipleship language has been popularized through the more practical application of Christianity in the modern and postmodern Church. Both schools of thought and practice endeavor to follow Christ in every aspect of life. See Thomas à Kempis, *The Imitation of Christ, A Timeless Classic for Contemporary Readers*, trans. William C. Creasy (1989; repr., Notre Dame, IN: Ave Maria Press, 1998). On the discipleship side is one of the renowned church theologians of the twentieth century: John Stott, *The Radical Disciple: Some Neglected Aspects of Our Calling* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2010), who says of *The Imitation of Christ*, “So many hundreds of thousands of editions and translations have been published that, after the Bible, it is probably the world’s bestseller.” Whether or not Stott’s claim is true, the global impact of the idea of imitating and following the life of Christ is manifestly clear. See also Bill Hull, *The Disciple-Making Pastor: Leading Others on the Journey of Faith*, rev. ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2007). For a slightly older and more academic treatment on Jesus’ method of making disciples, see Carl Wilson’s classic, *With Christ in the School of Disciple Building: A Study of Christ’s Method of Building Disciples* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1976). Another standard work in the field of evangelism and discipleship is Robert E. Coleman, *The Master Plan of Evangelism*, 30th Anniversary ed. (1963; repr., Grand Rapids, MI: Fleming H. Revell, 1993).

As a young postmodern writer, Jones states, “A common theme in modern Christianity has been that head knowledge is how one becomes more adept at following Christ: The more you know, the better you’ll do. But in fact, that hasn’t proven to be true.”⁶³ Contemporary North American Church leaders possess more knowledge, information, and insights than most can apply in several lifetimes. This knowledge does not necessarily lead to action or transformation. Paul, writing to his young apprentice, Timothy, says that the person desiring to grow in Christlikeness should “train [oneself] to be godly” (1 Tim. 4: 7-8). Sadly, many North American Christians and leaders are so focused on programming or social science avenues that they are not training themselves in the way of Jesus through the practices of faith and daily spiritual exercise. Sweet and Frank Viola attest in *Jesus Manifesto* that North American Church leaders need to focus less on insight, teaching, and head knowledge and renew the Church’s emphasis on relational behavior in terms of following Jesus, if they are going to turn the tide of postmodernism back toward the organized church.⁶⁴

In a 2007-2008 survey, Brad J. Waggoner, co-founder of Lifeway Research, surveyed 2,500 Protestants in seven domains (learning, obedience, service, evangelism, faith, worship, and relationships) and found that only 17 percent of the year-long study

⁶³ Ibid., 31.

⁶⁴ Leonard Sweet and Frank Viola, “Christianity Is Not What You Think” in *Jesus Manifesto: Restoring the Supremacy and Sovereignty of Jesus Christ*, by Leonard Sweet (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2010), 79-92. In particular, they direct their comments at Willard, who in his magnum opus, *The Divine Conspiracy*, 325, writes: “Thus a part of the call of God to us has always been to *think* And when we come to the task of developing disciples into the fullness of Christ, we must be very clear that one main part, and by far the most fundamental, is *to form the insights and habits of the student’s mind so that it stays directed toward God*. Willard devotes the longest chapter of his work to explaining his “curriculum for Christlikeness,” 311-373.

scored above eight on a hundred-point scale.⁶⁵ “We can say,” says Waggoner, “that 17 percent of our twenty-five-hundred churchgoers received a decent discipleship or spiritual formation score.”⁶⁶ Coupled with the earlier results by the Gallup Organization, showing that only 14 percent of American adults are “fully spiritually committed,” as well as the lifestyle gaps demonstrated by Barna, this score drives home the point that behavior is the real issue in the North American Church.

Hope on the Horizon

A new day is dawning in North American spirituality, and there is hope on the horizon. Facing the limitations of the eight typical ways of measuring or assessing vital spirituality, North American Church leaders seek new paths, directions, and links to personal and congregational transformation. In the United Methodist Church, a recent survey of pastors revealed that “clergy focus most of their leadership development efforts on their own spirituality.”⁶⁷ One of the most promising aspects to this new day has been the leadership of Asbury Seminary, one of the first major seminaries in North America to form a department of spiritual formation and begin to focus students of formal theological education on practical and spiritual application.⁶⁸

⁶⁵ Brad J. Waggoner, *The Shape of Faith to Come: Spiritual Formation and the Future of Discipleship* (Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 2008), 20.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ “Pastors Develop their Leadership through Spiritual Growth, Research Finds,” *Circuit Rider*, Aug/Sept/Oct 2009, 13.

⁶⁸ Steve Harper, “Wesley’s Theology Today,” (lecture, Asbury Theological Seminary, Wilmore, KY, Fall 1988).

When I was a seminary student at Asbury in 1988, I enrolled in a class on “Wesley’s Theology Today” with Steve Harper, a professor in the Spiritual Formation Department. During the semester class, I experienced a major paradigm shift. Good theology is not simply thinking right and believing correctly (orthodoxy); it is learning to live in harmony and integration with God, self, and others (orthopraxy—“right actions,” and what Gregory S. Clapper calls “orthokardia”—“right heart”).⁶⁹ While giving the class a theological title, Harper focused his lectures through the lens of spiritual practice and formation, based on the life of John Wesley. For the first time, I began to understand the difference between theory and practice, intellectual attainment and spiritual growth, mental gymnastics and spiritual formation that affects behaviors unto the pattern of Christ.

In many ways, the postmodern person has this same struggle with the North American Church today. Spiritual pilgrims do not want mental gymnastics and pat answers to life’s complex questions.⁷⁰ They hunger for Christ-centered, Christ-like behavioral examples and role models to follow. In essence, a postmodern pilgrim is one who follows Christ relationally and spiritually, with a focus on right actions and right “heart” over right teaching or beliefs, while understanding the importance of all three aspects. This is the premise for the postmodern path: Jesus and following Jesus as the way

⁶⁹ See Gregory S. Clapper, “From the ‘Works of the Flesh’ to the ‘Fruit of the Spirit’: Conversion and Spiritual Formation in the Wesleyan Tradition,” in *Conversion in the Wesleyan Tradition*, eds. Kenneth J. Collins and John H. Tyson (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2001), 216. The combination of these three “orthos,” according to Clapper, constitutes the “sanctified life.”

⁷⁰ Douglas John Hall, *Lighten Our Darkness: Towards an Indigenous Theology of the Cross*, rev. ed. (Lima, OH: Academic Renewal Press, 2001), 97 and 227, writes: “The very habit of answering has become the downfall of the churches in North America . . . A theology of the cross is not a theology of answers; it is a theology of the question.”

of life at the center (John 14:6). The early Christian faithful were known as followers of the Way (Acts 19:23; 24:14). Fifteen years ago, in 1996, Sweet issued “My Postmodern Confession of Faith: My Magna Carta of Trust” and wrote: “My fundamental identity is as a disciple of *Jesus*—but even more, as a disciple of Jesus who lives *in Christ*, who doesn’t trek through history simply ‘in His steps’ but seeks to travel more deeply in *His Spirit*.”⁷¹

In their significant book, *The Way of Jesus*, Jonathan S. Campbell and Jennifer Campbell summarize this emerging, postmodern concept:

Jesus is our path or roadway *to* life . . . Jesus is also the *Way of* life. Jesus provides a living example of what he expects us to continue to live. Jesus both taught and demonstrated a whole new value system that would need to be exercised in community. Consider the many “one anothers” that we find throughout the New Testament Scriptures . . . Healthy community emerges from our shared life in Jesus. As we journey with Jesus, he is our *Waymaker*, the leader on the road, the guide to the wandering, the teacher of the seekers, and the example to all. Not only has Jesus traveled the road before us; he is our guide and he is our path.⁷²

Before tracing the steps of Jesus in this new pilgrimage journey, the grounds of the new path will be examined through the defining literature of allegorical, spiritual, recovery-based, human development, and current leadership models. That overview will be the subject of Chapter 3.

⁷¹ Leonard Sweet, “My Postmodern Confession of Faith, My Magna Carta of Trust,” *Worship Leader*, March/April 1996, 39.

⁷² J. S. Campbell and J. Campbell, *The Way of Jesus*, 60-61.

PART TWO

FOUNDATIONS FOR THE PROPOSED BIBLICAL LEADERSHIP
DEVELOPMENT PATH

CHAPTER 3

FAITH FORMATION AND CHRISTIAN MATURITY

This chapter reviews some of the defining works of Christian moral and spiritual formation, ancient and contemporary, along with the cutting-edge leadership development work of Robert J. Clinton and Janet Hagberg. These pioneers broke new ground and helped the Church to see faith formation as a pilgrimage, embracing the mysteries of life. Others in the fields of social science and recovery pioneered new understandings of human development and life transformation. As described by these keen observers of the human condition, adults and leaders seem to go through certain phases, as well as seasons and segues or transitions, on their way to maturity and exemplary leadership. Each of these models for faith formation and Christian maturity offer promise and hope for the future of the North American Church. Whether rooted in Church tradition and Scripture, or derived from secular understandings, all of these models offer implicit clues to the new direction God's Spirit may be taking North American Church in the future.

Laying the Groundwork: Narrative Literature as Experience and Symbol for Timeless Truth

Since postmodern culture is decidedly experience-based, and therefore responds well to story, it is important to lay the groundwork of narrative literature as experience

and the role of the timeless classics of literature and faith. Sweet speaks as accurately as anyone on the subject of postmodern spirituality and experience:

In postmodern culture, there is no interest in a “second-hand” God, a God that someone else (church tradition, church professionals, church bureaucracies) defines for us. Each one of us is a Jacob become Israel: a wrestler with God. The encounter, the experience *is* the message.

Postmoderns literally “feel” their way through life. Want to create change? Give postmoderns a new experience they haven’t had before. The experience of a new story, the “feel” of a new consciousness, is the key to personal and social change.¹

As Sweet infers, the current North American generation is captured by images and riveted by media to the power of a single moment in time. Postmoderns yearn for a singular experience that has the ability to change lives, delivering them from the boredom of superficiality and the dread of insignificance. Narrative literature possesses the unique ability to offer relational and experiential understandings of life and capture the beauty of timeless truth. Classic narrative literature, like a majestic redwood forest, sinks deep root systems into the fabric of the human experience and soul and replays the entirety of human emotion, drama, and experience within the snapshot of a particularly timely metaphor, image, symbol, story, character, or remembrance.

Given this propensity for experience-based reality, Millennials² and other postmoderns are primed for a resurgence of narrative literature and theology. Thirty years ago, Stephen Crites spoke of this emerging phenomenon in his enduring essay, “The

¹ Sweet, *Post-Modern Pilgrims*, 43.

² Neil Howe and William Strauss, *Millennials Rising: The Next Great Generation* (New York: Vintage Books, 2000), 36, date the Millennial generation from 1982 to 2003.

Narrative Quality of Experience.”³ He begins by saying, “I want to argue that the formal quality of experience through time is inherently narrative.”⁴ Distinguishing between “sacred story” and “mundane story,” Crites reiterates his central point: “The stories give qualitative substance to the form of experience because it is itself an incipient story.”⁵ Simplifying Crites’ complex argument, Sweet says, “The narrative quality of experience is a deeply religious issue. We organize our experience through narrative. We inhabit a storied reality.”⁶

More than the quality of experience, narrative stories have the power to supply symbolic and substantive theological understandings of reality as opposed to pure process. James W. Fowler contends that the “fundamental or root metaphor for interpreting and managing our experiences” in twentieth-century thought is one of ‘process.’⁷ However, he maintains that what is missing in this process-driven, systematized culture is the emphasis on “substance, stasis, and immutability.”⁸ Narrative, therefore, helps recover the content of time-honored perspective and provides a framework for the shared experiences of life in a dynamic and fluid way. As Crites says, “Such stories, and the symbolic worlds they project, are not like monuments that men behold, but like dwelling-places. People live in them.”⁹

³ Stephen Crites, “The Narrative Quality of Experience,” *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 39, no. 3 (September 1971): 291-311. On page 308, Crites makes reference to the “post-modern” era.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 291.

⁵ Crites, “Narrative Quality,” 297.

⁶ Sweet, *Post-Modern Pilgrims*, 123.

⁷ James W. Fowler, *Becoming Adult, Becoming Christian: Adult Development and Christian Faith* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2000), 65.

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ Crites, “Narrative Quality,” 295.

In addition to capturing the full range of life experience, Crites points out that the preaching of the early Christians to a large extent was a “story-telling mission, offering people a new story, the Christian *kerygma*, to reorient their sense of the meaning both of historical time and their own personal life-time.”¹⁰ Good narrative story and early Christian story reorient a person’s sense of meaning, from the past to the present and even into the future. In this way, narrative stories and their timeless qualities and symbols serve as an effective antidote to the postmodern tendencies to dwell in the moment, to define ultimate reality only in temporal or relative terms. David Tracy goes one step further and argues that the truth found in classic literature is ultimately transformative.¹¹

Better than any other medium, narrative captures the human experience. It shapes understanding of deeper truth through symbol and story and recovers lost content of time-honored perspective. It keeps attention focused on all three time frames: past, present, and future. Much of the defining literature undergirding faith formation and Christian maturity is not only ancient; it is considered classic literature, beginning with Holy Scripture as both literature and the sacred Word of God.¹²

¹⁰ Ibid., 308.

¹¹ David Tracy, *The Analogical Imagination: Christian Theology and the Culture of Pluralism* (New York: Crossroad, 1981), 175, distinguishes among “classic literature,” “period pieces,” and “the religious classic.” A “period piece,” for example, would include the current best-selling novels. Tracy contends that in the realm of “classics,” the true seeker after God finds ultimate truth. Tracy asks, “What does it mean to find a normative element in cultural experience? My thesis is that what we mean in naming certain texts, events, images, rituals, symbols and persons ‘classics’ is that here we recognize nothing less than the disclosure of a reality we cannot but name truth.”

¹² See Leland Ryken, *How to Read the Bible as Literature . . . and Get More Out of It* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1984), 11-32. Ryken is a noted English literature professor at Wheaton College and has argued for the Bible to be read and interpreted as literature as well as sacred text, since at least 1979. See also Leland Ryken, “The Bible: God’s Storybook,” *Christianity Today*, October 5, 1979.

Allegorical Models

The pilgrim journey has been represented through the centuries by four major directions, like the points of a compass or the points of the cross: Journey Upward or Godward (towards God or transformation in Christ), Journey Inward (towards self-awareness, purging of selfish motives and drivers, and leading to beloved-of-God acceptance), Journey Downward (towards self-denial, humiliation, and preparation for humble service), and Journey Outward (towards relationship self-denial, humiliation, and preparation for humble service).¹³ The classic allegorical models comprise two types primarily: Journey Upward or Godward and Journey Downward. John Bunyan's *The Pilgrim's Progress*, Hannah Hurnard's *Hinds' Feet on High Places* by Hannah Hurnard, and Bruce Wilkinson's *The Dream Giver* are all typical of this upward journey genre of literature.¹⁴ The Journey Upward represents the pilgrim's journey toward heaven, reunion with God, the "High Places," in Hurnard's story; "Land of Promise" in Wilkinson's parable; and the "Celestial City," in the case of Bunyan.¹⁵ The Journey Downward represents the

¹³ The Journey Upward has its roots in classic tales of ascent like Dante's third poem, *Purgatory*, in which the pilgrim climbs Mount Purgatory in Dante Alighieri, *The Divine Comedy: Purgatory*, vol. 2, trans. and commentary by Mark Musa (New York: Penguin Press, 1985) and St. John of the Cross, *Ascent of Mount Carmel*, trans. E. Allison Peers (Radford, VA: Wilder, 2008). I am indebted to Janet Hagberg and Robert Guelich, *The Critical Journey: Stages in the Life of Faith*, 2nd ed. (Salem, WI: Sheffield Publishing Co., 2005) and Elizabeth O'Connor, *Journey Inward, Journey Outward* (1968; repr., New York: Harper and Row, 1975), for these concepts. The Downward Journey idea comes from Parker J. Palmer, *Let Your Life Speak: Listening for the Voice of Vocation* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2000), 80, where he gives credit to Annie Dillard, *Teaching A Stone to Talk: Expeditions and Encounters* (1983; repr. New York: Harper Perennial, 2008), 19-20, who urges readers to "ride these monsters deeper down."

¹⁴ See John Bunyan, *The Pilgrim's Progress* (1994; repr., New York: Signet Classic, 2002); Hannah Hurnard, *Hinds' Feet on High Places* (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House, 1976); and Bruce Wilkinson, *The Dream Giver* (Sisters, OR: Multnomah, 2003). Bunyan's classic, like the works of Hurnard and Wilkinson, has elements of the Journeys Downward and Inward. However, their main focus is the upward journey.

¹⁵ Bunyan, *The Pilgrim's Progress*, 43.

pilgrim's journey into suffering for the purpose of self-denial, humiliation, and preparation for humble service as shown in Dante Alighieri's *Divine Comedy*. Allegory may be defined as a special, extended literary device which elicits "the reader's full imaginative response at the realistic or surface level of the narrative."¹⁶

A very beloved allegorical classic is the timeless adventure of young Christian on his way to the Celestial City in *Pilgrim's Progress*. Bunyan tantalizes the reader and fellow pilgrim by using the imagery of a road, entering through what Jesus calls "the narrow gate" (Matt. 7:13) to commence a perilous journey of many trials and temptations. Bunyan, writing from his local context of Bedfordshire, England, around 1678,¹⁷ is a master at exploring and "mapping" this inner world of the pilgrim, employing and "recasting" the allegorical method, "as it had been employed in the medieval Catholic tradition."¹⁸

Like looking through a pair of bifocals, classic allegory like *Pilgrim's Progress* conveys many layers and depths of meaning throughout the story of the pilgrim's heavenward journey.¹⁹ Bunyan's genius derives not from a system above human experience, like the earlier medieval classics, but from the "subterranean regions beneath it."²⁰ Essentially, the whole of *The Pilgrim's Progress* is a dream in which the hero,

¹⁶ Ryken, *How to Read the Bible*, 201.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Roger Lundin, "New Introduction," in *The Pilgrim's Progress*, xiv-xv.

¹⁹ Ryken, *How to Read the Bible*, xv.

²⁰ Lundin, "New Introduction," xv.

Christian, meets his inner states embodied as a series of temptations, demons, and perils.”²¹ In this “subterranean” way, Bunyan captures the journey of every person.²² This universal thematic approach likely explains the enduring quality of this book to all generations.

A second, more contemporary example of allegory as Journey Upward is found in *The Dream Giver*. Though not as well known as Hurnard’s *Hind’s Feet on High Places*, but similar in story, this tale is more accessible to be read and experienced by postmoderns because it is shorter (only about fifty-five pages). *The Dream Giver* involves the central character, Ordinary, “a Nobody who leaves the Land of Familiar to pursue his Big Dream.”²³ Though brief, the Dream Giver story contains all the central elements of an effective and classic allegory: journey, struggle, detours and delays; conflict with friends and adversaries; helpful companions; dark temptations, doubts and fears; personal confrontation with the inner, dark side of self; hopeful vision; and the final completion of the journey by God’s grace, along with arduous, sustained effort.

The second type of allegorical writing conveys primarily the Journey Downward, as in the *Divine Comedy*, the archetype for medieval Catholic spirituality.²⁴ The downward

²¹ Ibid.

²² Ibid., xi-xii. Bunyan, a prominent pastor/evangelist in the mid-1650s and widower with four small children, remarried his second wife, Elizabeth Bunyan, and then shortly thereafter was imprisoned for a period of twelve years. He was persecuted as a “Nonconformist,” meaning that he did not subscribe to the *Thirty-Nine Articles of Religion*, the basis of Anglican faith, nor would he practice Anglican worship forms. Bunyan sounds like a postmodern skeptic and non-traditionalist who has given up on church but not on his faith.

²³ Wilkinson, *The Dream Giver*, 7.

²⁴ A noted contemporary Quaker teacher and activist, Palmer, *Let Your Life Speak*, 69, resonates with Dante. He writes that the “way to God is down”: “When I was finally able to turn around and ask [the true self], ‘What do you want?’ [after a long bout with depression] the answer was clear: I want you to embrace this descent into hell as a journey toward selfhood—and a journey toward God.” Contrary as it

journey has many metaphorical images: darkness, desert, wilderness, “wasteland,” and “slough of despond.”²⁵ No image for downward descent, however, is more famous than Dante’s immortal image of the descent into hell. His work actually consists of three books of poems: *The Inferno*, *Purgatory*, and *Paradise*, and it was completed in 1321.²⁶ Mark Musa, esteemed translator of Dante’s work, indicates early on in his commentary that the poet is “recounting a journey that he (the Pilgrim) has actually experienced, and the feelings evoked by the recollection of this journey are powerful indeed.”²⁷ Like Bunyan, Dante experiences the pain of separation from home, friends, and family; and, it is through this pain and displacement that he pens one of classical literature’s greatest poems. M. Craig Barnes also draws many parallels between the pilgrimage culture of Dante’s time and the “nomadic,” restless, wandering culture of the twenty-first century.²⁸

Dante opens the *Divine Comedy* with these lines: “Midway along the journey of our life, I woke to find myself in a dark wood, for I had wandered off from the straight

appears, the Journey Downward is not pleasant for any pilgrim but often is necessary, illuminating, and ultimately liberating (cf. Rom. 5:3-5; James 1:2-4; 1 Pet. 4:12-17; 5:10).

²⁵ Dry, parched land is the classic image of the desert fathers in the early Christian centuries, as noted by Alister E. McGrath, *Christian Spirituality: An Introduction* (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 1999), 101-103, as well as Hurnard, *Hinds’ Feet*, 67-77. Wilkinson uses the image of “WasteLand” in *The Dream Giver*, 34-41. My personal favorite image is Bunyan’s “slough of despond,” in *The Pilgrim’s Progress*, 16-18.

²⁶ Dante Alighieri, *The Divine Comedy: Inferno Commentary*, vol. 2, trans. and commentary by Mark Musa (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1996), 3-4. Dante wrote this masterpiece in the last year of his life, while in political exile from his “beloved home in Florence.”

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 4.

²⁸ See M. Craig Barnes, *Searching for Home: Spirituality for Restless Souls* (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2003), especially his first four chapters, 9-69.

path.”²⁹ These words are set in the year 1300 (at the cusp of a new millennium), the night before Good Friday. Musa notes that while the poems are best known for the descent to hell, the real purpose of Dante’s pilgrimage work is to describe the journey to heaven:

In the Middle Ages life was often thought of as a journey, a pilgrimage, the goal of which was God and Heaven; and in the first line of the *Commedia* Dante establishes the central motif of his poem—it is the story of man’s journey or pilgrimage to God. That we are meant to think in terms not just of the Pilgrim but of Everyman is indicated by the phrase “the journey of our life.”³⁰

As with Christian’s journey to the Celestial City, Dante’s pilgrimage to God is arduous and physical. The journey to God is not merely one of contemplation, prayer, and introspection, as many frame the journey.³¹ Musa summarizes by saying that the journey of Dante’s Pilgrim will be “a testing ground for the Pilgrim’s spiritual development.”³²

Spiritual Models

The second discipline to be included in this survey of defining literature focuses on spiritual models. They portray the pilgrimage as the Journey Inward or towards self-awareness and purging of selfish motives and drivers, leading to beloved-of-God acceptance (as typified by St. Ignatius’ *Spiritual Exercises*); Journey Downward or towards self-denial, humiliation, and preparation for humble service (as typified by St. John of the Cross’s *Dark Night of the Soul*); and both Journey Inward/Outward (as illustrated by

²⁹ Dante Alighieri, *The Divine Comedy: The Inferno*, vol. 1, trans. and commentary by Mark Musa (New York: Penguin Press, 1984), 67.

³⁰ Alighieri, *Inferno Commentary*, 3.

³¹ See, for example, the Spanish mystic, Teresa of Ávila, who penned her *Interior Castle* as a guide to prayer for fellow Carmelite nuns on their journey to God. Teresa of Ávila, *Interior Castle: The Classic Text with a Spiritual*, trans. E. Allison Peers and comm. by Dennis J. Billy (Notre Dame, IN: Ave Maria Press, 2007).

³² Alighieri, *Inferno Commentary*, 20.

Wesley's *Ordo Salutis* and Hagberg and Robert Guelich's *Critical Journey*).³³ The spiritual models take a different approach than the allegorical ones. Instead of framing life's journey in two-tiered, interpretive, and memorable tales, the spiritual models employ exercises and personal disciplines, metaphors ("dark night") and theological constructs ("way of salvation") to guide the pilgrim along a path of inner contemplation and introspection as well as outward devotion to God through service to others.³⁴

A spiritual guide named St. Ignatius of Loyola, who lived over five centuries ago, gave the Church a "full-orbed vision"³⁵ for the life of discipleship. To understand this vision, one must first comprehend the Contemplative Tradition in general. Foster describes four "strengths" of this tradition: first, "it constantly fans the flames of our 'first love' (Rev. 2:4); second, it "forces us beyond merely a cerebral religion"; third, the Contemplative Tradition makes prayer central to all spiritual practice; and fourth, it "emphasizes the solitariness of our life with God."³⁶ Most representative of the classical Journey Inward, the "full-orbed vision" of St. Ignatius' *Exercises* speaks to many areas: a

³³ See St. Ignatius of Loyola, *The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius: Based on Studies in the Language of the Autograph*, trans. Louis J. Puhl, preface by Avery Dulles (1951; repr., New York: Vintage Spiritual Classics, 2000); St. John of the Cross, *Dark Night of the Soul*, trans. and ed., with an introduction, by E. Allison Peers (1959; repr., New York: Image Books/Doubleday, 2005); John Wesley, "The Scripture Way of Salvation," in *John Wesley*, ed. Albert C. Outler (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980), 271-282; and Hagberg and Guelich, *The Critical Journey*.

³⁴ See Colin W. Williams, *John Wesley's Theology Today* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1988), 39-46. Wesley's *Ordo Salutis*, translated from the Latin, means "Order of Salvation," but among his followers, it was better known as the "way of salvation" due to Wesley's famous sermon, "The Scripture Way of Salvation," noted above.

³⁵ I am indebted for this phrase to David Neff, "Make Disciples, Not Just Converts," *Christianity Today*, October 25, 1999, 29.

³⁶ Richard J. Foster, *Streams of Living Water: Celebrating the Great Traditions of Christian Faith* (New York: HarperCollins, 1998), 51-52.

“school of prayer,” “a manual for retreats,” general guidance, discernment of genuine godly desire from ego-driven desire (also known as true Self versus false self),³⁷ and general principles for living life Godward.³⁸

St. Ignatius of Loyola’s spiritual journey took him from worldly glory (a Spanish nobleman and knight in the king’s service) to humble, monastic life in the service of Christ.³⁹ Seriously wounded in battle, enemy troops carried the young soldier to safety at his home castle in Loyola. Spending a full year in convalescence from nearly losing his leg, St. Ignatius had ample time to decide whether he would choose to follow Christ as his soldier or return to the king’s service. Life-threatening wounds and painful setbacks have a way of getting one’s attention. Hours spent reading a four-volume Spanish translation of the *Life of Christ* helped St. Ignatius make his pivotal, life-altering decision.⁴⁰ Like many postmoderns today, Loyola struggled with discernment. Both life choices he faced were commendable, yet he had to know which choice was God’s highest desire and best-suited purpose. St. Ignatius became a priest, and the world is better for his courageous and humble decision.

The Journey Inward, as introduced and practiced by St. Ignatius, delves into the interior life in terms of selfish desires versus godly desires springing from the heart.

³⁷ For the most complete and excellent treatment of this subject, see Thomas Ryan, *Four Steps to Spiritual Freedom* (New York: Paulist Press, 2003).

³⁸ Avery Dulles, “Preface,” in *The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius: Based on Studies in the Language of the Autograph*, trans. Louis J. Puhl, (1951; repr., New York: Vintage Spiritual Classics, 2000), xxi-xxii. The lasting significance of St. Ignatius’ *Exercises* is demonstrated by the fact that they are still used extensively today throughout both the Catholic and Protestant traditions for training of novitiates in church orders as well as Protestant clergy and laity in need of spiritual reinvigoration.

³⁹ Dulles, “Preface,” *The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius*, xiv.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

Thomas Ryan—a long-time Canadian resident, Catholic priest, and ecumenical leader—offers an extensive, contemporary treatment and daily application of the Ignatian spiritual model, which is first and foremost a model of spiritual discernment.⁴¹ “Discernment” involves many nuances and disciplines for pilgrims intent on knowing and serving God faithfully: distinguishing between good and evil, God’s voice and self talk, God’s voice and other human voices, God’s will and self-will, God’s purposes and self-serving purposes, and God’s best desires for the pilgrim versus the pilgrim’s willingness to settle for less.

Ignatian spirituality teaches the pilgrim to learn how to distinguish and delineate between the “true Self,” the “habitat of God,”⁴² and the unbridled pretentious and fearful “false self.”⁴³ “The cornerstone of Ignatian spirituality is that God can be found in all things. Nothing is insignificant, because at every moment the true Self and the false self are at work.”⁴⁴ The glory of Ignatian spirituality is that God uses all of the pilgrim’s desires and choices—whether good or bad, dysfunctional or healthy, constructive or destructive, wise or unwise, selfish or selfless—to mold and shape the pilgrim into the purposes of God and the character of Christ (Rom. 8:28). This is truly the good news of the gospel.

The epitome of literature and spiritual models that depicts and describes the Journey Downward for the Christian pilgrim is unquestionably *Dark Night of the Soul* by

⁴¹ Thomas Ryan, *Four Steps to Spiritual Freedom* (New York: Paulist Press, 2003). St. Ignatius introduced his highly acclaimed “Discernment of Spirits,” which Dulles, “Preface,” xv, calls the “very core of *The Spiritual Exercises*,” in St. Ignatius’ master work composed from 1522 to 1545.

⁴² Ryan, *Four Steps to Spiritual Freedom*, 60.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 73.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 111. For another excellent, contemporary treatment of the “false self,” see M. Robert Mulholland Jr., *The Deeper Journey: The Spirituality of Discovering Your True Self* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2006), 46-67.

contemplative mystic St. John of the Cross.⁴⁵ The downward journey consists of life spinning or spiraling out of control in a disturbing way: whether by circumstances, personal choice, natural disaster, life-threatening disease, sudden loss, death of a family member, job loss, reversal of fortune, unexplained suffering, separation or divorce, or any of a host of daunting situations resulting in the loss of hope, especially hope in God. Bruce Demarest, professor of Christian Formation at Denver Seminary, gives an excellent definition of the “dark night” experience, based on Scripture and tradition: “The dark night of the soul is a painful trial in which we no longer experience spiritual comforts but rather the painful sense of God’s absence.”⁴⁶

In such a confused and languishing state of mind, the pilgrim has a difficult time separating perception from reality, and the self-talk tends to become wholly introspective, depressed, and even repressive. St. Ignatius calls these dark times, “desolations,”⁴⁷ and describes them as “darkness of soul, turmoil of spirit, inclination to what is low and earthly, restlessness from many disturbances and temptations which lead to want of faith, want of hope, want of love.”⁴⁸ Rosamund Stone Zander and Benjamin Zander describe the conversation of this precarious position in life as “the downward spiral”—self-condemning,

⁴⁵ St. John of the Cross, *Dark Night of the Soul*.

⁴⁶ Bruce Demarest, *Seasons of the Soul: Stages of Spiritual Development* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2009), 94. The pilgrim thus “perceives” that God is absent or “unfair” . . . “silent” . . . and “hidden,” to use Philip Yancey’s timely explanation. See Philip Yancey, *Disappointment with God: Three Questions No One Asks Aloud* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1988), 36.

⁴⁷ Ignatius of Loyola, *Spiritual Exercises*, 116 (rule 317.4).

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 116-117. These are rules 317-322.

self-negating, faith doubting, possibility excluding language.⁴⁹ Stone Zander and Zander write that this type of talk is fear-based and “wholly reactive to circumstances . . . focusing on the abstraction of scarcity.”⁵⁰ Feelings of hopelessness and abandonment form the path of the Journey Downward.

In classic mystical paradox, the downward journey is indeed a journey upward toward God, though it appears to move in the opposite direction from God.⁵¹ Following the mystical tradition of pilgrimage ascent to union with God, St. John of the Cross describes the journey in terms of several “purgations” or cleansings of the soul by God, interspersed with times of rest and release.⁵² Similar to St. Ignatius, St. John of the Cross maintains that it is the vision of God in Christ, and the working of God’s Spirit, which propels the pilgrim forward in the journey toward ultimate perfection. Demarest summarizes and explains the benefits of this “dark night of the soul” experience:

Through the dark night, then, God changes the habits of our lives, lovingly weaning us from attachment to inordinate pleasures, possessions and puffed-up egos. He cuts away at our spiritual greed in which we seek pleasurable comforts more than God himself . . . Through the distress of the dark night God detaches soul and spirit from these lesser loyalties and nudges us toward maturity in Christ.⁵³

⁴⁹ Rosamund Stone Zander and Benjamin Zander, *The Art of Possibility* (New York: Penguin Books, 2002), 108-111. An organization or local church can enter this downward spiral talk as readily as the individual, causing much angst, confusion, and general devastation to the well-being and health of the group.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 108.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 13. As E. Allison Peers points out in his introduction to the *Dark Night*, St. John of the Cross is continuing the work begun in his *Ascent of Mount Carmel*.

⁵² Demarest, *Seasons of the Soul*, 166, offers a drawing to explain the upward yet downward path of St. John’s difficult struggle.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 95.

The last two spiritual models to be presented in this chapter are those of Wesley and Hagberg. These two models represent both the Journey Inward and the Journey Outward. Wesley, the great Anglican reformer of the eighteenth century and founder of the Methodist movement, developed a very clear “way of salvation” which he called the *Ordo Salutis*.⁵⁴ For Wesley, the way of salvation had five main parts: “preventing grace” (now called prevenient, the grace that goes before; cf. Rom. 1:1-3:20), “converting or convincing” grace (now called justifying; cf. Rom. 3:21-7:25), “perfecting or sanctifying grace” (cf. Rom. 8:1-12:21), and “glorifying grace” (cf. Rom. 13:11-14, 14:7-12).⁵⁵ These are the components of Wesley’s Journey Inward.

As faith proceeds from “grace to grace,”⁵⁶ faithful pilgrims indeed work out their salvation with fear and trembling yet with the hope of attaining wholeness or “perfection in love” in this life.⁵⁷ Wesley’s model demonstrates again the progressive nature of the faith in the unfolding drama of the ever changing spiritual journey. Wesley’s conviction of a faith formed through spiritual journey is captured by one of his most famous quotations: “I am a spirit come from God, and returning to God . . . I want to know one thing, the way to heaven: how to land safe on that happy shore.”⁵⁸

⁵⁴ Williams, *John Wesley’s Theology Today*, 40.

⁵⁵ Wesley, “The Scripture Way of Salvation,” 271-282 and Steve Harper, *John Wesley’s Message for Today* (Grand Rapids, MI: Francis Asbury Press, 1983). I am indebted to former senior pastor Ames, interview by author, for this connection of Wesley’s order of salvation to the Book of Romans.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

⁵⁷ Wesley, “The Scripture Way,” 281-282. See also John Wesley, “Thoughts on Christian Perfection,” in *John Wesley*, ed. Albert C. Outler (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980), 283-298.

⁵⁸ John Wesley, *Wesley’s Doctrinal Standards, Part I: The Sermons, with Introductions, Analysis, and Notes*, ed. N. Burwash (1746; repr., Salem, OH: Schmull Publishing, 1988), xx.

Wesley's way of salvation is an outward journey as well. Wesley took the gospel from the pulpits of Anglican Church houses to the streets of Bristol and London. He was a passionate social activist: promoting literacy; establishing orphanages and prison ministry; providing reading rooms for his preachers; and caring for the poor, marginalized, and widows. Wesley biographer A. Skevington Wood writes: "He helped to keep hope alive in a miserable age. Wesley made no secret of the fact that he felt that his main mission was to the poor."⁵⁹ Wesley went to the people with the gospel, often preaching in the marketplaces and open fields.⁶⁰ Wood says that Wesley "reached the common man. He had the ear of the working classes."⁶¹ This was no small accomplishment for an Anglican, Oxford-trained clergyman. Wesley's heart, which had been "strangely warmed" at Aldersgate Street,⁶² now ignited a firestorm of church renewal and much-needed societal reform. While acknowledging Wesley's many social reforms, Wood reminds students of Wesley that his message had a huge impact "on the personality" and spiritual matters as well.⁶³

Wesley's movement not only journeyed outward to the masses in social relief and field preaching; his spiritual and organizational genius devised a way to group new followers of Christ into societies, classes, bands, and select bands for spiritual formation. Tom Albin, dean of the Upper Room Chapel, says, "The whole Wesley revival was really

⁵⁹ A. Skevington Wood, *The Burning Heart, John Wesley: Evangelist* (1967; repr., Minneapolis, MN: Bethany House, 1978), 142.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 127.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 141.

⁶² John Wesley, "The Aldersgate Experience," in *John Wesley*, ed. Albert C. Outler (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980), 51-69.

⁶³ Wood, *The Burning Heart*, 141-142.

a revival of pastoral care and spiritual guidance. The diaries [of John Wesley, his helpers, and participants in the movement] are what clued me in to this.”⁶⁴ Albin, a noted Wesley scholar in his original writings, reports many participants had no spiritual guidance, no pastor to shepherd them.⁶⁵ Furthermore, Wesley took each small group and related it to a particular aspect of his message of grace. Albin says,

The trial band explored and experienced prevenient grace, the grace that goes before belief. The class meeting was for convincing grace [or converting grace] In the band meeting, all the members are born again. The issue then becomes, how do I grow in grace, how do I live as a disciple In the band meeting, the level of confidentiality is much higher.⁶⁶

This was the true genius of the Wesleyan movement and revival: persons were guided into and found a niche according to where they were in their spiritual life at the time, all the while progressing toward maturity and leadership in Christ. The last level to attain in the early Methodist movement was the “select band,” in which the individual became filled with the love of God through the Spirit (Rom. 5:5) and desired sanctifying grace above all else.⁶⁷ Albin summarizes the Wesleyan spiritual model: “The focus of the class meeting is on the mind, the band meeting focuses on the will, but the formational

⁶⁴ Tom Albin, interview with Tim Stafford, “Finding God in Small Groups,” *Christianity Today*, August 2003, 43.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Ibid. The groups became progressively smaller, from “12 to 36 people” in the class meeting to “four to eight” in the band meeting, where everyone comprised the same gender and marital status.

focus of the select society is the heart. The early Methodists would see the select society as spiritual adulthood. You've given all of yourself at a different level."⁶⁸

A second example of this Journey Inward/Journey Outward spiritual model is found in the story and writing of Hagberg. As a contemporary writer, speaker, spiritual director, and social activist, Hagberg's writing reflects her personal story. Disillusioned early on with the Church, she dropped out almost completely for a period of ten years in her life, calling herself an "agnostic."⁶⁹ Later returning, she found healing and eventually new direction through reflection and "this community of people who I felt cared for and loved me despite my failure."⁷⁰ Hagberg experienced a measure of success again through her involvement in church and community. Now finding herself on "a very nice plateau," Hagberg remarried, became a stepparent, wrote another book, yet felt empty and unfulfilled on the inside.⁷¹ From a Lutheran background, she says, "I wanted to grow and did not know how"⁷² and was led by friends to a spiritual director who was Catholic.

Hagberg and Guelich's discussion of this "critical journey" has resulted in her becoming a noted spiritual guide. As with other spiritual guides of the past, the six stages Hagberg and Guelich present emerge directly from her life experience as follows:

"Recognition of God, Life of Discipleship, Productive Life, Journey Inward, Journey

⁶⁸ Ibid., 44.

⁶⁹ Hagberg and Guelich, *The Critical Journey*, 268 and 22.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² Ibid., 23-24.

Outward, and Life of Love.”⁷³ Hagberg and Guelich describe the role of the stages:

“Stage 1 humbles us, stage 2 grounds us, stage 3 rewards and exalts us, stage 4 unsettles us, the Wall unmasks us, stage 5 transforms us and stage 6 transcends us.”⁷⁴ *The Critical*

Journey: Stages in the Life of Faith is perhaps best known for the description of this

“Wall” experience,⁷⁵ which also has been noted by Peter Scazzerro.⁷⁶ Hagberg and

Guelich offer a truly classic definition of “spirituality”: “the way in which we live out our response to God.”⁷⁷ The pilgrim way of Christ is not forced, coerced, or pressured. It is a guided path, a volunteer journey, and a response to God’s gracious invitation.

Recovery Models

Recovery models represent all four aspects of the pilgrim journey: Journey Godward (toward a “Higher Power”⁷⁸), Downward, Inward and Outward. The twelve steps of Alcoholics Anonymous convey the Godward and inward journey of spirituality, as recovering addicts seek wholeness, forgiveness, and restoration through working certain

⁷³ Ibid., 17.

⁷⁴ Ibid., 162. A more detailed summary may be found in Appendix C. More will be said about this “Wall” stage in Chapter 6 of this dissertation.

⁷⁵ The “Wall” experience does contain a hint of the Downward Journey understanding and puts the downward journey concept in today’s language (see Appendix C, specifically Stage 4).

⁷⁶ Peter Scazzerro, *Emotionally Healthy Spirituality: Unleash a Revolution in Your Life in Christ* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2006), 118-134. Scazzerro and his wife have a ministry based in New York that integrates emotional health and contemplative spirituality with pastors, leaders, and local churches, according to Scazzerro, *Emotionally Healthy Spirituality*, back cover. For more information and access to his blog, visit Emotionally Healthy Spirituality, <http://www.emotionallyhealthy.org> (accessed June 13, 2011).

⁷⁷ Ibid., 3.

⁷⁸ *Alcoholics Anonymous: The Story of How Many Thousands of Men and Women Have Recovered from Alcoholism*, 4th ed. (New York: Alcoholics Anonymous World Services, Inc., 2008), 60.

steps. Recovery models also are the first in modern times to deal authentically with the Journey Downward or “hitting bottom,” as members of Alcoholics Anonymous frequently describe their experience.⁷⁹ Philip Yancey writes of the cofounder of Alcoholics Anonymous, Bill Wilson, that he reached the “unshakable conviction, now a canon of twelve-step groups, that an alcoholic must ‘hit bottom’ in order to climb upward.”⁸⁰ To “hit bottom” means to realize that “I *can*’t fix myself; I’m lost.”⁸¹ In working the twelve steps, pilgrims pursue the Journey Inward. Furthermore, recovering alcoholics and addicts practice the Journey Outward by helping fellow twelve-step participants to become sponsors. This is the missional focus of the twelfth step and the sponsorship program. In fact, the twelfth step acknowledges the reality of a “spiritual awakening” on the part of the recovered.⁸²

Phyllis Tickle, noted religious sociologist, observes that Alcoholics Anonymous was one of the “prime movers” of the sociological events of the twentieth century most affecting “North American Christianity and its shifting relationships with spirituality.”⁸³ She goes on to say that “A.A. opened the floodgates to spirituality by removing the

⁷⁹ See J. Keith Miller, *A Hunger for Healing: The Twelve Steps as a Classic Model for Christian Spiritual Growth* (New York: HarperCollins, 1991), 25. J. Miller’s work is the best treatment to date on the traditional twelve steps from a Christian perspective.

⁸⁰ Philip Yancey, “Lessons From Rock Bottom,” *Christianity Today*, July 10, 2000, 72. This is the basis for Step 1: “Our Lives Had Become Unmanageable.” See the “Big Book,” *Alcoholics Anonymous*, 59-60.

⁸¹ J. Miller, *A Hunger for Healing*, 25.

⁸² *Alcoholics Anonymous*, 60. For a detailed explanation and summary of the twelfth step and sponsor program, see J. Miller, *A Hunger for Healing*, 195-233.

⁸³ Phyllis Tickle, *The Great Emergence: How Christianity Is Changing and Why* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2009), 91.

confines of organized religion.”⁸⁴ Alcoholics Anonymous perhaps represents the best example of a postmodern spiritual movement in this time.

Two parallel Christian movements within the Alcoholics Anonymous world also have emerged: Celebrate Recovery through Rick Warren, John Baker, and Saddleback Church in California and the newly formed “International Christian Recovery Coalition,” by “Dick B.” who serves as the executive director. The Celebrate Recovery movement has spawned the Celebrate Recovery Bible,⁸⁵ while the International Christian Recovery Coalition seeks to take the movement back to its original roots in Samuel Shoemaker, the Oxford Group, and primitive Christianity.⁸⁶ Both movements seek to restore the supremacy and centrality of Jesus Christ to the recovery process.

Human Development Models

Building on the work of the developmental pioneers Lawrence Kohlberg and Jean Piaget,⁸⁷ for the pilgrimage seeker of Christian spirituality models by three others stand

⁸⁴ Ibid., 93.

⁸⁵ See the *Celebrate Recovery Bible*, a Purpose Driven publication, New International Version (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2007). The two illuminating texts for these parallel movements are John Baker, *Life's Healing Choices: Freedom From Your Hurts, Hang-Ups, and Habits* (New York: Howard Books, 2007) and “Dick B.,” *The Good Book and the Big Book: A.A.'s Roots in the Bible*, Bridge Builders ed. (Maui, HI: Good Book Publishing, 1997). For the definitive history of Alcoholics Anonymous, see Ernest Kurtz, *Not-God: A History of Alcoholics Anonymous*, expanded ed. (Center City, MN: Hazelden/Pittman Archives Press, 1991).

⁸⁶ Established July 2009, International Christian Recovery Coalition, “Summary of International Christian Recovery Coalition Objectives,” <http://www.christianrecoverycoalition.com/> (accessed February 18, 2011), 8-10. Dick B. is the author of thirty-nine books and over three hundred published articles.

⁸⁷ See Lawrence Kohlberg, *The Philosophy of Moral Development: Moral Stages and the Idea of Justice*, Essays on Moral Development, vol. 1 (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1981); and Jean Piaget, *The Moral Judgment of the Child*, trans. Marjorie Gabain (New York: The Free Press, 1966). A major developmental school of thought developed by Kohlberg describes the “cognitive-developmental” or “interactional” model, whereby individuals learn to “adapt” and “invent” within their environment.

above the rest: Eric H. Erikson, Daniel J. Levinson, and Fowler.⁸⁸ Human development models represent the Journey Inward and Journey Outward (Erikson, Levinson, Fowler, and even Don S. Browning). Erikson's famous model, consisting of eight "psychosocial stages or crises," as he refers to them in his Pulitzer Prize-winning work, *Childhood and Society*,⁸⁹ seems to be the benchmark work in the field. Donald Capps explains that Erikson's work is the "first to cover the whole span of life,"⁹⁰ as opposed to covering only the earlier years. In addition, Capps notes that Erikson "was very interested in the implications of his model for the study of religion and, conversely, the significance of religion for the model."⁹¹

Erikson is also one of the first to articulate that psychosocial development proceeds by "critical steps." Erikson states, "We do not consider all development a series of crises; we claim only that psychosocial development proceeds by critical steps—'critical' being a characteristic of turning points, of moments of decision between progress and regression, integration and retardation [going backward]."⁹² The pilgrimage journey contains both progressive steps and recurring seasons which run concurrently.

⁸⁸ Erik H. Erikson, *Childhood and Society*, 2nd ed., revised and enlarged (1950; repr., New York: W. W. Norton, 1963); Daniel J. Levinson, *The Season's of a Man's Life* (1978; repr., New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1985); James W. Fowler, *Stages of Faith: The Psychology of Human Development and the Quest for Meaning* (1981; repr., New York: HarperCollins, 1995); *Becoming Adult, Becoming Christian*; and Donald Capps, *The Decades of Life: A Guide to Human Development* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2008). Capps has undertaken a most illuminating "decade-oriented" revision of the life stages based on Erikson's work.

⁸⁹ Erikson, *Childhood and Society*, 270.

⁹⁰ Capps, *The Decades of Life*, xxiv.

⁹¹ Ibid. Piaget and Kohlberg's models were anti-religion as a determiner of moral judgment or behavior. See Donald M. Joy, "Kohlberg Revisited: A Supra-Naturalist Speaks His Mind," in *Moral Development Foundations: Judeo-Christian Alternatives to Piaget/Kohlberg*, ed. Donald M. Joy (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1983), 37-53.

⁹² Erikson, *Childhood and Society*, 270-271.

Both aspects contribute significantly to the Twelve Steps in the Way of Christ, which will be detailed in Part Three of this dissertation.

Whereas Erickson introduces the idea of more linear steps or stages of human development, Levinson's seminal work, *The Seasons of a Man's Life*, focuses on eras, life cycles, seasons, transitions, mid-life crisis, and "marker events" (similar to Erikson's turning points).⁹³ Levinson's model, like Erikson's, is sequential and follows the natural and chronological timeline of the lifespan.⁹⁴ However, in contrast to Erikson, Levinson focuses primarily on the early to middle years and adds the element of seasonal cycles, which take many forms. Levinson elaborates: "There are seasons in the year: spring is a time of blossoming, winter a time of death but also of rebirth and the start of a new cycle. There are seasons, too, within a single day—daybreak, noon, dusk, the quiet dark of night. . . . There are seasons in a love relationship, in war, politics, artistic creation and illness."⁹⁵

In addition to critical steps and seasons, turning points or "markers" also form a person's life-woven tapestry, according to Levinson. He defines "marker events" as circumstances requiring some form of "adaptation," often beyond one's control.⁹⁶ Levinson says, "Our lives are punctuated by events such as marriage, divorce, illness, the birth or death of loved ones, unexpected trauma or good fortune, advancement or failure

⁹³ Levinson, *The Season's of a Man's Life*, 54-63, 191-259. His work is based on a longitudinal study of forty men from four major professions ("executives, workers, novelists, and biologists").

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 57. Here Levinson offers a main chart.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 6-7.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 54-56.

in work, retirement, war, flourishing times and ‘rock bottom’ times.” Such “impactful”⁹⁷ marker events are essential to the understanding of the Twelve Steps in the Way of Christ, as each step likewise contains certain pairs of markers to help identify the points of transition for the pilgrim from one step to the next.

The final two human development models under consideration that relate to the pilgrimage journey, specifically the Journey Outward, are those of Fowler and Browning.⁹⁸ Fowler’s major contribution to development theory is his famous series of six stages, known in common parlance among United Methodists as his “ages and stages.”⁹⁹ They are the stages of “Intuitive-Projective Faith [The ‘Innocent’], Mythic-Literal Faith [The ‘Literalist’], Synthetic-Conventional Faith [The ‘Loyalist’], Individuative-Reflective Faith [The ‘Critic’], Conjunctive Faith [The ‘Seer’], and Universalizing Faith [The ‘Saint’].”¹⁰⁰ Fowler’s stages display great affinities with Erikson and Levinson; but in contrast to his notable predecessors, Fowler develops his stages in the context of faith, notwithstanding the scientific rigor of his human development discipline. Thus, Fowler’s stages become more accessible to the pilgrims of religious and Christian communities and provide the benchmark to this day by which all faith-stage development theories are evaluated.¹⁰¹

⁹⁷ Ibid., 54.

⁹⁸ Don S. Browning, *Generative Man: Psychoanalytic Perspectives* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1973).

⁹⁹ Fowler provided inspiration for United Methodist Sunday School curricula and is the Charles Howard Candler professor of theology and human development at Emory University *Stages of Faith*, back flap.

¹⁰⁰ Fowler, *Stages of Faith*, 113. Bracketed summaries are from a chart by Charles R. McCollough, *Heads of Heaven, Feet of Clay* (New York: The Pilgrim Press, 1986), 32.

¹⁰¹ Fowler, “Mary’s Pilgrimage: The Theory at Work,” in *Stages of Faith*, 217-268. This is his twenty-second chapter, which summarizes the content of his theory.

The real power behind Fowler's work, as it relates to the pilgrim journey, is the idea of "vocation."¹⁰² Fowler emphatically defines "vocation" as "*the response a person makes with his or her total self to the address of God and to the calling to partnership.*"¹⁰³ Distinguished Princeton theologian, Walter Brueggemann, lays the groundwork for Fowler's proposal of vocation. He says, "Vocation is finding a purpose for being in the world that is related to the purposes of God."¹⁰⁴ There are two key components of Fowler's treatment of vocation: first, it is not self-actualization; and second, it is shaped, formed, and discovered in the context of Christian community.¹⁰⁵ By introducing the central tenet of God and God's purposes for the pilgrim, Fowler departs from the self-help and recovery models as well as the traditional human development models.

Finally, Browning's *Generative Man* is included in this survey of human developmental literature as it relates to the pilgrim Journey Outward in Christ. Like Fowler, he sees vocation as "generativity."¹⁰⁶ This is more than just the ability to be productive; it is the capacity to extend legacy to the next generation, passing on one's life and work. Browning explains that generativity as "the meaning or end of life is not to be found by studying the origins or beginnings of life. The meaning of life is to be found in the end of life, in the

¹⁰² Fowler, *Becoming Adult, Becoming Christian*, 75-121. Fowler's definition does not refer to the normal usage of vocation as choice of profession or employment.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, 77.

¹⁰⁴ Walter Brueggemann, "Covenanting as Human Vocation: A Discussion of the Relation of Bible and Pastoral Care." *Interpretation* 33, no. 2 (April 1979): 126.

¹⁰⁵ Fowler, *Becoming Adult, Becoming Christian*, 79-99.

¹⁰⁶ See Browning, *Generative Man*, 180-181.

purpose of life as it expresses itself in maturity and generativity.”¹⁰⁷ Most significantly as it relates to a quickly aging Baby Boomer population in North America, Browning identifies the core of Erikson’s stage work with generativity, not childhood or adolescence, as so often is interpreted. He says, “Generativity is the normative center of Erikson’s thought; however, in some ways, he has less to say about this stage than about any other stage of development which he discusses. Yet the center of life and the essence of the good man are to be found here.”¹⁰⁸ Like the workers in the vineyard or the guests at Jesus’ first wedding party in Cana, God calls the pilgrim to be generative and use the full span of life, knowing that in many cases God saves the best wine for last (Matt. 20:1-16; John 2:1-10).

Leadership Models

Leadership models is the last discipline covered by this survey and focuses mostly on Clinton of Fuller Theological Seminary, who is the first to pioneer the field of Christian “leadership emergence theory.”¹⁰⁹ Clinton is known best for his six stages of leadership development: “sovereign foundations” (similar to Wesley’s concept of prevenient grace), “inner-life growth,” “ministry maturing” (includes both A and B—“A” refers to the acquisition of skills and training, while “B” deals with relational growth and discernment in character formation), “life maturing,” “convergence,” and “afterglow.”¹¹⁰ Each of these six stages, according to Clinton, contains unique “process items” which give rise to and meaning

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., 183.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., 181.

¹⁰⁹ Robert J. Clinton, *The Making of a Leader* (Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 1988), 30-33, 246.

¹¹⁰ Ibid., 39-47. For “ministry maturing” A and B, see pages 77-124. Clinton’s work is based on the study of several thousand Christian leaders.

to each stage.¹¹¹ Clinton defines “process” items as “providential events, people and circumstances” God uses “to develop a leader.”¹¹² As with St. Ignatius and Erikson before him, Clinton affirms that God uses all of life, whether in terms of good and bad, character strength and weakness, victories and defeats, to level the path (cf. Isa. 40:3-4) and propel the pilgrim toward maturity and leadership in Christ. This providential aspect of God’s involvement in the leader’s life is a frequent emphasis for Clinton.¹¹³ He says, “God shapes a leader over an entire lifetime . . . God intends to develop a leader to reach the maximum potential and accomplish those things for which the leader has been gifted.” His claim mirrors the Apostle Paul’s letters which are filled with statements regarding Christian growth and leadership development (cf. Col. 1:28; Gal. 4:19; 2 Cor. 3:18; 7:1; Titus 2:1-8; 1 Tim. 4:11-16; 5:9-14; 2 Tim. 2:1-2, 15; Phil. 3:12-15; 1 John 2:12-14).

Clinton’s groundbreaking labor and exhaustive leadership studies create the foundation for a new day in the North American Church, with far-reaching implications for North American Church leaders. His work stands among the masters of old, who created the classic allegorical and spiritual models, and the giants of human development who imparted wisdom to comprehend natural people development. Clinton’s work paves the way for Chapter 4, which discusses ancient-future faith, postmodern faith formation, and leadership development as outlined by both Protestant and Catholic models of spirituality.

¹¹¹ Ibid., 33.

¹¹² Ibid., 47-48. The process items are directly linked to each stage.

¹¹³ See for example Robert J. Clinton, *Focused Lives: Inspirational Life Changing Lessons from Eight Effective Christian Leaders Who Finished Well* (Altadena, CA: Barnabas Publishers, 1995), 1.

CHAPTER 4

ANCIENT-FUTURE FAITH AND A POSTMODERN APPROACH: FAITH FORMATION AND LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

A sound biblical understanding of faith formation and leadership development makes use of the ancient models of visualization, metaphor, and pilgrimage journey and points toward new steps on an ancient path of relational ministry centered in the life and way of Christ. The Psalmist writes: “Blessed are those whose strength is in you, who have set their hearts on pilgrimage” (Ps. 84:5). Christ came to offer not only an ethic to follow based on truth but a way to imitate based on the pattern and model of his own life pilgrimage. The way of Christ provides a proven path for understanding the way of every seeker of the Christian faith, ancient or postmodern. From weakness, humiliation, and pain to passion and strength in the “exchanged and victorious life,”¹ Christ followers and leaders are called to walk in the way of Christ. The North American Church must relearn to tread the ancient path of pilgrimage and teach others to journey in the pilgrimage way of Christ, especially when the route is marked by pain, rejection, and suffering. The way of Christ, after all, is the way of the cross. However, as the Church celebrates each year

¹ I first encountered this phrase in the writing of Major Ian Thomas, a participant in the Keswick revival of the last century in England and founder of Torchbearers International. Thomas passed away in 2007, but his four sons continue their worldwide mission. See Torchbearers International, “Biography of Major W. Ian Thomas,” http://torchbearers2.hanson.co.nz/about/Major_Thomas (accessed March 3, 2011).

during the seasons of Lent and Eastertide, the way of Christ is also the way of the empty tomb and the resurrected, ascended, glorified, and victorious Lord.

Three Distinct Segues in the Earthly Life of Christ

Webber discusses the early Christian tradition of forming faithful disciples of Jesus Christ.² In the early Church, the baptismal candidate or catechuminate (a person submitting to the catechesis or instruction of the church) would go through an intense training of three years in what Webber outlines as four distinct stages: “seeker, hearer, kneeler, and the faithful.”³ He explains:

During three years of passing through the seeker, hearer, and kneeler stages, the converting person was given a firm basis in the structure of Christian orthodoxy over against the teaching and practice of opposing religions, especially the mythologies of Rome. And when the time for baptism came, the convert confessed Christ as he or she had been instructed.⁴

This early progression traced by Webber provides a solid basis for understanding the three distinct segues in the earthly life of Christ himself, as Christ became a seeker after God (Luke 2:49), a hearer (John 5:19-20, 30), a kneeler (giving himself even unto death on a cross—John 3:13-16, 31-35), as well as faithful in all God’s house (Heb. 3:6).

Christ’s own path to spiritual formation and development is marked by three distinct segues. First, there is the early growth stage, from birth to manhood at the

² See Webber, *Ancient-Future Faith*, 157-163; Robert E. Webber, *Ancient-Future Evangelism* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2003), 41-54, and most extensively in Robert E. Webber, *Journey to Jesus: The Worship, Evangelism, and Nurture Mission of the Church* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2001).

³ Webber, *Ancient-Future Faith*, 157. The kneeler stage was the most intense period of preparation, conducted during the season of Lent, the nearly seven weeks leading up to Easter, when the catechumenates traditionally were baptized.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 160.

traditional Jewish age of thirty. The second segue is the self-emptying ministry or *Quo vadis* stage, which includes his three-year public ministry and his passion week, leading to the cross. Finally, there is *Christus Victor*, or overcoming life stage, which includes his ten post-resurrection appearances,⁵ the forty days he spent on earth following his resurrection (Acts 1:3), and his final ascension to heaven, seated at the right hand of God (Mark 16:19; Luke 24:50-51; Acts 1:9-11).

Regarding the first segue, Scripture clearly explains that Jesus indeed “grew in wisdom and stature, in favor with God and men” (Luke 2:52). Though he was God in human form, Christ learned, matured mentally, and grew physically. At the age of twelve, he sat at the feet of the teachers of Israel in the Temple, listening and asking questions, telling his mother and father, “I had to be in my Father’s house” (Luke 2:46, 49). Jesus demonstrates the natural curiosity of any blossoming child or emerging adolescent yet with a sense of divine purpose and destiny. In addition to his own submission to Father God, as well as personal growth and development, Jesus learns at the feet of his noble mother, Mary; he also is trained as the carpenter son of Joseph and discovers life as a peer among four brothers and at least two sisters (Matt. 13:55-56).

The second segue of Christ’s life, the self-emptying or *Quo vadis* stage, begins with his departure after baptism by John at the Jordan into the wilderness of Judea and continues toward the cross with three announcements of death to his disciples, as recorded in Mark’s Gospel (Mark 8:31; 9:31; 10:32-34). In fact, all four Gospel writers

⁵ See Coleman, *The Master Plan of Evangelism*, 45. Catholic scholars group the post-resurrection appearances into fourteen stations, like the fourteen traditional Stations of the Cross. See Raymond Chapman, *Stations of the Resurrection: Meditations on the Fourteen Resurrection Appearances* (Harrisburg, PA: Morehouse Publishing, 1998). See Appendix D for more information on *Christus Victor*.

make reference to Jesus' predictions of his impending journey to Jerusalem, death, and resurrection (cf. Matt. 16:21; Luke 18:31-33; John 12:23-41). This second phase of Christ's life is called the *Quo vadis* stage due to the voluntary suffering Jesus agrees to undertake on behalf of humankind. The path to salvation for humankind is announced by Jesus as the path to suffering and servitude, not glory and honor, as the disciples and other followers of Jesus understood messianic promise in comparison to the expectations of the general crowds (cf. John 6:14-15, 12:34, and Acts 1:6 contrasted with Jesus' teaching in Mark 10:43-45; Luke 24:25-26 and John 12:23-26).

Quo vadis is the way of suffering. It is the way of Christ, and it is the way of Paul and Peter. Jesus said, "No servant is greater than his master" (Matt. 10:24; John 13:16; 15:20). The context of these verses is servanthood and suffering (false accusation, betrayal in the Upper Room, persecution); sooner or later, it is God's way for every faithful servant and Christ follower.⁶ The ultimate obedience, the ultimate self-emptying of Christ, is his submission to death on a cross, the instrument of Roman torture for common criminals. The writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews, that great Christological book of the New Testament, points out: "During the days of Jesus' life on earth, he offered up prayers and petitions with loud cries and tears to the one who could save him from death, and he was heard due to his reverent submission. Although he was a son, he learned obedience from what he suffered" (Heb. 5:7-8).

⁶ Ibid. According to Coleman, *The Master Plan of Evangelism*, 44-45, nearly half of the Gospel accounts of Jesus pertain to the last months of his life, particularly his last week of passion. At least sixteen times according to the count of Coleman, *The Master Plan of Evangelism*, 123-124, Jesus spoke about his suffering and death prior to his arrest by the soldiers.

The Apostle Paul writes in Philippians 2:8: “And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death—even death on a cross!” Paul speaks of Christ’s suffering on many occasions; and referring to his own public floggings, he states boldly that he “bears on his body the marks of Jesus” (Gal. 6:17). Likewise, the Apostle Peter, writing to a persecuted Church desiring to imitate their Lord, says, “To this you were called, because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps” (1 Pet. 2:21). Jesus’ pain became his passion. His exchanged, self-emptying life became the hope and the goal of every pilgrim in Christ’s Way.

The third and final segue of *Christus Victor*—Christ’s overcoming, victorious life on earth—follows even through the early Church’s example. Christ is the victor over sin (Rom. 6:1-11; Gal. 3:19-22), death (Rom. 6:22-23; 1 Cor. 15:20-26, 54b-57), the grave (1 Cor. 15:35-54a), and even hell itself (Matt. 16:18; Luke 10:18-19; Eph. 4:7-10). This conviction and nearly two-millennia tradition is captured best in the words of The Apostles’ Creed: “[He] was crucified, died and was buried; he descended to the dead [or hell]. On the third day he rose again; he ascended into heaven, is seated at the right hand of the Father, and will come again to judge the living and the dead.”⁷ This is the heart of the Gospel of Christ: death and resurrection. Webber defines Christian spirituality in this way: “The true identity of the Christian is with Jesus Christ in his death and resurrection. True Christian spirituality is to live out our baptism by continually dying to sin and rising

⁷ “A Service of Word and Table I,” in *The United Methodist Book of Worship* (1992; repr., Nashville: The United Methodist Publishing House, 2007), 34.

to the new life in Christ.”⁸ To walk in the path and pattern of the death and resurrection of Jesus is to imitate Christ’s life.

The Church worships and serves a living, resurrected Lord. This is the primitive confession of the early Church: Jesus is Lord (Acts 2:36). This is the basis of celebration worship each Sunday, even during the season of Lent. Furthermore, Paul writes in his letter to the Colossians, “And having disarmed the powers and authorities, he [Christ] made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross” (Col. 2:15).

Webber’s conclusion is powerful and expresses the fact that in Jesus Christ, the ultimate death has become the ultimate victory:

In sum, the *Christus Victor* message provides the Christian with an interpretation of all reality. It speaks to the origins of all things; it deals with the problem of evil; it affirms a God who is involved in the created order; it answers the human quest for meaning; it provides a hope for the future This mystery is the message, the good news for a postmodern society.⁹

Three Strong Voices for Ancient-Future Faith

Three strong voices, in addition to Sweet’s early writing,¹⁰ have introduced the North American Church to the concept of “ancient-future” faith: Webber, Thomas C. Oden, and more recently, Rex Miller.¹¹ Ancient-future faith is a “both/and” faith:

⁸ Webber, *Ancient-Future Evangelism*, 89.

⁹ Webber, *Ancient-Future Faith*, 60-61.

¹⁰ Sweet, *Post-modern Pilgrims*, 46 and 173, states that he first used the phrase “ancient-future faith” in the early 1990s and cites Sweet, *FaithQuakes*, 19, published in 1994.

¹¹ Webber, *Ancient-Future Faith* and *Ancient-Future Evangelism*; Thomas C. Oden, *Agenda for Theology: After Modernity . . . What?* rev. ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1992); In this celebrated work, Oden argues for a return to classical and ancient Christianity; and Rex Miller, *The Millennium Matrix: Reclaiming the Past, Reframing the Future of the Church* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2004).

classical yet current, grounded in Scripture yet centered on the living person of Christ, tradition-inspired yet continually seeking new expressions in transmission and worship, generative yet founded on the salvation story ultimately revealed centuries past in Jesus. Webber emphatically states in *Ancient-Future Evangelism* that the work of the Church in forming the spiritual life of the new disciple is to “train the new Christian in the practice of living in the pattern of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.”¹² Webber begins his theological work with the “Christ event,” rather than the Scriptures, in order to reach postmodern people.¹³ He explains: “I have structured *Ancient-Future Faith* around the phenomenon of the origin of the Christian faith. I have not started where evangelicals usually start—with the Scriptures. Rather, I begin with the work of Jesus Christ, the primordial event of the living, dying, rising, and coming again.”¹⁴ Thus, Webber commences his exploration of ancient-future faith with the Christ event, a more conducive place to begin for experientially based, celebrity-driven, postmodern people.¹⁵ Webber concludes, “Evangelical spirituality in a postmodern world needs to begin with the proclamation that *Jesus is our spirituality*.”¹⁶

The second strong voice for ancient-future faith is Oden. In his watershed book, *Agenda for Theology*, he argues that North American and global Christian leaders need to

¹² Webber, *Ancient-Future Evangelism*, 89.

¹³ Webber, *Ancient-Future Faith*, 31.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ See Chapter 1 of this dissertation for a detailed analysis of experientially based, celebrity-driven, postmodern people.

¹⁶ Webber, *Ancient-Future Faith*, 132.

return to “*classical Christianity* (or ancient ecumenical orthodoxy),” based on the work of the seven great ecumenical church councils.¹⁷ These early ecumenical church councils all dealt with issues of Christology, relating to the biblical and historical understanding of the person and work of Christ on earth,¹⁸ which is precisely the point made by Webber. Oden, former professor of theology and ethics at Drew University, was the first to announce widely his conviction that the North American Church should return to a faith position grounded in Scripture but also enumerated in the classics of ancient church tradition, particularly those written in the first millennium.¹⁹ While Oden’s work has been supported by others in the spiritual formation tradition, the movement to return to what Oden calls the “rebirth of orthodoxy” is gaining momentum across the world.²⁰

While Oden’s emphasis centers more on the beliefs and tenets of orthodoxy, rather than the Christ event, Christ and his life are central to everything Oden proposes. Oden describes his autobiographical journey of emergence from a unique background as a “movement theologian,” radicalized by the university in the early 1960s, embracing at one time in his life the most unorthodox of agendas, including “situation ethicist . . .

¹⁷ Oden, *Agenda for Theology*, 37. For a complete overview of the seven councils, see Leo Donald Davis, *The First Seven Ecumenical Councils (325-787): Their History and Theology* (Collegeville, MN: The Order of St. Benedict, Inc., 1990). Also, Stephen W. Need, *Truly Divine and Truly Human: The Story of Christ and the Seven Ecumenical Councils* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2008).

¹⁸ The seven councils—mostly conducted in the Eastern four cities of Nicea, Constantinople, Ephesus and Chalcedon—focused on the doctrine of the Trinity and the divine-human nature of Christ, establishing the boundaries for orthodoxy and heresy still in use today. The Council of Chalcedon in 451 was the turning point, where Jesus was proclaimed as “truly divine and truly human.” See Need, *Truly Divine and Truly Human*, xiii.

¹⁹ Oden, *Agenda for Theology*, 37.

²⁰ See Thomas C. Oden, *The Rebirth of Orthodoxy: Signs of New Life in Christianity* (New York: HarperCollins, 2003), especially Part II, Table 2: “Evidences of the Rebirth of Orthodoxy,” 73-79.

socialist . . . [and] human-potential movement camp-follower.”²¹ Oden summarizes his pilgrimage journey to faith or his “orthodox metamorphosis”²² as follows:

As I conversed with the ancient ecumenical teachers, I gradually came to behold interpersonal transactions and personal dynamics in the light of God’s becoming fully human in the incarnation . . . This incarnational revolution invaded every corner of my psychological research . . . I came to grasp the consensual reasoning that occurs so effortlessly within classic Christianity.²³

Oden’s personal journey from a movement theologian to an ancient, orthodox theologian parallels in many ways the journey and struggle of the North American Church to become relevant to postmoderns and Millenials.

R. Miller, the third and more current voice for ancient-future faith, advocates convincingly that the “medium” of communication shapes the culture, especially postmodern culture.²⁴ According to R. Miller, the digital culture of today (post 2010) fits well with this narrative, ancient-future approach to faith experience. Using the analogy of a verb tense, he calls the digital culture “future perfect”²⁵ and writes:

Oral culture’s time is the continual present; print fixes the past in place; and broadcast lives in the future. Digital culture’s time is future perfect: a verb tense

²¹ Ibid., 86-87.

²² Ibid.

²³ Ibid., 89.

²⁴ R. Miller, *The Millennium Matrix*, 15-17.

²⁵ Ibid., 96 and 77. He reprises history under four major headings: “Oral Culture—Liturgical Church, B.C—A.D. 1500; Print Culture—Reformation Church, 1500-1950; Broadcast Culture—Celebration Church, 1950-2010; [and] Digital Culture—Convergence Church, 2010.”²⁵ I believe this is the most insightful demarcation of church history written to date. Though R. Miller is not the first to articulate this structure, his connection of digital culture to the Convergence Church is unparalleled. For the earlier statement of this model, see Robert E. Webber, *The Younger Evangelicals: Facing the Challenges of the New World* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2002), 70. R. Miller, in contrast to Webber, comes from a communications background. The back flap states that R. Miller has spent the last twenty-five years “researching social change through the lens of communications.”

that conveys the sense that a future event has already taken place. Digital technology is changing our sense of time and history, both pulling the future into our awareness and drawing in the best of the past. It treats time as malleable, to be compressed or expanded as needed.²⁶

This is what scholars like Webber, Oden, and Miller mean by “ancient-future.” As narrative resurges and digital culture expands, North American Church leaders have a unique opportunity to relate the timeless message of Christ and other “storied” classics to postmodern generations seeking life through experience.

Postmodern-Sensitive Catholic Models of Spirituality

Postmodern core values such as intimate community, accountability, transparency, and authenticity are provided best through a caring, pastoral, and incarnational presence, both from pastors and trained laity and not through a prepackaged, predetermined system. In this regard, the Catholic practices of spirituality prove helpful, instructive, and insightful. Such discoveries from Catholic spirituality, as brought to light by John Hull, point the way forward to a recovery of visualization, metaphor, and pilgrimage journey on the ancient path of relational ministry centered in Christ. J. Hull describes three areas central to spiritual growth for the Catholic faithful:

In my experience of Catholicism as a “lived faith” by the average Catholic seeking spiritual growth, there are three focal points: 1) silent retreats with opportunity for practice of various spiritual disciplines, including a meeting with a spiritual director and confessor; 2) The Sunday Eucharist, expanding into attendance at daily Mass whenever possible; and 3) various forms of Marian

²⁶ Ibid. While employing the precise phrase “ancient-future,” the “Complete Millennium Matrix” chart in R. Miller, *The Millennium Matrix*, 95-118, especially under the “Digital” column, clearly shows an application of this functional concept.

spirituality within [which] one would include a general emphasis/experience of the communion of the saints.²⁷

Taking Hull's second-mentioned area first, The Eucharist or Mass, understood by the faithful to be the literal body and blood of Christ, forms the foundation and reflects the central understanding of the suffering Christ in the Catholic faith. Robin Maas and Gabriel O'Donnell explain this ancient tradition:

In the Christian context, our remembrance of God is an extension of the great *anamnesis*, or remembrance of the Sunday Eucharist, into every day of the week, into each moment of every day. *Anamnesis*, the Greek word for "remembrance," designates the action of the community gathered in faith to recall the passion, death, and resurrection of Christ—God's great Passover—and in so doing, to make present the mystery of our deliverance through the words and gestures of the eucharistic celebration.²⁸

This Eucharistic event becomes the great visualization of the Catholic faithful, reminding each communicant or supplicant that Christ died for the sins of many (Matt. 26:28). The Mass or Eucharist, more than any other church experience, shifts the focus from "rationalism to the mystery of the interpreted faith grounded in the Christ event,"²⁹ and rehearses the drama of the incarnational Christ event: "Christ has died; Christ is risen; Christ will come again."³⁰

²⁷ John Hull, e-mail message to author, March 14, 2011. He is former associate director and theological mentor of Fuller Seminary's Doctor of Ministry now seeking Deacons' Orders in the Catholic faith.

²⁸ Robin Maas and Gabriel O'Donnell, eds., *Spiritual Traditions for the Contemporary Church* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1990), 420-421. This appreciation of the Holy Eucharist is not limited to Catholics. For many in the Wesleyan tradition, especially the Eucharist is a central and essential faith practice. See Ole E. Borgen, *John Wesley on the Sacraments: A Theological Study* (Grand Rapids, MI: Francis Asbury Press, 1972) and J. Ernest Rattenbury, *The Eucharistic Hymns of John and Charles Wesley*, 3rd ed. (Akron, OH: OSL Publications, 2006), 3, where he mentions that some even called the Wesley Revival a "Sacramental Revival."

²⁹ Webber, *Ancient-Future Faith*, 31.

³⁰ "Service of Word and Table I," 38.

Silence and solitude are the second key components in Catholic spirituality noted by J. Hull, and like the Eucharist, create space for visualization and invitation to God's caring presence through the Holy Spirit. In today's frantically paced world, retreat and solitude are essential to soul healing, personal renewal, and inner strengthening. Jesus often demonstrated this with his disciples (cf. Mark 1:35; 6:46; 14:32-35; Luke 5:16; 6:12; 9:28).³¹ Experiences of solitude can be life-transforming, whether on personal retreats, Emmaus Walks,³² or spending time at a particular retreat or conference center, away from the noise, deadlines, distractions, and interminable compulsions of life. The power of solitude brings inner alignment and peace with personal issues of brokenness as well as a small sense of participation in the suffering of Christ.

A second way the pastoral presence of God can be experienced by postmodern pilgrims today is through the discipline of spiritual direction, mentoring, or spiritual guidance. The key to spiritual guidance is for pilgrims to pursue deeper relationships with those whose life wisdom has enabled them to travel further down the road of life with Christ. Such a mentor does not have to be a pastor or clergy person. In today's spiritually hungry, postmodern climate, many lay people and trained professionals are offering their services as spiritual guides, mentors, and advisors. Unlike counseling and psychotherapy,

³¹ For an excellent discussion of the value of spiritual retreats, see Ajith Fernando, *Jesus Driven Ministry* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2007), 61-71.

³² *Walk to Emmaus* is an interdenominational, lay-driven life event and spiritual retreat, an *agape*-filled weekend experience of spiritual immersion for today's Christians. Started in the Catholic Renewal Movement in Spain in 1949, as *Cursillo*, it spread to many denominations, including my own United Methodist Church. Adopted as a program for a "primarily Protestant audience," it became the *Walk to Emmaus* in 1981. Now in its thirtieth year, it is the closest among my church experiences, to forming disciples in the "pattern of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ." See Stephen D. Bryant, "What Is Emmaus?" *Upper Room Ministries* (1995), <http://www.upperroom.org/emmaus/whatis/history.asp> (accessed March 17, 2011).

delving into the person's past and searching for keys to healing, spiritual guidance works from the present and seeks to engage, instruct, and hold the pilgrim accountable for the development of personal practices and habits that further character formation and life transformation in the way of Christ. In addition, general confession of known issues, forgiveness, and seeking restitution where appropriate are critical to the overall process of guidance in Christ formation (James 5:16).

The third spiritual practice of growing Catholic faithful, noted by J. Hull, is that of Marian spirituality and the communion of saints. While Protestants diverge from this Catholic practice of praying to Mary or certain saints, a “general emphasis/experience of the communion of the saints” can prove helpful to postmodern pilgrims, especially as a caring and pastoral presence.³³ The writer to the Hebrews says that a great cloud of witnesses surrounds the pilgrims on their journey and urges them to “run with perseverance the race marked out” (Heb. 12:1-2). In a Doctor of Ministry seminar in 2004, Archibald Hart asked a question that greatly impacted the class's spiritual journey of healing: “Who is in your grandstand, cheering you on?”³⁴ As products of past relationships, some positive and many negative, Hart says pilgrims need to “clear out the grandstands” of those “evaluating [us]”—those looked to for “praise, affirmation, [and] recognition.”³⁵ Instead, pilgrims need to replace these critical, unpleaseable persons with those who truly cheer onward, including lives of saints, mentors, or spiritual leaders after

³³ Hull, e-mail.

³⁴ Hart, “CN705 The Minister's Personal Health.”

³⁵ Ibid.

whom they have modeled their own lives and journeys. The writer to the Hebrews concludes that as faithful pilgrims we then need to “fix [their] eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith” (Heb. 12:2a).

Finally, North American Church leaders who desire to reach postmodern generations can discover, rather than design, God’s ancient way of making disciples. These are revealed in the footsteps, suffering, and victory of Jesus Christ as expressed in Scripture and church tradition. The way of suffering follows the ancient path walked by the suffering Christ down the Via Dolorosa in Jerusalem. This pilgrimage tradition stands foremost in Catholic spirituality and finds its greatest expression in the Stations of the Cross. Catholic retreat centers, like the Mater Dolorosa Passionist Retreat Center at the foot of the San Gabriel Mountains in Southern California, depict life-size figures of the Fifteen Stations of the Cross.³⁶ They provide the pilgrim a window to view the suffering of Christ, especially during the forty days of Lent. The Protestant faithful have no such model of spirituality.

Many Catholic leaders have written on the Stations of the Cross, from Pope John Paul II to Joseph Champlin to Nouwen to Clarence Enzler,³⁷ explaining the gift of the stations to embody and embolden pilgrims through the sufferings of Christ. Walking the Stations connects the pilgrim to the “God who is,” rather than the “God we want.”³⁸ The Stations reenact the passion week of Christ, reminding postmodern seekers and faithful pilgrims alike

³⁶ Taken from Mater Dolorosa Retreat Center, *Come to the Mountain* (Sierra Madre, CA: Mater Dolorosa Retreat Center, 2003). Here the resurrection of Christ is included.

³⁷ See Joseph M. Champlin, *The Stations of the Cross with Pope John Paul II* (Liguori, MO: Liguori, 1994); Henri J. M. Nouwen, *Walk With Jesus: Way of the Cross Meditations*, condensed ed. of *Walk with Jesus: Stations of the Cross* (1990; repr., Fenton, MO: Creative Communications for the Parish, 1999); Clarence Enzler, *Everyone’s Way of the Cross*, rev. ed. (Notre Dame, IN: Ave Maria Press, 1986).

³⁸ Patrick M. Morley, *The Seven Seasons of a Man’s Life* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1997), 28.

that God is a suffering God, that life is full of suffering, and that suffering is the chief means God uses to produce the character of Christ in the faithful pilgrim. In his chapter on “The Dark Night of the Soul,” Patrick M. Morley says, “The dark night of your soul is God’s kindness to empty your soul of self.”³⁹ This understanding and reenactment of the gift of suffering, emptying the soul of self, is a missing bridge for the postmodern generation today.

The Catholic (*Quo Vadis*) and Protestant (*Christus Victor*) Understandings of Christ and the Christian Journey

The North American Church, especially in its contemporary Protestant forms, lacks a decisive and comprehensive theology of suffering. With the possible exception of confirmation classes, usually thirteen weeks in duration, this pattern of the ancient Church is seldom observed, if at all. It is only within the past sixty years or so that believers have been able to catch a glimpse of suffering theology from a Protestant voice in the testimonies, sermons, and writings of C. S. Lewis, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Frederick Buechner, Corrie Ten Boom, Joni Eareckson Tada and Steven Estes, and Barbara Brown Taylor,⁴⁰ along with three other major theological voices in Protestant circles today: Douglas John Hall, Jürgen Moltmann, and Diogenes Allen.⁴¹ Beyond these and the more

³⁹ Ibid., 143.

⁴⁰ See C. S. Lewis, *The Problem of Pain* (1940; repr., New York: HarperOne, 1996); Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *The Cost of Discipleship*, 2nd ed. (New York: Macmillan, 1972); Frederick Buechner, *Secrets in the Dark: A Life in Sermons* (New York: HarperOne, 2006); Corrie Ten Boom, with Elizabeth Sherrill and John Sherrill, *The Hiding Place*, 35th Anniversary ed. (1971; repr., Grand Rapids, MI: Chosen Books, 2006); Joni Eareckson Tada and Steven Estes, *When God Weeps: Why Our Sufferings Matter to the Almighty* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1997); and Barbara Brown Taylor, *Gospel Medicine* (Boston: Cowley, 1995) and *Home By Another Way* (Boston: Cowley, 1999).

⁴¹ See Douglas John Hall, *God and Human Suffering: An Exercise in the Theology of the Cross* (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg, 1986) as well as Hall, *Lighten Our Darkness*; Jürgen Moltmann, *The Crucified God: The Cross of Christ as the Foundation and Criticism of Christian Theology* (1974; repr.,

popular, emerging Protestant voice on suffering of Randy C. Alcorn, there is little tradition upon which to rely⁴²—besides those who comment on suffering as expressed through the Book of Psalms.

Brueggemann is one of those Protestant scholars providing an excellent overview of suffering through his understanding of the Book of Psalms. He describes the book in three categories: psalms of “orientation,” “disorientation” (the lament psalms), and “reorientation.”⁴³ He clearly identifies Jesus as crucified, suffering Messiah with these psalms of disorientation.⁴⁴ Brueggemann writes: “I . . . prefer to say that the Christian use of the Psalms is illuminated and required by the crucifixion, so that in the use of the Psalms we are moving back and forth among reference to Jesus, the voice of the psalm itself, and our own experiences of dislocation, suffering, and death.”⁴⁵ Bernhard W. Anderson, with Steven Bishop add, “As interpreted in the New Testament, the psalms not only anticipate the advent of the King who would inaugurate God’s kingdom, but portray the passion and struggle he would undergo in fulfilling his task as God’s anointed . . . Christians pray the Psalms ‘in Christ.’”⁴⁶

Minneapolis, MN: First Fortress Press, 1993); and Diogenes Allen, *The Traces of God: In a Frequently Hostile World* (Cambridge, MA: Cowley, 1981).

⁴² Randy C. Alcorn, *If God Is Good: Faith in the Midst of Suffering and Evil* (Colorado Springs, CO: Multnomah, 2009).

⁴³ Walter Brueggemann, *The Message of the Psalms: A Theological Commentary* (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg, 1984), 20-21.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 20.

⁴⁶ Bernhard W. Anderson with Steven Bishop, *Out of the Depths: The Psalms Speak for Us Today*, 3rd ed., rev. and exp. (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2000), 211.

Catholic scholars, in contrast to Protestant writers, have delved into the struggle and theology of human suffering since the patristic period of the early Church as well as more recently.⁴⁷ The ancient Latin phrase *Quo vadis* provides an apt metaphor for the Catholic proposal that the way of Christ includes suffering. The phrase, *Quo vadis*, “Where are you going?” comes from the Apocryphal *Acts of Peter*, a part of second-century, non-canonical Christian tradition. As the story has been passed down, Peter is faced with the decision of leaving Rome under the persecution of Agrippa, knowing that if he stays he will face certain death. As Peter leaves the city, Peter encounters the risen Christ approaching the city of Rome and asks him, “*Quo vadis?*”

And when he [Peter] saw him, he said: Lord, wither goest thou thus (or here)? [*Quo vadis?*] And the Lord said unto him: I go into Rome to be crucified. And Peter said unto him: Lord, art thou (being) crucified again? He said unto him: Yea, Peter, I am (being) crucified again. And Peter came to himself: and having beheld the Lord ascending up into heaven, he returned to Rome, rejoicing, and glorifying the Lord, for that he said: I am being crucified: the which was about to befall Peter.⁴⁸

Sensing that the certainty of death is at hand, Peter naturally seeks to avoid the pain and suffering by walking away from the city. His encounter with the risen Christ propels him back toward his final destiny, which Jesus had predicted earlier as recorded in the last chapter of John’s Gospel (John 21:18-19).

⁴⁷ See, for example, Richard John Neuhaus, *Death on a Friday Afternoon: Meditations on the Last Words of Jesus from the Cross* (New York: Basic Books, 2000); Henri J. M. Nouwen, *The Wounded Healer: Ministry in Contemporary Society*, 2nd ed. (New York: Image Doubleday, 2010) and *Can You Drink the Cup?* 10th ed. (Notre Dame, IN: Ave Maria Press, 2006); and the works of Brennan Manning, long-time priest in the Franciscan Order, especially *The Ragamuffin Gospel* (1990; repr., Sisters, OR: Multnomah, 2000) and *Ruthless Trust: The Ragamuffin’s Path to God* (New York: HarperCollins, 2002). See also Susan Muto’s two-book series on *John of the Cross for Today: The Ascent* and *John of the Cross for Today: The Dark Night* (Pittsburgh, PA: Epiphany Association, 2000).

⁴⁸ “Acts of Peter,” in *The Apocryphal New Testament*, trans. M. R. James (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1924), in Peter Kirby, comp., *Early Christian Writings*, <http://www.earlychristianwritings.com/text/actspeter.html> (accessed March 3, 2011).

Peter, like all devoted followers of Christ, must turn back and embrace the gift of suffering, though it feels like anything but a gift in the moment. Donald G. Bloesch, distinguished United Church of Christ evangelical theologian, states his conviction that the North American Protestant Church must “recover Catholic substance” in order to recover a biblical faith.⁴⁹ He concludes: “Genuine catholic evangelical spirituality will see its pivotal center in the atoning sacrifice of Christ and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit It will be characterized by sacrificial service in the midst of the suffering of the world as opposed to flight from the world.”⁵⁰ One cannot journey long on the pilgrim path in the way of Christ and avoid suffering (cf. John 15:20).

In contrast with Catholic spirituality, which emphasizes the suffering of Christ, the Protestant proposal states that the way of Christ brings victory. Certainly, Christ wants his children to live the overcoming life (cf. John 10:10; Rom. 8:37; 1 John 5:4-5; cf. Rev. 2:7, 11, 17, 26; 3:5, 12, 21; 21:7). Webber maintains that the “starting point for an evangelical witness in a postmodern world” is the “centrality of Christ and his victory over the powers of evil.”⁵¹ The phrase, *Christus Victor*, like the story behind *Quo vadis*, goes back to the early Church tradition, close to the end of the second century, perhaps around A.D. 195.⁵²

⁴⁹ Donald G. Bloesch, *Essentials of Evangelical Theology: Volume Two: Life, Ministry, and Hope* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1979), 278.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 285. Bloesch advocated spiritual renewal within his denomination. John Dart, “Theologian Bloesch, 82, Sought Renewal in UCC While Resisting Literalists,” *The Christian Century* (October 5, 2010): 15.

⁵¹ Webber, *Ancient-Future Faith*, 48.

⁵² Ibid., 57. The quintessential work on this subject as it relates to the atonement of Christ is Gustav Aulen, *Christus Victor: An Historical Study of the Three Main Types of the Idea of Atonement*, trans. A. G. Herbert (New York: Macmillan, 1969). See also, Joel B. Green and Mark D. Baker, *Recovering the Sandal of the Cross: Atonement in New Testament and Contemporary Contexts* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000), 118.

In an Easter sermon by Melito of Sardis, the preacher says of Christ: “I . . . am the Christ. *I am the one who destroyed death, and triumphed over the enemy, and trampled Hades underfoot, and bound the strong one, and carried off man to the heights of heaven, I, he says, am the Christ.*”⁵³ This overcoming theme of Christ’s victory and resurrection spans the New Testament, from the post-resurrection narratives in the Gospels to the letters of Paul, Hebrews, and especially the Book of Revelation (see Appendix D for details).

With the *Christus Victor* in mind, Hall offers a new Protestant understanding of God’s pain and human suffering through his concept of the “conquest from within,” contained in his classic trilogy of books on human suffering: *Lighten Our Darkness, God and Human Suffering*, and *The Cross in Our Context*,⁵⁴ all of which demonstrate his uncanny ability to interpret Luther’s Reformation theology for a postmodern time.⁵⁵ Hall learned from his mentors that the theology of suffering, the theology of the cross, cannot be spoken in “the language of dogma and doctrine The truth of the cross, if it is to be conveyed at all through words, must finally draw upon the language of art, of story,

⁵³ G. F. Hawthorne, ed., *Current Issues in Biblical and Patristic Interpretation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1975), 173.

⁵⁴ Douglas John Hall, *Lighten Our Darkness and God and Human Suffering*, cited earlier. Douglas John Hall, *The Cross in Our Context: Jesus and the Suffering World* (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Fortress, 2003). Hall is emeritus professor of theology at McGill University in Montreal. He was shaped by emerging neo-orthodoxy at Union Theological Seminary and has been a systematics professor since 1962.

⁵⁵ Douglas John Hall, *Bound and Free: A Theologian’s Journey* (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Fortress, 2005), 35-38. See Douglas John Hall, “Cross and Context: How My Mind Has Changed,” *The Christian Century* (September 7, 2010): 34. Also, Douglas John Hall, *Remembered Voices: Reclaiming the Legacy of “Neo-Orthodoxy”* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1998).

drama, symbol, metaphor, analogy. The cross of Jesus Christ is after all not a theological statement It is an event, a deed, an enactment.”⁵⁶

Like the Catholic visual metaphors of the Stations of the Cross, the *theologia crucis*, the theology of the cross, is at the heart of Hall’s interpretation of Luther on human suffering. Luther, in his commentary on the first twenty-two Psalms, states, “But the theology of the cross alone is our theology!” While resurrection undergirds the cross at every point for Luther,⁵⁷ the glory of God came in the face of Jesus Christ, a face that was marred beyond that of any other human being (cf. 2 Cor. 4:6; Isa. 52:14). No single part of the human body represents the heart and soul more than the face. For Luther, the face of God is suffering.

Gerhard O. Forde, the eminent Lutheran theologian, explains Luther’s theology in terms of active participation and sharing in the fellowship of Christ’s suffering. He writes: “The cross draws us into itself so that we become participants in the story Just as Jesus was crucified so we also are crucified with him. The cross makes us part of its story. The cross becomes our story. That is what it means to say, as Luther did, “The cross *alone* is our theology.”⁵⁸ The gift of the cross allows one to be able to enter the grief of another,

⁵⁶ Hall, *God and Human Suffering*, 107.

⁵⁷ *Luther’s Commentary on the First Twenty-two Psalms*, trans. John Nicholas Lenker, Standard Edition of Luther’s Works, vol. 1 (Sunbury, PA: Lutherans in All Lands Co., 1903), 289. One must understand that the theology of the cross includes the resurrection, as understood and defended by Luther. Forde says, “We should always bear in mind in pondering texts like the Heidelberg Disputation that resurrection is always taken together with the cross Indeed, it is not possible to have a theology of the cross without resurrection.” Gerhard O. Forde, *On Being A Theologian of the Cross: Reflections on Luther’s Heidelberg Disputation, 1518* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1997), 18.

⁵⁸ Forde, *On Being A Theologian of the Cross*, 7. Moltmann, *The Crucified God*, 208, points out the historical context of Luther’s Heidelberg Disputation or twenty-four theses; Luther presented his exegetical work on Psalm 22 to a regular conference of Augustinian monks, and when he finished his presentation he immediately headed to Worms. Moltmann concludes, “Thus the *theologia crucis* stands at the climax of his [Luther’s] ‘decision for reformation’ and represents its theoretical basis.”

compassionately and tenderly, one who endures such unimaginable pain and suffering. Shared tears are a sufficient witness to the glory of God, to our overcoming faith in Christ's resurrection. We do not weep as those who are without hope, as Paul says (1 Thess. 4:13-14).

Hall makes a similar case as Forde that redemption comes "from within," that Christ conquers the suffering of humanity from within."⁵⁹ Such a conquest and victory is visible only to the eyes of faith; the world calls such "power"—"weakness" and such "victory"—"failure" (cf. 1 Cor. 1:23).⁶⁰ He asserts the following:

Suffering is necessary for the body of Christ—and is the one indispensable mark of its authenticity—because there is still suffering in God's beloved world, and God would still be involved in it. God's involvement in the world's suffering is not a once-for-all matter. It preceded the advent of the Son, . . . and it succeeds his ascension. As Christians we believe that the Christ achieved a decisive identification with and conquest of human suffering; and we therefore know our own part in this redemptive process to be a matter of "grace alone," the grace of our incorporation into *his* suffering.⁶¹

Paul speaks of his own horrific suffering as an Apostle of Christ, including images of the arena: "fools . . . weak . . . dishonored . . . hungry and thirsty . . . in rags . . . brutally treated . . . homeless . . . cursed . . . persecuted . . . slandered Up to this moment, we have become the scum of the earth, the refuse of the world (cf. 1 Cor. 4:9-15)." To follow Paul, the Apostle of Christ—and ultimately experience victory as he did—means to follow his example of the suffering service of Christ.

⁵⁹ Hall, *God and Human Suffering*, 107.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 140-141.

Hall follows Luther in contrasting this *theologia crucis*, theology of the cross, exemplified by Jesus and Paul, with the *theologia gloriae*, the “theology of glory.”⁶² Hall compares Luther’s understanding of a theology of glory to his explication of the triumphalism of Christendom or the general exercise of power in the name of Christ by the North American Church. The rallying battle cry for Constantine, as Hall points out, was “In this sign, *conquer!*”⁶³ Webber confirms that for at least the first millennium of the Church, *Christus Victor* was the dominant model of Christ.⁶⁴

Ernst Kasemann, noted professor of New Testament at the University of Tübingen, in an important 1970 article on “The Pauline Theology of the Cross,” says that for Christians, “the glory of the church and of Christian life” is to “let their lives become a service to God under the sign of Golgotha.”⁶⁵ For postmoderns seeking relationship with God through the Church, the “sign of Golgotha” will present a much more attractive, humble, and gracious invitation than “In this sign, *conquer!*” In an age of skepticism, cynicism, and criticism of leadership in all forms, an authentic witness to pain and human suffering best portrays the true Gospel of Jesus Christ because it more closely resembles the reality of human experience here on earth.

⁶² Hall, *Lighten the Darkness*, 108-109.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 108.

⁶⁴ Webber, *Ancient-Future Faith*, 43. Webber goes on to say that this model changed during the Medieval period, when the focus shifted to sacrifice.

⁶⁵ Ernst Kasemann, “The Pauline Theology of the Cross,” *Interpretation* 24, no. 2 (April 1, 1970): 177.

Like Hall, Brueggemann calls the Church to claim the power of Christ's resurrection to triumph over greed, hate, and the idolatry of consumerism.⁶⁶ Brueggemann summarizes the nature of this hidden victory:

The victory of God in our time over this deathly idolatry is hidden from us, as God's decisive victory is always hidden from us. We do not know exactly when and where that victory has been wrought. It is hidden in the weakness of neighbor love, in the foolishness of mercy, in the vulnerability of compassion, in the staggering alternatives of forgiveness and generosity which permit new life to emerge in situations of despair and brutality. . . The news grounded in God's victory is that the deathly power of commodity has no claim upon us, no legitimacy to define our life. We are free of its awesome power and claim, and are therefore free to live a different life.⁶⁷

For the true seeker and the serious Christ follower, this is largely what it means for love to triumph over consumerism and triumphalism in today's culture.

Resting upon the models of Catholic and Protestant spirituality, building on the foundation of a return to ancient-future faith, employing visualization, metaphor and pilgrimage, along with the Stations of the Cross and the post-resurrection appearances of Christ, the Twelve Steps in Christ's Way contained in Part Three of this dissertation can assert itself as a viable path for the pilgrim. In the same way that the earlier, classic allegorical stories of Bunyan and Dante are arduous journeys, so the way of Christ today is filled with suffering. Just as the earlier tales of Journey Upward offer hope and promise of celestial glory, so the way of Christ today offers assurance of glory, both in this life and the life to come. More importantly, the glory of the journey in Christ's way remains hidden to all but the eyes of faith—most often found contemptible and misconstrued in the voices of the crowd, except for the true encouragers looking on from the grandstand of heaven.

⁶⁶ Brueggemann, *Biblical Perspectives on Evangelism*, 37-43.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 40-41.

PART THREE

TWELVE STEPS IN THE WAY OF CHRIST—A POSTMODERN PATH FOR
CHRISTIAN GROWTH AND LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

CHAPTER 5

A NEW PARADIGM FOR FOLLOWING CHRIST: TWELVE STEPS IN THE WAY OF CHRIST AND AN INTRODUCTION TO SEGUE ONE

In light of the consumer-driven, systematized, programmatic, discipleship models being proffered in today's churches, North American Church leaders must return to the ancient paths of metaphor and pilgrimage journey in a new approach to Christian growth and leadership development based on the life of Christ in order to reach postmoderns and develop missional leaders. The central idea of this thesis, *Twelve Steps in the Way of Christ*, rests upon the groundwork laid regarding the current celebrity culture and the postmodern view of the failed experiment of the Church in North America; the eight inadequate ways of measuring North American spirituality; the defining works of spiritual formation, moral development, and contemporary Christian leadership emergence models; and the historic Catholic and Protestant proposals, *Quo vadis* and *Christus Victor*.

The *Twelve Steps in the Way of Christ* recreate a structure and process for a renewal of Wesleyan spirituality centered in Christ for a postmodern time. A Wesleyan spirituality is a pilgrimage-based paradigm centered on growth in grace, traveled in steps, discerned through key markers or turning points, appropriated through a dynamic process of action and reflection, aided by the accountability of community, and undertaken for the

sake of others. It is derived from the journey of Christ himself while on earth. These twelve steps offer a distinctive, Christ-centered pattern or model for spiritual growth and leadership development. God desires every potential believer and Christ follower to become passionately involved with knowing and loving God through a pilgrimage journey of seeking, following, and then believing and trusting through the Holy Spirit—all of which results in emerging leadership.

Introduction to the Twelve Steps in the Way of Christ

Seekers, believers, and Christ followers of the twenty-first century seek imaginative, collaborative, collective, and connected means to fulfill their quest for spiritual growth. They want a way, a path to follow, that is well worn and ancient yet feels familiar and somehow remains flexible enough to allow for their own personalities and idiosyncrasies. Frost and Hirsch remind leaders, “Any yearning for spiritual wholeness will not be satisfied with formulae, programs, or doctrine. It takes time for the spiritual to find its earthing point in each life. It’s only through a shared pilgrimage that Christian and not-yet-Christian can come to a place of encountering the Holy in the midst of the storm.”¹ This “earthing point” signals the inevitable continuity and discontinuity of life, especially for postmodern pilgrims, and the necessity for North American church leaders to engage contemporary followers of “the Way” in a more organic and “fully human,” Christ-shared experience.²

¹ Frost and Hirsch, *The Shaping of Things to Come*, 97.

² Ibid. Frost and Hirsch go on to point out that this is one of the reasons for the success of twelve-step programs like Alcoholics Anonymous, where people today want to learn from “others who share the same life context and have found a way forward,” as opposed to “experts or higher authorities.”

Each step of the proposed spiritual journey path builds on the next step.³ While the steps appear linear in progression, they are anything but linear. Twelve Steps in the Way of Christ provides leaders and followers alike a suggested guide, a spiritual pathway, and biblical metaphor to help leaders and followers embrace the tastes and textures, unique shapes, and nooks and crannies of shared experience passed on from generation to generation. This is part of God’s unique way of “making all things new” (Rev. 21:5).

The Twelve Steps model, however, is not a simple, upward, linear journey to celestial glory. The steps are viewed better in terms of multiple journeys continuously interwoven and intertwined like a double-helix DNA molecule or a twisting, spiral staircase ascending and descending. The way is always forward; but sometimes the pilgrim goes up, sometimes down, or sometimes plateaus, like the middle landing of a staircase. Neil Cole patterns his journey model primarily on the missionary journeys of Paul and points out that life is a series of journeys and not just a single, lifelong trip; he says that each journey series is “full of new territory, exciting adventures, and life lessons to be learned.”⁴ Life is not a neatly prescribed, pre-packaged system. It is a journey lived forward but best viewed backward.⁵ The Twelve Steps in the Way of Christ, therefore, must not be viewed as a singular and linear journey but rather as a series of steps or

³ See Appendix E for a complete list of the Twelve Steps in the Way of Christ.

⁴ Neil Cole, *Journeys to Significance: Charting a Leadership Course from the Life of Paul* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2011), xxvi. Cole’s most recent book, *Journeys to Significance*, has helped me also to frame the three segues, consisting of four steps each in the Twelve Steps in the Way of Christ as distinct journeys of their own. Cole’s book is the first I have seen to utilize the six-stage Clinton model (described in *The Making of a Leader*, 39-55 and discussed earlier in Chapter 3), as applied to the life of a biblical character and spiritual leader, the Apostle Paul.

⁵ Ibid.

journeys within the larger, organic, and constantly evolving pilgrimage life lived in response to God's continuing invitation to a grace-based existence.

Introduction to the Steps of Segue One: Light in the Darkness/Clarity of Vision

Each section of the Twelve Steps is formed within its own series of four steps, introduced by a particular, metaphorical image or segue. The image of light in the darkness and clarity of vision birthed in the midst of chaos frame the first four steps: God Seeker, Christ Follower, Spirit Believer, and Emerging Leader. This invitational, volunteer journey in Christ's Way is symbolized by the image of light in the darkness and is a journey of vision, discipleship, and service to others. At the very beginning of creation, God spoke and said, "Let there be light" (Gen. 1:3). John reprises this creation narrative in the opening to his Gospel, where he says of Christ, "In him was life, and that life was the light of men [and women]. The light shines in the darkness, but the darkness has not understood [or overcome] it" (John 1:4-5).

For the postmodern seeker, the darkness represents the chaos of this time, the unknowing and uncertainty of life. Wheatley speaks of this present period as an "era of many messes" and "America's dark night."⁶ She says, "There is only one way through a dark night, and that is to illuminate the truth of who we are."⁷ This light of Christ brings a vision of knowing, loving, and serving God through imitation of Christ and service to

⁶ Margaret J. Wheatley, *Finding Our Way: Leadership For an Uncertain Time* (San Francisco: Barrett-Koehler, 2007), 2 and 257.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 259.

others (cf. John 1:9; 1 John 1:7). Webber says, “*The right image of discipleship is Jesus.*”⁸ Thus, as Christ’s resurrection brought life and hope to the early Christian followers and fearful believers who gathered behind closed doors and worshipped in the catacombs under the city of Rome, so these steps of discipleship provide postmodern seekers a means and a way—a process—to grow in faithfulness to Christ in the midst of this cultural darkness.

Great pilgrimage journeys begin with clear vision of a desired destination. Vision comes through the spiritual disciplines of learning to wait on God (Ps. 27:13-14; Hab. 2:3), listen to the Holy Spirit (Rom. 8:26-27), diligently search and study the Word of God (John 5:39; 2 Tim. 3:14-17), and seek godly counsel (Prov. 11:14—“in an abundance of counselors there is safety,” RSV⁹), especially in the confirmation of two or three witnesses (Deut. 19:15). The pilgrim must be patient waiting on God’s vision, not in pride of selfish desire but in humble expectancy and faith (Hab. 2:1-4).

As with great narrative literature and all of life, the pilgrim journey lurches forward with starts and stops, detours and delays, spurts and surges, mountain peaks and valleys, rivers and deserts. It is filled with blue sky and dark, terrifying, descending wall clouds hiding the destructive winds of upheaval, chaos, and turmoil. M. Robert Mulholland Jr. eloquently speaks to this hope in his own life transformation:

When spirituality is viewed as a journey, however, the way to spiritual wholeness is seen to lie in an increasingly faithful response to the One whose purpose shapes our path, whose grace redeems our detours, whose power liberates us from crippling bondages of the prior journey and whose transforming presence meets

⁸ Webber, *Journey to Jesus*, 100.

⁹ *The Bible: Containing the Old and New Testaments*, Revised Standard Version (1952; repr., New York: American Bible Society, 1980).

us at each turn in the road. In other words, holistic spirituality is a pilgrimage of deepening responsiveness to God's control of our life and being.¹⁰

Mulholland beautifully frames the argument and names the goal of spiritual formation: “deepening responsiveness to God's control of our life and being.” Spiritual formation is part journey and pilgrimage and mystery, continually influenced by God in Christ through the Holy Spirit. Spiritual formation is also part trained behavior, calling forth “an increasingly faithful response” and concerted effort on the part of the pilgrim, inculcating spiritual disciplines into daily life both individually and corporately. All of Christian spiritual formation has one goal: Jesus Christ. The first four of the Twelve Steps in the Way of Christ restore the ancient Church tradition of discipleship and develop emerging leaders who can influence their worlds for Christ and the Gospel.

Segue One Steps: God Seeker, Christ Follower, Spirit Believer, and Emerging Leader

The first four steps in segue one: God Seeker, Christ Follower, Spirit Believer, and Emerging Leader lead the postmodern pilgrim into growth and discipleship in Christ. These beginning steps encourage the fledgling pilgrim to explore God to the fullest extent possible, including: all of God's grandeur (cf. Job 38-41; Rom. 1:20); God's purposes for the pilgrim's life (cf. Ps. 8:4-8; Acts 17:26-31), including repentance (Acts 17:30) and fellowship with God through Christ (cf. Rom. 5:1-2; John 14:23; 1 John 1:7); infilling

¹⁰ Mulholland, *Invitation to a Journey*, 12. Webber best summarizes this tradition and progression with his own steps of “Seeker, Hearer, Kneeler, and Faithful.” These first steps, grounded in the practice of early Christianity, I have modified and expanded to cover the earliest stages of Christian growth and leadership development and not merely the initial process of conversion, baptism, and church covenant. See Webber, *Journey to Jesus*, 26. See also Hagberg and Guelich, *The Critical Journey*, 7, for their first three stages: “Recognition of God, Life of Discipleship, and Productive Life.”

with the Holy Spirit (cf. Matt. 3:11; John 1:33-34; Acts 1:5); and preparation for service to others (cf. Gen. 12:1-2; Mark 10:43-45; Rom. 12:1-2).

The first step in the Twelve Steps in the Way of Christ is that of God Seeker. God is a seeking God, and he looks for relationship. H. Eddie Fox and George E. Morris write these powerful words: “From the beginning of creation, the quest for relationship is primarily a divine quest. God is the seeker, the pursuer, the searcher. Thus, salvation is God’s idea.”¹¹ Jesus speaks of the seeking heart of God in his three parables of the lost sheep, lost coin, and lost son in Luke 15. He describes the Father as a seeker after certain kinds of worshippers in John 4:23. In the Sermon on the Mount, asking and seeking are at the center of kingdom transaction (Matt. 7:7-8). Willard helpfully points out that “the ask-seek-knock teaching first applies to our approach to others, not to prayer to God.”¹² So, if seeking is at the heart of Jesus’ ministry and the heart of Father God, and people are made in God’s image, the wooing or prevenient grace of God is the first marker on the seeker’s spiritual journey. Jesus made clear that God’s grace draws or “woos” all people to a deeper walk with Christ (cf. John 6:40-44; 1 John 4:19).

As with all twelve steps in Christ’s Way, each one has at least two markers to guide the pilgrim along the path. Asking the question, “Who am I?” and seeking an

¹¹ H. Eddie Fox and George E. Morris, *Faith-Sharing: Dynamic Christian Witnessing by Invitation*, vol. 4 of the World Evangelism Library (Nashville: Discipleship Resources, 1986), 3. This was prepared by the direction of the World Methodist Council.

¹² Willard, *The Divine Conspiracy*, 232. The Apostle Paul also makes this seeking issue a central part of his most memorable sermon on Mars Hill in Athens (Acts 17:27: “God did this so that men would seek him and perhaps reach out for him and find him, though he is not far from each one of us”).

answer is the second marker or turning point.¹³ The goal of the search is love, affirmation, acceptance, meaningful relationship, and answers to life's key questions: "Where did I come from?" "Where am I heading?" "Who am I?" "What is life about?"¹⁴ Nicky Gumbel, founder of the Alpha Course for Christianity, calls these the "first order questions of life."¹⁵ Daniel Benedict and Craig Kennet Miller categorize seekers into four types: "Churched Seekers, Seekers on the Journey, Latent Seekers, and Unbelievers."¹⁶ For the purposes of this discussion, the "Seekers on the Journey" are the most relevant. Benedict and C. Miller describe this group:

In our day and age, Seekers on the Journey are looking for God in many different places and are on a self-search to define and to create their own spirituality. They may or may not have been part of the church at some time in their life, but they are not now committed to any organized religion. Many adapt beliefs from more than one religion. . . . What distinguishes them from other seekers is that they have a spiritual itch that needs to be scratched, and they are willing to look anywhere and everywhere to fulfill that need.¹⁷

More than simply offering "seeker services," North American Church leaders need to recognize the fact that many of today's seekers have this spiritual "itch" to be scratched.¹⁸

Through personal witness and testimony, like the early disciples, leaders can engage

¹³ Not all the Twelve Steps have questions for markers, but each step has important questions to consider which help pilgrims discern their place on the spiritual path. See Appendix E for these details.

¹⁴ Nicky Gumbel, *Questions of Life: A Practical Introduction to the Christian Faith* (Colorado Springs, CO: Cook Ministry Resources, 1996), 15.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Daniel Benedict and Craig Kennet Miller, *Contemporary Worship for the Twenty-first Century: Worship or Evangelism?* (Nashville: Discipleship Resources, 1995), 27-29.

¹⁷ Ibid., 28. Latent Seekers are those who were part of the Church at an early age or baptized but never made a personal profession of faith in Jesus Christ.

¹⁸ Seekers should not be disparaged in any way because they are on the first step of the pilgrim journey. Most begin the journey as God Seekers, including the first disciples of Jesus.

postmodern skeptics, the fearful, or those hurt by the local church. North American Christians today must share the good news of Christ in very personal, one-on-one encounters, not through large programs or undue claims of spiritual superiority. This kind of winsome testimony by leaders will result in a natural curiosity on the part of genuine seekers to know and experience more of such a God of kindness, mercy, and grace.

The second step in Christ's Way is that of the Christ Follower.¹⁹ Christ Followers are those who ask the Jesus question: "Who Is Jesus Christ?" This is the first marker of Step Two. Later, again by God's amazing grace, pilgrims make a conscious decision to deny themselves, "take up their cross" (cf. Matt. 16:24-27; Luke 9:23-24), and pattern their lives after the way and in the footsteps of Jesus (1 Pet. 2:21). This is the second marker on the journey, what the Apostle Paul (cf. Rom. 5:6-11; 8:1-4; Gal. 3:6-9) and J. Wesley call the experience of "justifying grace," finding lasting peace with God, self and others (cf. Rom. 5:1-2; Eph. 2:14-18; Prov. 16:7). Clearly, added to God's wooing of the pilgrim disciple is the act of believing and trusting in Christ as Savior and Deliverer. Jesus said to his first disciples, "Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men" (Matt. 4:19-20; Mark 1:17-18; Luke 5:10-11; John 1:43).

Once a God Seeker has committed to the journey of Christ and becomes a Christ Follower or disciple of Jesus, this second major life question that all pilgrims must ask ("Who is Jesus Christ?") in my view becomes life's most important question. Whether at

¹⁹ Cf. John Valentine, *Follow Me* (Nottingham, England: Inter-Varsity Press, 2009), 47, says, "Christian discipleship is following Jesus. We can be even more precise: it is copying Jesus, trying to model our lives on his life."

Ginghamsburg Church under the tutelage of Michael Slaughter or as part of the Alpha Course under Gumbel, the question, “Who is Jesus?” is central to the spiritual journey.²⁰ Slaughter says the same question was posed by Jesus to Peter in this form: “Who do you say that I am?” (Matt. 16:15; Mark 8:29; Luke 9:20), is the “most critical question facing the church today, as it relates to our future.”²¹ Slaughter further attributes the rapid growth of Ginghamsburg Church to “the clear focus on the person, work, and authority of Jesus Christ. He is the reason behind every action we take.”²² Christ following is much more art and practice than a cerebral exercise. R. Miller articulates the ancient relationship of rabbi to apprentice in contemporary language: “Discipleship is not a small group or classroom topic. It is a lab project, a choreographed dance, an art taught under the eye of a master. It is apprehended first through demonstration, not intellectually.”²³ Mentors and spiritual guides are critically important to pilgrims beginning their spiritual journeys in Christ.

The goal of Christ following is both character development, becoming like Christ, as well as preparation for spiritual deployment (consecration and surrender). In short, Christ Followers learn God’s Word as contained in Scripture and experience God’s grace through the fellowship of the local church and the presence of the indwelling Holy Spirit. Christ following is a journey of Word and grace, in the same way that God Seekers learn about love and relationship. Authentic engagement with the Word of God, the Scriptures,

²⁰ See Michael Slaughter, *Spiritual Entrepreneurs: 6 Principles for Risking Renewal*, ed. Herb Miller (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1995), 25-45; and Gumbel, *Questions of Life*, 23-41.

²¹ Slaughter, *Spiritual Entrepreneurs*, 26.

²² Ibid.

²³ R. Miller, *The Millennium Matrix*, 159.

develops character more than any other practice (cf. Heb. 4:12; 2 Tim. 3:14-17).²⁴ For an overview of ways to engage God Seekers and Christ Followers through God's Word today, Thomas G. Bandy's *Introducing the Uncommon Lectionary: Opening the Bible to Seekers and Disciples* presents itself as an excellent source.

God's grace, through the indwelling Holy Spirit, guides the entire pilgrim journey. Cole summarizes this important second step in terms of "surrender": "The main thrust of this phase is to know God in a more personal and dynamic way. From the moment human beings first sinned in the garden, God has been pursuing us. . . . A dramatic surrender is characteristic of this phase, whether that is a first-time conversion, a step into greater devotion and life service, or both."²⁵ The great hymn of the church, *I Surrender All*, captures well this transformative moment for the pilgrim.²⁶ Whether experienced at a church camp, crusade, altar call, invitational response by lifted hand, prayer on one's knees, or the quiet conviction of simply giving all to God, surrender frames the issues of repentance and justifying grace.

Spirit Believer is the third step in Christ's Way. Spirit Believers surrender their lives fully to Christ, experience a fresh infilling of the Holy Spirit, and learn to discern and hear God's voice of comfort and guidance speaking to them. The Spirit Believer step

²⁴ Thomas G. Bandy, *Introducing the Uncommon Lectionary: Opening the Bible to Seekers and Disciples* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2006), 144-160. Bandy's book offers helpful material, especially his first couple of appendices.

²⁵ Cole, *Journeys to Significance*, 29 and 37. While surrender is characteristic of the whole journey, it is particularly applicable to this second step in Christ's Way.

²⁶ "I Surrender All," in *The United Methodist Hymnal: Book of United Methodist Worship*, (Nashville: The United Methodist Publishing House, 1989), Hymn #354.

normally occurs either simultaneously or in short proximity to the second step, depending on the individual's personal journey, understanding, teaching, tradition, upbringing, or other factors. The One to whom God gives the Spirit without limit (John 3:34b), Jesus Christ, is intent on sharing that same Holy Spirit with every Christ Follower.²⁷

This step is called "Spirit Believer" for an important reason. A clear first marker of this step is the ability to hear God through the "still, small voice" of God's Holy Spirit both individually and corporately through the traditional means of grace (Holy Communion, fellowship, spiritual companionship, sacred reading, prayer partners, group study, worship, and the like). This marker may be far more important in today's North American culture than the more attention-drawing and almost exclusively individualistic "sign gifts" listed by the Apostle Paul (cf. 1 Cor. 12-14, especially 1 Cor. 12:7-11, 28-31). The gentle whisper of God's Spirit can convey much more authenticity to postmodern seekers in North America than the high-profile "power" gifts of tongues, healing, miracles, and prophecy.²⁸

Learning to hear God's voice is like a child learning to walk. It takes time, patience, and a good teacher. Some pilgrims experience this God-talk through devotional reading and study of Scripture, as Becky Tirabassi notes in *Let God Talk to You*.²⁹ Prayer

²⁷ Space does not permit a discussion of when such spiritual infilling(s) and empowerments take place. Wesleyans tend to see at least two fillings of the Spirit, whereas the reformed and Catholic traditions tend to expect only one, at the time of baptism/conversion. See the excellent discussion of the gifts of the Spirit in the context of all New Testament believers functioning as "priests" in the second volume of Bloesch, *Essentials of Evangelical Theology*, 104-109.

²⁸ See John Wimber with Kevin Springer, *Power Evangelism* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1986), 107-121, 191-192.

²⁹ Becky Tirabassi, *Let God Talk to You* (Minneapolis, MN: Bethany House, 2009), 9-10, 44-56.

is the chief means by which God speaks and by which the pilgrim learns to hear God's voice, such as in learning to pray the Book of Psalms—that is, portions of the Psalms prayed in daily devotions as an individual or as part of a group.³⁰ Journaling one's thoughts and encounters with God is another excellent aid, one which I have used extensively over the years. Additionally, worship is vital to learning to hear God speak both individually and in the experience of community. The pastor, mentor, small group leader, Sunday School teacher, or fellow pilgrim becomes a primary encourager and is very important for the pilgrim at this point. Such guides engage the pilgrim in holy conversations and spiritual matters, based on the Word of God and life experience.

In this way, the experience of the third step in Christ's Way, Spirit Believer, is Sonship or Daughterhood (cf. Rom. 8:15-16; Gal. 4:6-7). The key question in the third step is this: "Who am I in Christ?" or "Whose am I?" Filled with the Holy Spirit, Spirit Believers are eager and empowered to work the works of Christ and hope to say, "I do the work of him who sent me" (cf. John 9:4) or even greater works (John 14:12). Faith and works are now joined in a flood of good will and opportunity (James 2:17-18). At this point, church leaders like Hagberg and Guelich suggest the general guidance of such helps as "self-assessment and gifts identification" or spiritual gift inventories and their own "Spiritual Life Inventory,"³¹ as well as other faith inventories. One of the best self-

³⁰ An excellent beginning resource for this exercise is James W. Sire, *Learning to Pray Through the Psalms* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2005).

³¹ Hagberg and Guelich, *Critical Journey*, 168. The Spiritual Life Inventory is one of Hagberg and Guelich's aids. For more information, see the web site: Personal Power Products, "Spiritual Development: Spiritual Products for the Inner Life," <http://www.personalpowerproducts.com/pppspiritdev.htm> (accessed

assessment helps is the DiSC Inventory, used extensively by Fuller Theological Seminary and other ministries and organizations.³²

With all that God does for the God Seeker, Christ Follower, and Spirit Believer during the first three steps of the pilgrimage, the fourth step in Christ's Way explodes with thanksgiving and praise as well as the new responsibility of Emerging Leader.³³ Emerging Leaders become cognizant and self-aware of many personal gifts, aptitudes, desires, dreams, inclinations, hopes, and aspirations. They have a general desire to serve, please, and meet the needs of others. This awareness of personal potential and birth of altruistic desire is the first clear marker of the Emerging Leader step. Hagberg and Guelich call this step "The Productive Life" and say that this "stage" is the "doing" and "active phase."³⁴ The crucial question of the fourth step is this: "To whom shall I go?"

However, a pattern becomes visible in step four of Christ's Way, Emerging Leader: the budding leader has the sincere desire to serve others but still remains ego-driven. R. Miller refers to this paradox as the "lead-to-serve mindset."³⁵ Young or inexperienced leaders can become self-driven, self-focused, and even self-centered,

May 27, 2011); see also, LifeWay, "Spiritual Growth Assessment," http://www.lifeway.com/lwc/files/lwcF_PDF_DSC_Spiritual_Growth_Assessment.pdf (accessed June 16, 2011), 8-9.

³² See the official website DISCClassicProfile.com, "DiSC Classic Profile & Test Online Versions," <http://www.discclassicprofile.com/?gclid=COvL2uidiakCFUhr7QodqHW7Hw> (accessed May 27, 2011). For a more comprehensive Christian approach to spiritual gifts, combined with the DiSC assessment, see Unique You: Solve the People Puzzle, <https://www.uniquelyyou.com/sgift.php> (accessed May 28, 2011).

³³ See Robert K. Greenleaf, *Seeker and Servant: Reflections on Religious Leadership*, eds. Anne T. Fraker and Larry C. Spears (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1996) and Robert K. Greenleaf, *Servant Leadership: A Journey into the Nature of Legitimate Power and Greatness* (1977; repr., New York: Paulist Press, 1991). While titled under "servant leadership," Greenleaf's books remain the standard in the field of leadership.

³⁴ Hagberg and Guelich, *Critical Journey*, 73. This is their Stage 3.

³⁵ Miller, *The Millennium Matrix*, 154.

especially if as Emerging Leaders they become more productive and successful.³⁶ Life seems to reward those who work hard, show promise, perform well, and learn quickly. However, beneath the impressive exterior of the “leader-servant” (who seeks to lead first and serve second) often lurks unresolved personal and family issues, dysfunctions, fearful attitudes and a plethora of addictive/compulsive behaviors.

This common dilemma of Emerging Leaders necessitates the Journey Inward and the Journey Downward, before one can truly emerge in the Journey Outward, using all of one’s God-given talents and resources for the sake of others and future generations—which ultimately results in one who serves and ends up leading. Those who guide Emerging Leaders can utilize the narratives presented in Chapter 4 of this dissertation³⁷ and the many others available today through books, movies, and the Internet to define, describe, and explain the four Journeys Upward or Godward, Inward, Downward, and Outward. In this way, the Twelve Steps bridge the disciplines of spiritual formation and leadership to grow the pilgrim deeper, wider, higher, and further in the Christian walk and in service to others (cf. Eph. 3:14-21). During this step, mentors and spiritual guides must take care to help pilgrims avoid isolation and sin, practice the spiritual disciplines (especially prayer and Christian conversation), and engage in authenticity and transparency. Journaling, spiritual growth assessments, an annual spiritual growth plan, and participation in pairs or triads for accountability are all useful tools for Emerging Leaders to move forward in maturity.

³⁶ Hagberg and Guelich, *Critical Journey*, 82.

³⁷ Hurnard, *Hinds’ Feet on High Places*; Wilkinson, *The Dream Giver*; Bunyan, *Pilgrim’s Progress*. Further examples include the Jedi journey in *Star Wars* books and films, *The Lord of the Rings Trilogy* books and films, and classic works like Fyodor Dostoevsky, *The Brothers Karamazov* (Clinton, MA: Colonial Press, 1966).

CHAPTER 6

SEGUE TWO STEPS: MATURING IN CHRIST—HEAT FOR THE HEART/ JOURNEY OF HUMILITY

The pilgrimage journey of following Christ is not easy. In his most celebrated teaching, the Sermon on the Mount, Christ himself said the way was narrow and the road was hard (Matt. 7:14). After the exhilaration of the first four steps of the first segue—God Seeker, Christ Follower, Spirit Believer, and Emerging Leader—the climb or ascent to maturity and leadership becomes steeper, and the pilgrim desirous of forward progression must endure hardships and trials of many kinds. Somewhere along the spiritual path, maturing believers encounter the wilderness: the separation and loss of communion with God and becoming prisoners of pain.

However, along this twisted, confusing, and often distorted way, growing believers and maturing leaders learn to process their pain in healthy ways, receive hope, and learn true humility through servanthood. The *Quo vadis*, the suffering way of Christ, is an essential pattern for all maturing Christ followers and leaders. This second segue of steps provides a key element of reaching postmodern generations and developing Great Commission Leaders.

Introduction to Second Segue: Heat for the Heart/Journey of Humility

In the first segue—which contains vision, discipleship, and service—light in the darkness is the primary metaphor. The second segue’s central metaphor is a deeper experience of the light: heat for the heart. This second phase of the overall pilgrimage of life calls forth the journey of humility, healing, hope, and relinquishment. Two of the most significant images of heat in the Old Testament, as they apply to maturity and leadership development, are the potter’s wheel of Jeremiah (Jer. 18-19) and the blacksmith’s shop of Isaiah (Isa. 44:12-22; cf. 48:10-11; 54:16-17; Prov. 27:17). The potter shapes and forms the clay at his discretion, time and again slapping the raw clay down on the table beside the wheel, kneading and working the clay to prepare for its use. If the least imperfection emerges while on the wheel, the clay goes back on the table and the final product is delayed again. Just the right amount of water is applied to keep the clay moist (Holy Spirit); then finally, the prepared, green clay must be placed carefully in the kiln to be fired at high temperatures and extreme heat, until it hardens and forms into its finished shape and is ready to use. Pilgrims making their way through the middle steps of Christ’s Way become a Wilderness Wanderer, Pain Prisoner, Prisoner of Hope, and Humble Servant. They may discover suddenly that their paths have been leveled, that their own rough “places” of character are being made smooth, just like the clay spun on the potter’s wheel.

The other significant Old Testament image of heat for the heart is the blacksmith’s shop in the Book of Isaiah. The blacksmith’s shop, even more than the biblical images of desert or wilderness, signifies the refiner’s fire of God—that painful, purging, cleansing, all-consuming work of God’s Spirit to turn hearts of stone into hearts

of flesh, as the prophet Ezekiel describes the process (cf. Ezek. 36:25-29a; Zech. 13:9). God will deliver the pilgrim from “all uncleanness”; teach holiness and obedience; put the Holy Spirit within to motivate and enable; and most of all, bring the wayward Wilderness Wanderers from their shackles and prisons of bondage (Isa. 61:1) into the promised land of pure hearts and relational partnership with God.

The dark, foreboding wall clouds described earlier became etched in my own memory while pastoring a small Methodist Church and while my family lived through a horrific pair of F4 tornadoes in Catoosa in 1993. It was that day—five days before my father died in Florida and just four months after my wife had major surgery for a ruptured abscess in her fallopian tubes (having spent eleven days in St. Francis Hospital in Tulsa and nearly dying)—that I began to think a lot about the passages in Isaiah. I asked God to show me why my family and I had to endure this extreme season of suffering. As strange as it may seem, God spoke to my heart in that still, small voice: “Read Isaiah chapters 48-54, and see them as love letters to you, except for Isaiah 53, which is about my Son.” During those tumultuous days, I learned to obey the Spirit’s promptings and take refuge in his blacksmith’s shop.

I could not deal with all the “Job’s comforters,” well-meaning friends who tried to offer words of encouragement or consolation yet wondered aloud sometimes why such tragic events were happening to us. Neither could I deal with the notion that God had simply turned Satan loose on me and my family, to do with as he would, except for not taking our lives, as the opening to the Book of Job suggests. For months, I struggled with our circumstances and felt great sadness, depression, and anger. The only notion that brought peace was the idea that I was struggling and wrestling with the Almighty himself,

that somehow God had placed me in his blast furnace, as Isaiah 48:10 says, “to refine [me], though not as silver; to test [me] in the furnace of affliction.” The prophet expresses a similar conviction in Isaiah 54:16-17, where the blacksmith is clearly God (in contrast with the human blacksmith of Isaiah 44:12-22), who “fans the coals into flame and forges a weapon fit for its work” (Isa. 54:16). Nevertheless, Isaiah proclaims that this “good news” is “the heritage” of God’s servants and “their vindication” from the Lord (Isa. 54:17).¹

Humble service in Christ’s Way begins with what Mike Mason calls the “cauterization of the ego.”² Just as darkness needs God’s light to give birth to vision in the first segue, so the human heart needs the heat of cauterization to make possible the alignment of core values, beliefs, purpose, and vision with personal integrity and character in the second segue. In his classic book on marriage, *The Mystery of Marriage*, Mason talks about the symbolism of the candle ceremony, in which the separate candles are extinguished in exchange for the single candle lit, to signify that two people are joined together as one in the covenant of marriage. Mason says, “The flame that must be extinguished is no lambent flicker of a candle, but the blistering inferno of self-will and independence.”³ Then he offers this memorable statement: “There is really nothing else like this lifelong, cauterization of the ego that must take place in marriage. All of life is, in one way or another, humbling.”⁴

¹ For an excellent treatment of refinement in the furnace of affliction, see Kay Arthur, *As Silver Refined: Learning to Embrace Life’s Disappointments* (Colorado Springs, CO: WaterBrook, 1997), 1-8.

² Mike Mason, *The Mystery of Marriage* (Portland, OR: Multnomah Press, 1985), 72.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid.

Pilgrims need not fear the journey of suffering and the heat it brings; it is part and parcel of the steps formed in Christ's Way. Like the gold and other precious metals that are purified and brought to splendor through fire, so the Christian pilgrim comes to maximum usefulness and generativity through the fires of faith and refinement (cf. 2 Tim. 2:20-21; Heb. 12:28-29). However, the refiner's fire is not the only heat God uses in the pilgrim's life; desert heat from the arid wilderness also serves God's desired ends.

Jesus was driven by the Spirit into the wilderness, offering a similar pattern for all Christ followers. Eugene H. Peterson sets the stage for Mark's account of Jesus' temptation following his baptism: "Apparently there are wrong ways to be on the way of the Lord. The wilderness provides the place and time to clarify what is involved. We necessarily (this is not an option) have to pay close attention to the *way* we are on the way of the Lord, how we do this. Jesus had to do it; we have to do it."⁵ Robert Hicks confirms this understanding of the wilderness. Regarding how Elijah ran from Jezebel into the Sinai, he says, "Anyone who has stood on the edge of the Sinai realizes this is truly a wilderness. But in the Scriptures it represents a place not only of testing but also of tutoring."⁶

The lessons of the wilderness tutoring require interpretation, as they are not always easily assimilated by the aspiring pilgrim. Counselors, spiritual guides, pastors, teachers,

⁵ Eugene H. Peterson, *The Jesus Way: A Conversation on the Ways that Jesus Is the Way* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 2007), 29.

⁶ Robert Hicks, *The Masculine Journey: Understanding the Six Stages of Manhood* (Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 1993), 144; see also Gilbert Rendle, *Journey in the Wilderness: New Life for Mainline Churches* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2010), 1. Rendle is a leading church consultant, who states that the entire North American Mainline Church is undergoing its own "exodus" into the wilderness right now and writes: "It isn't often that a whole people go through a religious wilderness together. Yet in North America that has been the case in my lifetime and in my experience."

mentors, fellow pilgrims, and even spiritual directors and life coaches can provide invaluable input, analysis, and understanding of confusing, disorienting, and contradictory life circumstances—including markers and turning points. The Christian pilgrimage journey never was intended to be walked alone but in community (Prov. 11:14; 27:17; Mark 3:13-15; Acts 2:42-47; Rom. 12:4-5; 1 Cor. 12:12-27; Heb. 10:24-25). When faced with hard tasks, bitter defeats, and painful life choices, spiritual guides can offer the life-giving water of wisdom to a parched soul. For physical disease and disability, people see a physician or physical therapist. Pilgrims need not be ashamed to seek spiritual guidance and direction when they have lost their compass points or life purpose. This is especially helpful in seasons of malaise or lethargy; in moments of trauma; when facing the loss of a job; or when encountering divorce, separation, or the death of a loved one or beloved pet.⁷

Segue Two Steps: Wilderness Wanderer, Pain Prisoner, Prisoner of Hope, and Humble Servant

Like the previous segue, there are four steps to Segue Two: Wilderness Wanderer, Pain Prisoner, Prisoner of Hope, and Humble Servant. Pilgrims enter the wilderness as step five of the Twelve Steps in the Way of Christ and find it a place where they lose their way, their bearings, their moorings, and even their roots often in a confused morass of either deliberate, circumstantial, providential, or seemingly senseless reversals of good

⁷ God sends assistance in the wilderness through the least expected of people or circumstances. In my case, God used three consecutive job losses, a year of unemployment, a troubled marriage, an unlikely band of brothers at a car dealership, a three-year leave of absence from pastoral ministry, a nondenominational church with raucous praise and a TV-screen preacher, and the tragic death of our son-in-law to tutor my life and build Christ's character into me. These losses and setbacks are examples of the many painful trials Christian pilgrims experience today. The most important element for pilgrims is to recognize where they are in the journey.

fortune.⁸ It is not just seekers who lose their way on the journey; sometimes seasoned veterans of the journey find themselves lost as well. Like Dante and Bunyan, their respective allegorical characters portray the apparent demise of their divine favor, leading to exile for Dante and imprisonment for Bunyan.⁹

The Wilderness Wanderer step has two distinct markers: crisis and woundedness. Crisis is the precipitating event leading to the wilderness experience, as discussed above; and woundedness is the consequence of the debilitating crisis, whatever form it may take. Another word for this wounding of soul, ego, emotional stability, and personal strength is “brokenness.” The pains and losses which usher the soul into the wilderness experience often leave the soul, and the fragile human ego, in a wounded state. The events that occur during the wilderness experience may not directly result from the pilgrim’s personal actions or choices; however, since no one is perfect and as pilgrims we only see in part (1 Cor. 13:9-12), to ensure that the wilderness experience is not a time of vain suffering but rather becomes useful in some way, an important question to ask in step five is this: “Where have I lost my way through sin, selfish ambition, setback or circumstance?” Os Hillman, founder and president of Marketplace Leaders, and a casualty of adversity himself, losing his marriage and over half a million dollars in his business ventures, speaks of the types of crises that people endure in the desert: “It might be a broken

⁸ Many contemporary Christian leaders speak of the wilderness journey, both in the life of Christ and the followers of Christ. For example, see Reggie McNeal, *Practicing Greatness: 7 Disciplines of Extraordinary Spiritual Leaders*, A Leadership Network Publication (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2006), 143-149; Steve Roll, *Holy Burnout: Turning Brokenness into Blessing, Through the Power of God’s Restoring Love!* (Tulsa, OK: Virgil Hensley, 1996), 121-136; Rendle, *Journey in the Wilderness*.

⁹ Barnes, *Searching for Home*, 73; Lundin, “Introduction,” ix-xvii.

marriage and a series of business setbacks, as it was for me. It might be a hospital room and a series of radiation treatments. It might be the agonizing loss of a loved one—a spouse, a parent, a friend or even a child. It might be a trial of being slandered, falsely accused or unfairly criticized. The desert can take many forms.”¹⁰ As Hillman points out, crises take many forms, none more painful than the loss of a child.

On September 19, 2008, my older daughter, Leah Brant, married the love of her life, Eric Trogdon—a tall, six-foot-four, blond-haired, blue eyed, gentle giant of a man. He loved life, lived on the edge, and rode motorcycles. Just five months after a picture-perfect wedding, on Valentine’s Day of 2009, our “son” was diagnosed with Stage IV stomach cancer and given less than a year to live. He was only thirty-five years old. All we could do was watch helplessly as he slowly slipped away from our daughter and family.

Despite all the hellish days of throwing up, sleeping by the toilet, and going nights on end without sleep, Trogdon fought courageously, with more than human strength. He heard the voices of angels; he saw visions of heaven and hell. He witnessed boldly to his friends in the biker community. We watched his transformation before our very eyes: from nominal Christian to mighty warrior for Jesus Christ.

Another mighty warrior, Tony Snow, former press secretary for the Bush administration, fought a tenacious battle against the same dreaded disease, with tumors found in his abdomen, which lead to surgery and chemotherapy.¹¹ Snow wrote in an article called “Cancer’s Unexpected Blessings” in *Christianity Today*: “Those of us with

¹⁰ Os Hillman, *The Upside of Adversity* (Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 2006), 64.

¹¹ Tony Snow, “Cancer’s Unexpected Blessings,” *Christianity Today*, July 2007, 30.

potentially fatal diseases—and there are millions in America today—find ourselves in the odd position of coping with our mortality while trying to fathom God’s will.”¹²

Snow describes exactly the feelings the Brant and Trogdon families felt during this tumultuous time. Snow points out that such personal disasters and crises draw people closer to those they love, freeze-framing time, and drag “into insignificance the banal concerns that occupy our ‘normal time.’”¹³ Confrontation with death and mortality is all encompassing and all consuming. Those pilgrims who have stared death face to face can receive new strength for living life in a more meaningful and significant way, if they so choose. These are some of the “unexpected blessings” of tragedy and terminal illness. Trogdon went home to his heavenly reward on Good Friday, April 2, 2010. Snow passed on to his reward July 12, 2008.¹⁴ Both left lasting legacies of courage in the face of impossible odds, valiant testimonies to God’s goodness in the worst of circumstances, and bold witnesses of a just and loving God amidst communities as diverse, postmodern, and skeptical as the biker community of Oklahoma City and the Washington, DC beltway.

Sixth Step: Pain Prisoner

The sixth step of the Twelve Steps in the Way of Christ is Pain Prisoner. The Pain Prisoner step naturally follows from the Wilderness Wanderer step, as life crises mount and the wounded ego serves notice that it will not go away without a fight or a titanic

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ibid., 32.

¹⁴ Dana M. Perino, “Remembering Tony Snow’s Life,” *Politico*, entry posted July 7, 2009, <http://dyn.politico.com/printstory.cfm?uuid=5199D3C3-18FE-70B2-A80C3FCB29EC7A> (accessed April 28, 2011), 1.

struggle. Pilgrims on the journey to maturity and leadership are forced to confront themselves in new and unexpected ways, not necessarily as open to change as spiritual father Jacob. Bill Thrall, Bruce McNicol and John Lynch contrast two rooms in their classic book, *True Faced*, “The Room of Good Intentions” and “The Room of Grace.”¹⁵ They write: “Striving [like Jacob] leaves us dysfunctional and immature because it creates hiddenness. Masks abound in The Room of Good Intentions. It is the world of false appearances. Hiddenness makes us vulnerable to sin and thwarts maturity. It breeds compulsive sinning.”¹⁶ Compulsive sinning is another way to say “addiction.” Now, it is important to note here that not all debilitating life circumstances or wrong choices lead to a life of addiction. Prisons take many forms: emotional setbacks like depression or anger; major life losses and the prison of tarnished memory and regret; physical maladies like chronic disease, Lupus, or fibromyalgia; aging; true addictions like gambling, sex, alcohol, and drugs; overcompensation or overfunctioning to make up for the underfunctioning of others, which is typical of dysfunctional homes, churches, or organizations (otherwise known as codependency); people pleasing, ladder climbing, and competitive striving; and even literal experiences behind bars. These are just a few examples of the forms of “imprisonment” a Pain Prisoner can experience in stage six.

Since not all Pain Prisoners are bound by issues of addiction, codependence, or self-defeating behavior, two key markers characterize this sixth step in the pilgrim’s journey: humiliation/rejection and failure/defeat. Humiliation means being “stripped of

¹⁵ Bill Thrall, Bruce McNicol, and John Lynch, *True Faced: Trust God and Others with Who You Really Are* (Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 2004), 38-43.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 68-69.

pretenses and defenses,”¹⁷ as Parker J. Palmer describes in his experience with clinical depression. Humiliation and rejection leave the pilgrim nowhere to run and nowhere to hide. Experiences of painful overexposure, whether to the elements of nature, criticism of family, peers, bosses, mentors or close friends, or the uncertainties of life, can wreak emotional havoc and imprison the soul. Palmer writes: “Twice in my forties I spent endless months in the snake pit of the soul. Hour by hour, day by day, I wrestled with the desire to die, sometimes so feeble in my resistance that I ‘practiced’ ways of doing myself in.”¹⁸ Then Palmer explains the paradox of his exit from depression via humiliation:

Years ago, someone told me that humility is central to the spiritual life. . . . But this person did not tell me that the path to humility, for some of us at least, goes through humiliation, where we are brought low, rendered powerless, stripped of pretenses and defenses, and left feeling fraudulent, empty, and useless—a humiliation that allows us to regrow our lives from the ground up, from the humus of common ground.¹⁹

As a distinguished pastor, professor and author, Barnes—who based his study of this issue on *Dante’s Inferno*—agrees. He says, “In other words, we have to go down to go up, because no one just climbs home to God. The path begins at the gate of hell.”²⁰

The second marker of Pain Prisoner is failure/defeat and essentially means falling on one’s face. This is similar to humiliation but connotes a more permanent and lasting sense of negation or resignation. Scot McKnight writes: “Failure is an element of being a

¹⁷ Palmer, *Let Your Life Speak*, 70.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 58.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 70. The root derivation for “humility” comes from the word, “humus,” meaning ground or earth. For examples of Jesus’ complete rejection, based upon Scripture and tradition, see Appendix F.

²⁰ Barnes, *Searching for Home*, 74.

disciple, and that is why the disciples are shown for what they really are. The disciples exhibit enough examples of failure to suggest a pattern.”²¹

Hall also brings this crucial point to the fore: “As a people, we are simply incapable of facing the experience of negation. We cannot admit failure . . . our way of life has been the way of ‘success.’ Nobody ever told us what to do in case of failure—least of all Christianity.”²² For so many North Americans, especially pastors and church leaders, failure is simply not an option. Al McGuire, longtime basketball coach and TV commentator, famously said, “Once you start keeping score, winning’s the bottom line. It’s the American concept.”²³

For this reason, any pilgrim or leader who fails today or suffers major setback or defeat tends to be treated as damaged goods. In this way, North Americans fear failure almost more than death itself. In a personal conversation at a 2007 conference, McLaren shared with me that “most Christians” remain stuck in earlier stages of the pilgrimage journey because their churches will not stand beside them when they are going through stages of extreme pain and dislocation.²⁴ McLaren added this:

When Christians or leaders get wounded or damaged, because of circumstance, authority issues or emotional immaturity, it’s easier for us to kick them out or ignore them because we don’t have a coaching system in place or the time to

²¹ Scot McKnight, *The Jesus Creed: Loving God, Loving Others* (Brewster, MA: Paraclete Press, 2004), 211. For more detail on the disciples’ failures, as recorded in the Gospels, see McKnight, *Jesus Creed*, 323.

²² Hall, *Lighten Our Darkness*, 220 and 261.

²³ Glenn Liebman, *2,000 Sports Quips and Quotes* (New York: Gramercy Books, 1993), 416.

²⁴ Brian McLaren, interview with author, at “Tale of Two Gospels” (presentation at Christian Discipleship conference, St. Stephen’s United Methodist Church, Albuquerque, NM, February 24, 2007).

tackle their complex life issues. Nor do we have a small group system to support and hold them accountable for their mistakes and behavior.²⁵

The “stuckness” of North American churches and leaders hinges on one thing: people today are not willing to admit their pain, let alone share their pain with another, unless behind closed doors in a counselor’s office or completely anonymous and confidential group. In order to keep moving through the grief or difficulty of the journey, a vital question for step six, Pain Prisoner, is this: “Where have we become stuck in our emotional, vocational, and spiritual lives?”

The mutual sharing of pain is the key to healing, as the Apostle James wrote in his letter: “Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed” (James 5:16). *The Message* translation says at the beginning of that verse, “Make this your common practice.”²⁶ Suffering and pain are the common lot of humanity. Understanding this as part of the pilgrim’s journey, the Church in North America will find healthy and constructive ways to create sacred space and allow for the personal sharing of pain in common groups. This can be done by Stephen Ministry groups; twelve step “anonymous” gatherings and other forms of recovery groups, like Divorce Recovery or Grief Recovery; spiritual retreats like the Walk to Emmaus; quiet rooms or prayer rooms; guided spiritual disciplines like the Exercises of St. Ignatius, meditation or labyrinth walks; physical exercise groups; and accountability partners, in

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Eugene H. Peterson, *The Message: The Bible in Contemporary Language* (Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 2002).

groups of two or three, as Cole recommends.²⁷ Sally Morgenthaler says, “We must name the pain and not repress it.”²⁸ This is the gift of authentic, small group ministry when shared pain is kept strictly confidential and held with respectful hands close to the heart.

Seventh Step: Prisoner of Hope

The seventh step of the Twelve Steps in the Way of Christ is Prisoner of Hope. The phrase comes from the Book of Zechariah in the context of the prophetic promise of the Messiah’s triumphal entry to Jerusalem (Zech. 9:9-12). God says through the prophet, “Return to your fortress, O prisoners of hope; even now I announce that I will restore twice as much to you” (Zech. 9:12). Hope and restoration are byproducts of the Messiah’s victory.²⁹ Although the outward circumstances may not have changed at all, the Prisoner of Hope pilgrim in step seven differs significantly from the Pain Prisoner step. The light of hope begins to shine in the human soul.

The markers for this step are lament and reassessment coupled with repentance and realignment. In steps five through eight, the primary metaphor is heat for the heart, and the primary work of God’s Spirit consists of all the “re-” words: renewal, repentance, reassessment, reinvigoration, reconfiguration, reconstruction, rededication, redirection, retooling, rediscovery, and refocus—yet, the main work in the soul at this point is realignment. Realignment occurs after a season of lament and reassessment. Lament has

²⁷ Cole, *Cultivating a Life for God*, 49-53.

²⁸ Sally Morgenthaler, “OD718 Beyond Hierarchy: Leadership as Co-Creation in the New Millennial Church” (lecture, Fuller Theological Seminary, Pasadena, CA, April 2010).

²⁹ N. T. Wright, *Jesus and the Victory of God*, vol. 2 of *Christian Origins and the Question of God* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1996), 612-623.

to do with sorrowing and grieving by pouring out one's complaints to God, as the Psalmists so often do.³⁰ These complaints are not a rebellion against God, as much as they represent the cries of brokenness, a different form of repentance or turning around from step two, borne through the pain and suffering of the human condition.

Following a time of lament, which for some looks and feels like depression, pilgrims begin to assume full and complete responsibility for their life's sad condition: no blaming, no accusing, no excusing, no alibis, and no one else to point a finger at but the pilgrim. When pilgrims become accountable and take responsibility, realignment happens and the inner soul urgings and desires begin to line up with the external will and purposes of God for the pilgrim. William C. Lantz, Jr. and Connie S. Lantz call this the step of "Accountableness" and "Responsibleness."³¹ No matter how difficult or frustrating the life circumstances, hope is reborn and God will do new things (cf. Isa. 43:18-19; Hos. 14:1-8) when pilgrims take responsibility for actions, attitudes, and outcomes. Then, God intervenes and takes responsibility for "fruitfulness" (Hos. 14:8b).

Facing mid-life crisis, burnout, emotional or physical pain, significant loss, defeat, or failure, the Prisoner of Hope begins the Journey Inward in earnest and seeks answers to life's unanswerable questions. Leadership consultants David L. Dotlich, James L. Noel,

³⁰ See Dorothee Soelle, *Suffering*, trans. Everett R. Kalin (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1975), 73, for an anatomy of lament chart. The chart is reproduced in Appendix G.

³¹ William C. Lantz, Jr. and Connie S. Lantz, *The Fifty-One Percent Principle: Taking Control Over Your Response to Life* (Tulsa, OK: Honor Books, 1994), 7; see also 13-72. W. Lantz is a long-time counselor and believes this taking of responsibility is an important step of healing.

and Norman Walker say, “Perceived failure is a powerful catalyst for change.”³² For this reason, the question for the pilgrim in step seven is this: “Where do I see glimmers of hope, and thereby glimpses of Jesus,³³ even if my life situation has not changed?” Thankfully, most Prisoner of Hope situations are not as drastic as the one faced by John the Baptist; in most cases, they become springboards to significant healing and restoration.

Most hope begins in what Brueggemann describes as “a proper posture . . . of *hope/listening/answering*” in a “second triad of practices which makes the first triad possible . . . The Israelite way is by *grief, rage, and praise*.”³⁴ Like Dorothee Soelle’s “anatomy of lament,” pilgrims need outlets for pain, loss, grief, shame, guilt, remorse, anger, fear, frustration, and even rage. Brueggemann argues for the need of lament: “In the face of the covenant-making God, *it is faithful human action to grieve*. It is for that reason that so many of the psalms of Israel are lament poems. Israel was not reticent to speak about loss, hurt, betrayal, fear, threat, anxiety.”³⁵ Just as I did during the near-death experience of my wife, the terrible tornadoes in Catoosa, and the death of my father, there are times when pilgrims need to take up their cause directly with God, even if they are angry like Job (cf. Job 6:1-10; 9:1-15; 13:1-3; 29:1-20). Brueggemann concludes his argument by saying, “The speech may be about loss, but it is addressed to the God in whom Israel is grounded. Israel’s

³² David L. Dotlich, James L. Noel, and Norman Walker, *Leadership Passages: The Personal and Professional Transitions That Make or Break a Leader* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2004), 118.

³³ For this phrase, I am indebted to Brennan Manning, *A Glimpse of Jesus: The Stranger to Self-Hatred* (New York: HarperCollins, 2003), title page.

³⁴ Brueggemann, “Covenanting as Human Vocation,” 124.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 123.

primal scream is addressed to someone. And therefore it has a chance of an answer.”³⁶

Grief, rage and praise are the way forward for grieving pilgrims who find themselves in the prison of hope.³⁷ God can handle the primal screams of his shattered pilgrims.

“Pain is often the greatest catalyst to powerful change,”³⁸ writes Hal Edward Runkel, “licensed marriage and family therapist, relationship coach, seminar speaker and organizational consultant.”³⁹ Primal screams come from every direction and every quarter in this North American culture filled with pain. The worst thing a pilgrim seeking wholeness and usefulness in God’s kingdom can do is bury the pain, freeze the hurt or anger, or completely ignore the offending parties through denial and smoldering rage. For pilgrims in Segue Two, journaling can be an excellent tool for self-reflection and the purging of pain. Specifically, writing out one’s disappointments, accumulated over time, with significant people that pilgrims have sought to please or to whom pilgrims have looked for leadership, mentoring, or guidance in life can be most therapeutic.

On leave from ministry in 2007, and doing a great deal of soul work, including five months with a life coach and five months of personal counseling and therapy, I had not yet experienced a breakthrough in the pain. On my way to see a spiritual director, the Holy

³⁶ Ibid. C. S. Lewis, *The Inspirational Writings of C. S. Lewis: Surprised by Joy, Reflections on the Psalms, The Four Loves, The Business of Heaven* (New York: Inspirational Press, 1994), 142-148, in his reflections upon psalmists’ writings, goes even further to call the sacred laments “cursings.”

³⁷ Fernando, *Jesus Driven Ministry*, 8 and 243, lists eighteen New Testament passages “that link suffering and joy” (cf. “Matt. 5:10-12; Lk. 6:23; Jn. 16:20-24; Acts 5:41; Rom. 5:3-11; 12:12; 2 Cor. 6:10; 7:4; 8:2; 12:10; Phil. 1:18; 2:17; Col. 1:24; Heb. 12:2; James 1:2; 1 Peter 1:6-9; 4:12-13; Rev. 12:11-12”).

³⁸ Hal Edward Runkel, *ScreamFree Parenting: The Revolutionary Approach to Raising Your Kids by Keeping Your Cool* (Colorado Springs, CO: WaterBrook Press, 2007), 42.

³⁹ Ibid., back flap cover. Runkel chose “ScreamFree Living” as the unusual name for his consulting company helping parents raise kids because in parent/child conflict, “screaming is the most popular reaction.”

Spirit prompted me: “Write down your major disappointments from the past years of ministry in the United Methodist Church.”⁴⁰ With the blessing of my spiritual director, I proceeded to journal seventy-two major, ministry-related disappointments over my eighteen-year pastoral ministry. In the process, I made another startling discovery: forty-eight of those seventy-two disappointments had occurred in the preceding three years. This time of “adversity analysis” changed my life.⁴¹ One week later, the day after Christmas, in a Christian counselor’s office and with the aid of a guided imagery exercise, I received a major healing in my life. The hard work of repentance and realignment begins with the humility to acknowledge failure and realign behavior, no matter the age or stage of life.

Step Eight: Humble Servant

Just as pain and failure are powerful catalysts for change, so Wilderness Wanderer, Pain Prisoner, and Prisoner of Hope ultimately lead to step eight: Humble Servant. All restorative and transformational change begins with humility.⁴² In step eight, two markers are most critical to the journey: facing the “Wall” (the cross) and facing the empty tomb.⁴³ As described earlier by Webber, this cross and resurrection experience is the crux of the journey toward wholeness and usefulness in God’s service.

⁴⁰ I thought to myself, “Yes, I like the word ‘disappointments,’ because it is a neutral word; it is not a blaming word.”

⁴¹ David L. Dotlich and Peter C. Cairo, *Why CEOs Fail: The 11 Behaviors That Can Derail Your Climb to the Top—And How to Manage Them* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2003), 143.

⁴² For an excellent study on humility, see C. J. Mahaney, *Humility: True Greatness* (Colorado Springs, CO: Multnomah Books, 2005).

⁴³ This term comes from Hagberg and Guelich, *The Critical Journey*, 113-129.

For many people, the chief wall in their lives is the wall of unforgiveness. Even the pilgrims who are most faithful and aspiring to Christlikeness harbor some kind of unforgiveness in their hearts and spirits. As an interpreter of St. Ignatius of Loyola, Ryan captures this point well:

Unlike the contemporary tendency to absolutize fulfillment as the be-all and end-all of human existence, Christian faith postulates that the treasure chest at the end of the trail is full of the riches of forgiveness. When forgiveness, not fulfillment, is seen as the final page in the story of our lives, we can live with our weaknesses in confidence and trust that God's grace will bring to completion the good work begun in us.⁴⁴

Jesus understood the power of this truth, as among his final words from the cross, he said, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing" (Luke 23:34). The first marker of this step is learning the power to forgive, as seen in Mark 2:10. When Jesus initially bestowed the gift of the Holy Spirit on the disciples, it was connected intimately to the ability to exercise forgiveness (John 20:21-23).

Forgiving others is the most difficult task the pilgrim of Christ will ever undertake.⁴⁵ Gordon MacDonald writes:

In the maturing years of my life . . . I came to see . . . Forgiveness is about surrendering the right for vengeance and retribution. It is about acknowledging that we are all failures in one way or another and that we stand on level ground with any offender before the cross, where God, in Christ, forgave us. None of us has a claim to superiority over any other in God's presence. Forgiveness is, in part, facing that hard reality.⁴⁶

⁴⁴ Ryan, *Four Steps to Spiritual Freedom*, 37-38.

⁴⁵ There are many excellent resources on the subject of forgiveness. In particular, see Lewis B. Smedes, *Forgive and Forget: Healing the Hurts We Don't Deserve* (1984; repr., New York: HarperCollins, 1996) and *The Art of Forgiving: When You Need to Forgive and Don't Know How* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1997); also, Nancy Leigh DeMoss with Lawrence Kimbrough, *Choosing Forgiveness: Your Journey to Freedom* (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2006).

⁴⁶ MacDonald, *A Resilient Life*, 128.

Hagberg and Guelich offer several suggestions for how to proceed through this “wall” of unforgiveness or whatever deep emotions may be causing the pilgrim to remain stuck.⁴⁷ Specifically, they mention three types of opportunities for healing: personal reflection, rituals, and restorative leaders.⁴⁸ At this important juncture in the pilgrim’s life, “the Holy Spirit guides the individual through . . . the Wall (Jn. 17:7, 12-13).”⁴⁹ Quiet and undisturbed reflection times like retreats, quiet rooms and the “curtailing” of normal activities are vital to the overall healing process.⁵⁰

Second, rituals play a vital role in the passing through of the Wall. Such rituals may include “burying old hurts, forgiveness rituals [such as the listing of disappointments], divorce services, letters of amends, grieving losses, etc.”⁵¹ While worship is often difficult during this period, music can bring great “solace” and comfort, along with use of the sense of touch: “a shawl around one’s shoulders, someone washing our feet, soul-filling hugs, holding hands in prayer.”⁵² Spiritual companions, peers, or trusted counselors are indispensable to this time as well. Hagberg and Guelich write: “Specific types of companionship are almost a universal component of this stage. For example, spiritual

⁴⁷ Once the pilgrim finally lets go of the intense feelings of hurt, anguish, bitterness, betrayal, resentment, rage, humiliation, embarrassment, contradiction, confusion, distress, despair, demoralization, and last of all, self-hatred, then God’s wondrous grace and mercy will bring relief, comfort, assurance, and peace.

⁴⁸ Hagberg and Guelich, *The Critical Journey*, 176.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Ibid., 177.

direction or pastoral counseling and therapy are helpful, often essential, for safe transformation. They provide a safe place to explore faith as a process, prayer as central to transformation, to use self-assessment for deeper meaning.”⁵³

The process can take months, years, or even a lifetime. This is where most North American leaders and pilgrims become stuck. This is the impenetrable wall built in the human heart. In my case, it took three years for me to receive the grace of God through others, so as to be able to forgive the leaders of my denomination and return to active ministry. On the other hand, it required more than forty years for me to forgive parents and other members of my family of origin.

Step eight’s second marker is facing the empty tomb. The empty tomb is the place of healing, forgiveness, and restoration. When we empty ourselves—reaching the end of ourselves, like facing the tomb—we gain new perspective, new hope, and renewed vision. We become available for kingdom service again, this time without restraint or limitation. The dark nights of the soul have served their cleansing, healing, and purging purposes. We are birthed anew and renewed, even in the second half of life. Barnes summarizes:

In this . . . stage you return to a place you have never been before. You return to a loving God, but differently. No longer is God perceived for his instrumental value. That vision was lost with the crisis. Now the love is simply for God with no added benefit to it.

The people who have passed through this dark night of reorientation are the most free people I know. That is because they are no longer afraid of losing anything. It is all gone. All that is left is the only thing from which they can never be separated—the love of God.⁵⁴

⁵³ Ibid., 176.

⁵⁴ Barnes, *Searching for Home*, 115.

The key questions for step eight are these: “Have we experienced humiliation, failure, defeat, or death to the ‘false self’ so that our true selves in Christ can emerge?” and “How have we identified with the suffering of Christ and thereby the suffering of the world?” Tada and Estes explain how pain serves its therapeutic and redemptive purpose in the journey toward humble service:

God uses suffering to purge sin from our lives, strengthen our commitment to him, force us to depend on grace, bind us together with other believers, produce discernment, foster sensitivity, discipline our minds, spend our time wisely, stretch our hope, cause us to know Christ better, make us long for truth, lead us to repentance of sin, teach us to give thanks in times of sorrow, increase faith, and strengthen character. It is a *beautiful* image!⁵⁵

Having lived as a quadriplegic since the age of seventeen, Tada exemplifies this spirit of humble service in the way of Christ. Tim Stafford describes Tada’s journey of humble service.⁵⁶ She has become a writer and speaker, radio show producer, artist and painter, greeting card designer, advocate and activist for people with disabilities, presidential council advisor, and world traveler.⁵⁷ Stafford says, “Joni has become a spokesperson for disabled people all over the world.”⁵⁸ At this eighth step, like Tada, pilgrims can finally proclaim that their acts of suffering are “God’s gifts wrapped in pain.”⁵⁹

⁵⁵ Tada and Estes, *When God Weeps*, 117.

⁵⁶ Tim Stafford, “A Heaven-Made Activist,” *Christianity Today*, January 2004, 47-50.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 47-48.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 48. Along with her husband, Tada is also co-founder of Joni and Friends, an outreach which sponsors family retreats and helps prisoners refurbish thousands of wheelchairs for use all over the world.

⁵⁹ Joni Eareckson Tada, *Glorious Intruder: God’s Presence in Life’s Chaos* (Portland, OR: Multnomah Press, 1989), 143. This Gold Medallion Book Award selection is by far the most significant and inspiring devotional book I have ever read, as it chronicles Tada’s daily struggles to celebrate God’s faithfulness in the midst of her disability.

CHAPTER 7

SEGUE THREE STEPS: BECOMING A GREAT COMMISSION LEADER—A VOICE ON THE PATH/FROM PAIN TO PASSION

This chapter introduces the final, four-step segue in the Way of Christ. With the help of community and accountability, along with personal responsibility, the honest processing of pain and sharing of wounds release the passion of emerging leaders so they can discover and fulfill their God-given destiny to live the overcoming life of Christ, for Christ, and for the world. God calls maturing believers and leaders to overcome through Christ their wrong choices, sins, setbacks, disappointments, and hardships of life. Pilgrims become not only servant leaders but Great Commission Leaders through this kind of overcoming faith. Thus, the pilgrim, now sufficiently identified with Christ, walks the steps of Wounded Healer, Passion Pursuer, and Destiny Discoverer toward maturity and into becoming a Great Commission Leader.

Introduction to the Segue Three Steps: Overcoming in Christ/ Voice on the Path

The predominant metaphor describing the third segue, or final four steps in the Way of Christ, is that of the voice on the path. While God Seekers/Christ Followers need light in the darkness, and Wilderness Wanderers/Pain Prisoners need heat for the heart (or

cauterization of the ego), Wounded Healers/Passion Pursuers need a voice on the path in order to embrace fully their God-given purpose and life destiny. Isaiah of Jerusalem speaks of such a voice: “Although the Lord gives you the bread of adversity and the water of affliction, your teachers [adversity and affliction] will be hidden no more; with your own eyes you will see them. Whether you turn to the right or to the left, your ears will hear a voice behind you” (Isa. 30:20-21a). God’s voice is heard through the “teachers” of adversity and affliction, but often pilgrims do not hear the voice of God speaking clearly during this time. Life has proffered too much interference, like the static on a radio station that is not attuned or is too far from the transmitter to receive the message.

Following the season of affliction and/or testing, pilgrims once again can learn to hear God’s voice speak clearly.¹ Amidst the swirling confusion and caldron of pain typified by the middle segue and steps, from the light of daybreak to the hot noon-day sun and now to the cool of the evening breeze, when God spoke clearly to Adam and Eve in the garden (Gen. 3:8), God speaks clearly, succinctly, lovingly, and tenderly, guiding the feet of the pilgrim in new directions from behind. God still allows pilgrims to choose (right or left); but instead of watching pilgrims pick forbidden fruit, God’s unseen, gentle voice guides pilgrims into the way of genuine fruitfulness.

The voice on the path is the voice of “vocation.”² Dan B. Allender, author of the impactful book, *The Healing Path*, speaks about how the surrendered pilgrim begins to

¹ Additionally, all of this passage relates to the greater context of God’s promise of “repentance and rest” being the pilgrim’s salvation, “quietness and trust,” and strength (Isa. 30:15).

² Numerous writers expound on this point. See, for example, Stephen R. Covey, *The 8th Habit: From Effectiveness to Greatness* (New York: Free Press, 2004), 249-291; Palmer, *Let Your Life Speak*, 1-36;

gauge the future. He writes of the “whisper” of a voice manifesting in two voices: the voice of God and the voice of the pilgrim:

We move into the future not with a map, a plan, or a clear structure, but with the whisper of a story that reminds us we will again see the goodness of God in the land of the living. The whisper is the voice of God’s Spirit reminding us of the cross and our individual moments of exodus. The whisper is also our own voice that mimics the Spirit by calling our memories to the stage and seeing the themes of redemption time and time again in our lives. God reminds us, we replay the stories, and then we move into the future with the confidence that God is good.³

David L. McKenna, former president of Asbury Seminary, says that “when we hurt and ask ‘Why?’ God speaks to pilgrims through the “whisper” and “transformation” of his grace.⁴ If God “shouts”⁵ in the midst of pain to get pilgrims’ attention, then God surely whispers when revealing God’s ultimate purposes to more mature pilgrims on the journey.

In this way, the voice of God’s healing, grace, and acceptance of self—despite all the foibles and failings of the past—gives rise to the voice (Latin, *vox*) of vocation.⁶

Allender concludes, “Healing in this life is not the *resolution* of our past; it is the *use* of our past to draw us into deeper relationship with God and his purposes for our lives.”⁷

The pain of the past becomes the bridge to the future, as with all renewal, whether

Fowler, *Becoming Adult, Becoming Christian*, 57-121; Warren Bennis, “Postlude: An Intellectual Memoir,” in *The Future of Leadership: Today’s Top Leadership Thinkers Speak to Tomorrow’s Leaders*, eds. Bennis, Gretchen M. Spreitzer, and Thomas G. Cummings (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2001), 254-280.

³ Dan B. Allender, *The Healing Path: How the Hurts in Your Past Can Lead You to a More Abundant Life* (Colorado Springs, CO: WaterBrook Press, 1999), 147.

⁴ David L. McKenna, *The Whisper of His Grace: When We Hurt and Ask “Why?”* (Waco, TX: Word Books, 1987), 155.

⁵ This is how Lewis, *The Problem of Pain*, 91, describes God getting the pilgrim’s attention.

⁶ *Cassell’s New Compact Latin-English, English-Latin Dictionary*, 1977 ed., s.v. “vox.”

⁷ Allender, *The Healing Path*, 6.

personal, church, or organizational. Hagberg and Guelich ask two excellent questions for pilgrims passing through the wall, who now hear the voice of God speak again into their lives: “1) How are you experiencing God in the middle of this Wall experience? Is grace visible? and 2) Who else can help you through this? Who are you asking for help, to be on your transformation team?”⁸ Everyone overcoming major life crises needs a personal transformation team, a group of at least two or three prayer and accountability partners.

The Post-Resurrection Narratives: Forming the Backdrop of the Unfolding Drama

The post-resurrection narratives, a largely neglected portion of the Gospels, form the outline and framework for the remainder of the Twelve Steps in the Way of Christ. Roberta C. Bondi says, “Even Jesus was resurrected with his wounds.”⁹ Jesus’ passion is to show off his wounds.

Instead of emerging from the grave like a champion prize fighter who has pounded his opponent into the canvas, Jesus’ badge of honor is his wounds. The wounds of Jesus seem to be a rather peculiar way of demonstrating his triumph over death and hell (cf. Luke 24:38; John 20:20, 26-27); yet, among the fearful, ashamed, and beleaguered disciples, the wounds offer hope. McKnight brings all pilgrims a word of hope, saying, “Our vocation,

⁸ Hagberg and Guelich, *The Critical Journey*, 177.

⁹ Roberta C. Bondi, *Memories of God: Theological Reflections on a Life* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1995), 174. Once Jesus emerges from the tomb, he is eager and determined to see his wounded and distraught, faithful followers: Mary Magdalene (John 20:10-17 and Mark 16:9-11); Peter (John 21:7-22; cf. Mark 16:7 and Luke 24:34); Thomas (John 20:24-29); John (John 20:4-7); Mary the mother of Jesus (Matt. 28:8-10); Cleopas and the unnamed disciple on the Emmaus Road (Luke 24:13-35; Mark 16:12-13); the seven disciples fishing at the Sea of Galilee (John 21:1-6); and the entire group of Eleven on several occasions (Mark 16:14; Luke 24:33-49; John 20: 19-23, 26-29).

whatever that might mean for each of us, sweeps up our entire past . . . we, too, are raised to a vocation with the wounds of our past intact, visible, and a witness to what God can do.”¹⁰ Hagberg and Guelich write: “The final step [of moving past the Wall] is honoring and accepting who you are with all your shadows and light, allowing God to use you in the world in powerful ways as a result.”¹¹ Contemplating the wounds of Christ gives grace to pilgrims to accept the wounds, shortcomings, and failings of their own lives.

During this final segue, pilgrims can benefit from a visual metaphor that enables them to contemplate the wounds of Christ. One of the settings in which I have contemplated the wounds of Christ is the famous Loretto Chapel in Santa Fe, New Mexico. I believe the famous Loretto Chapel staircase, contrasted with the Stations of the Cross, offers a solid representation of the pilgrimage journey of the Twelve Steps in the Way of Christ. This winding, double- spiral staircase—built with no visible means of support—seems to have its own mysterious past. The small chapel, completed in 1878, has a small choir loft at the back of the sanctuary, with no way to reach its twenty-two foot height except by means of a ladder.¹² According to legend, the Sisters of the Chapel “made a novena to St. Joseph, the patron saint of carpenters. On the ninth and final day of prayer, a man appeared at the Chapel with a donkey and a toolbox looking for work. Months later, the elegant staircase was completed, and the carpenter disappeared without

¹⁰ McKnight, *The Jesus Creed*, 87.

¹¹ Hagberg and Guelich, *The Critical Journey*, 178.

¹² The Loretto Chapel, “Staircase,” <http://www.lorettochapel.com/staircase.html> (accessed April 15, 2011).

pay or thanks.”¹³ Like many lives faced with impossible challenges or obstacles to overcome, God suddenly shows up, enters the fray of pilgrims’ lives, and works out a solution that most pilgrims never would have considered.

Contemporary pilgrims can contemplate the painful journey of Christ and his wounds in many ways. For example, they can make a pilgrimage journey to a holy site like Loretto Chapel or someplace closer to home, visit a Jewish temple, or enjoy a day of silence at a Catholic monastery or chapel. Pilgrims can visit a retreat center, church camp, or a sanctuary of one’s faith preference that is not visited often. There in quiet visual contemplation, without conversation or electronic devices, pilgrims can sit and meditate on Christ with the aid of stained glass windows, icons, classic art that depicts Christ’s suffering, as I experienced on my first Walk to Emmaus many years ago. Meditating on the Fifteen Stations of the Cross remains an enduring practice of the experience of Christ’s wounds. Additionally, the watching of a movie like *Passion of the Christ*, meditating on icons like those painted by Hagberg, (available through her website or books),¹⁴ extended viewing of paintings by a contemporary artist like Ron DiCianni,¹⁵ or anything that evokes the cross within the mind or heart of the pilgrim can serve as aids to contemplate the wounds of Christ.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Personal Power Products, “Icons” for the Inner Life, <http://www.personalpowerproducts.com/pppspiritdev.htm#icons> (accessed June 12, 2011).

¹⁵ See Ron DiCianni, *The Devotional Paintings of Ron DiCianni: A Brush with God’s Word* (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House, 2002). See also *Were You There? Find Yourself with Jesus*, paintings by Ron DiCianni, stories by Neil Wilson (Brentwood, TN: Integrity Publishers, 2004).

Segue Three Steps: Wounded Healer, Passion Pursuer, Destiny Discoverer and Great Commission Leader

The purpose of the steps in Segue Three—Wounded Healer, Passion Pursuer, Destiny Discoverer, and Great Commission Leader—is to lead postmodern pilgrims into fullness in Christ and fulfillment of their God-given purposes and destinies. Having emerged from the cross dead to self and from the empty tomb free of selfish ambition, and having passed through the Wall of fear and “stuckness” to embrace self-abnegation, the pilgrim is free at last to pursue godly ambitions, God-inspired dreams and purposes, holy imaginations, and heavenly callings for the sake of Christ and the benefit of others.

Ninth Step: Wounded Healer

Wounded healers are humble servants who desire nothing more than to help others, especially those who have suffered similar wounds. Once pilgrims emerge from the tomb of self-emptying and complete abandonment to the purposes of God, then much like the first disciples locked behind closed doors, they can be greeted by the risen Christ who passes through the Wall on their behalf to offer grace and mercy in the visible wounds as well as courage for the continuing journey. Stephen Seamands says, “Healing comes as we offer our wounds to God to be used as instruments in God’s service for the redeeming of ourselves and others.”¹⁶ In this ninth step, a Wounded Healer is one who has experienced three of the four points of the cross: Journey Upward, Journey Inward, and Journey Downward and is now ready to begin the genuine Journey Outward.

¹⁶ Stephen Seamands, *Wounds That Heal: Bringing Our Hurts to the Cross* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2003), 170.

“The history of God’s self-humiliation begins with the creation and reaches to the end. God is present in two ways; he dwells in heaven and also among the humiliated.”¹⁷ According to Moltmann, and his testimony of God’s self-humiliation, the first-century rabbis translate Psalm 18:35b, “You stoop down to make me great,” as “You show to me your greatness through your self-humiliation.”¹⁸ God indeed has stooped down to make his pilgrims “great.” That greatness, however, begins in the experience of one’s limitations. The humiliating setbacks and suffering seasons of life, once overcome through the dying and rising with Christ healing and sanctifying process, now produce a freedom to serve unselfishly, give extravagantly, live abundantly, pray unceasingly, and work tirelessly for the sake of God’s kingdom.

The two chief markers for the ninth step, Wounded Healer, are scars and tears coupled with renewed vision. The scars of life define who pilgrims are: they are the badges of honor through Christ or the tattoos of shame. Barnes relates the struggle that pilgrims on Christ’s Way face with their wounds. He says that the wounds “have a way of preoccupying us,” weighing us down on the journey with a heavy load of baggage to carry.¹⁹ He adds, “When we are wounded we do not walk easily, but limp along in a way that defers and caters to the wound. We hold the wound, nurture it, and allow ourselves to even be defined as wounded people. But the reality is that we are what God created us to

¹⁷ Jürgen Moltmann, “The Crucified God,” *Theology Today*, vol. 31, no. 1 (April 1974): 13.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹ Barnes, *Searching for Home*, 109.

be, and that is not wounded. So the wounds have to be healed.”²⁰ Pilgrims on the journey to maturity and leadership face a choice. They can show deference to their wounds and cater to them, allowing those wounds to define them for the rest of their lives; or, they can receive the grace of God through Christ and allow God to heal and turn the embedded pain into healing for others. Healing comes through exposure and cleansing, scars and tears.

Seamands refers to these cleansed and healed scars as “radiant scars.”²¹ In other words, these same scars that once brought shame, humiliation and remorse to the pilgrim now become badges of courage, honor, and service to others.²² Here is the key question for this step: “Have we received healing for our wounds through the wounds of Christ and the pain of God?” Seamands notes that even the Son of God returns from the grave with healed, glorified and “radiant” scars.²³ These radiant scars, once backlit by the sufferings of Christ on the cross, now stream forth and radiate his divine glory.²⁴ It is likewise with the scars of Christian pilgrims who learn to confess their faults one to another.

Spiritual confession is the vehicle for healthy exposure of scars. Cole says, “The first discipline necessary for a disciple to grow into usefulness is the confession of sin. Unless we are cleansed from sin, we will not be useful or honoring to the Lord. Christians

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Seamands, *Wounds That Heal*, 165-180.

²² The Apostle Paul, though he has much to boast about in his pedigree (Phil. 3:4-6), only chooses to boast of the badges representing his extensive sufferings on behalf of Christ for the sake of others (cf. 1 Cor. 4:8-13; 2 Cor. 4:8-12; 6:3-10; 11:21b-30; 12:9-10; Gal. 6:17; Heb. 11:35b-40). Paul’s “boasting” is his way of contemplating the wounds of Christ in his own life, continually reminding him that he is a wounded healer due to Christ’s grace and mercy.

²³ Seamands, *Wounds That Heal*, 170.

²⁴ Ibid., 176.

are people of confession” (cf. 1 John 1:9).²⁵ While Protestants do not have a priest to whom they may confess, a spiritual partner, mentor, close and trusted spiritual friend, spiritual guide or “Christguide”²⁶ can hear pilgrims’ confessions in a sacred space of mutual accountability and confidentiality.²⁷

E. Stanley Ott offers a confessional, covenantal model called “Word—Share—Prayer” or “The Discipleship Triangle,” that forms the basis for ministry team sharing and life together in covenant relationship for church staffs and small groups.²⁸ Though designed for ministry teams, these seven “threads” are adapted easily to pairs or triads of pilgrims seeking mutual accountability: spiritual disciplines; “face-to-face friendships”; confidentiality; direct communication; clear expectations; “loose-tight” balance between shared responsibilities and agreed upon goals, guided by the covenant; and “loving loyalty,” or agreeing to disagree agreeably.²⁹ The adoption of a spiritual, scriptural and expectation covenant at the outset is one of the keys to the success of any such group.

²⁵ Cole, *Ordinary Hero*, 106. Since Protestant Christians do not have a priest to whom they can confess their sins, it is incumbent on Protestant pilgrims to become priests to one another. Barnes speaks to this issue: “The point of the Protestant Reformation was not to do away with the priesthood, but to turn all believers into priests who can offer absolution.” See Barnes, *Searching for Home*, 91.

²⁶ James B. Scott and Molly Davis Scott, *Kingdom People: Leave the Common Life Behind. Take the Journey from Casual to Complete Christian*, rev. ed. (Dallas: Provident Publishing, 2008), 200-208.

²⁷ If confession is to be made, other than to a professional counselor, more than one person needs to share (cf. James 5:16), so as to avoid a confidential breach that could damage the pilgrim’s reputation.

²⁸ E. Stanley Ott, *Transform Your Church with Ministry Teams* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 2004), 101.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 107-116 and 168-185, supplies excellent appendices on group covenants, schedules, lists of Scriptures to study, and a team/group checklist. For more in-depth exploration of church staff covenants; see also Cladis, *Leading the Team-Based Church*, 159-177.

Mutual accountability with compassion also offers the means to cleansing and tears. The first type of suffering, what Soelle calls “godly grief,”³⁰ following the Apostle Paul (cf. 2 Cor. 7:11), yields the second marker of step nine in the Way of Christ: renewed vision. The confession of pain and suffering with tears indeed leads to cleansing and renewed vision. Repentance, or “godly sorrow,” is not just about remorse or even asking forgiveness but about making a conscious decision to alter the course of one’s behavior to go in a new and God-inspired direction.³¹ Visions born early in the journey, long thought dead or dismissed, come back to life with even greater fruition, or God may simply give the pilgrim an entirely new vision for a new day.

Step Ten: Passion Pursuer

Passion Pursuer culminates from the pain of steps four through nine: Wilderness Wanderer, Pain Prisoner, Prisoner of Hope, Humble Servant, and Wounded Healer. In step ten, the pilgrim’s true passion is discovered in the midst of acknowledging and working through one’s pain. Free from the trappings of the false self, the Passion Pursuer begins the most exciting and rewarding segment of the journey: exploring and mining past pain in order to discover future passion. I call this living “on the other side of you.”

³⁰ Soelle’s *Suffering* is the finest work on suffering I have read. She does not try to defend a particular theory or explanation of human suffering. She only speaks of two kinds of grief, 133-134, joining with the Apostle Paul: “godly grief and worldly grief,” (2 Cor. 7:8-11) or, 141, the grief that God can transform into hope and “indestructible life,” (cf. Heb. 7:16). Other types of suffering she calls “senseless,” because they have no apparent usefulness or redeeming value.

³¹ The biblical word for repentance, *metanoia*, according to MacDonald, was used partly as a word for travelers in the ancient world losing and retracing their way. So in addition to the traditional understandings of repentance as “remorse” and “changing one’s mind,” “altering one’s direction” is central as well. See MacDonald, *A Resilient Life*, 119.

“On the other side of you,” the contrasts are apparent. On one side, before the cross and resurrection, there is great failure; on the other side, there is significant success not only personally but for the kingdom of God. The two markers of step ten in Christ’s Way, Passion Pursuer, are the identification of the source of pain and the call to mission. The identification of the particular pain with which the pilgrim has struggled incessantly over the course of life, through the five previous steps, offers the best clue to the development of future passion. The key question of step ten is this: “Have we looked back to our pain, individually and corporately, to seek the source and direction of our future passion?” Ryan says, “Each of us has a calling, a passion that burns inside us. It is so important that we access that secret place within ourselves and bring it forth into the light of day and begin living it until the energy flowing in our bodies sings its delight and confirms for us beyond the shadow of a doubt that we are onto our way, our path.”³²

The “secret place” within the pilgrim can be described as “yearnings, authentic desires, and burdens of the soul.”³³ Within each human heart, God seems to place certain yearnings and inklings, unfulfilled passions and aspirations, even childhood dreams. Ryan elaborates on this point: “Actually, the word we translate into English as *will* comes from both a Hebrew and a Greek word that means ‘yearning.’”³⁴ Part of the joy of discovery of that unique passion happens through the gift of experimentation, or what

³² Ryan, *Four Steps to Spiritual Freedom*, 101.

³³ *Ibid.*, 102, 95; see also Allender, *The Healing Path*, 206-208.

³⁴ Ryan, *Four Steps to Spiritual Freedom*, 102.

Covey calls, “finding your voice.”³⁵ As pilgrims follow their inklings, hunches, intuition, and conscience, new vistas of life and leadership emerge.

Pastors, spiritual mentors and friends, “Christguides,” and the Christian community can provide much wisdom, reflection, and illumination on the pilgrim’s path at this point in the journey. Ryan says that authentic desires born of God are “always in some way public . . . they stem from communal values, not just individual ones. They lead us out of ourselves and into the human community.”³⁶ Personal hunches and intuitions, even when God-inspired, always need to be tested by trusted others in the spiritual community for validity, authenticity, and self-transcendence. Sweet, the postmodern expert, writes: “Christian spirituality is a self-transcending experience of God through Christ by the gift of the Holy Spirit. Rituals, the arts, retreats . . . spiritual disciplines—these are not means of discovering the self but of transcending the self. The Christian metanarrative seeks self-transcendence, not self-fulfillment.”³⁷

In this way, the locus or center shifts away from the pilgrim and outward toward God and others (cf. Matt. 10:39; 16:25). In order to follow the example of Jesus, along with one’s spiritual inklings or yearnings, the pilgrim must begin by asking the right questions. Sweet offers these suggestions:

Not “What do I want?” but “What is wanted of me?” . . . not “How can you meet my needs?” but rather “How am I meeting the world’s needs?” . . . not “What are

³⁵ Covey, *The 8th Habit*, 28. This is the subject of Palmer’s book, *Let Your Life Speak*, as well.

³⁶ Ryan, *Four Steps to Spiritual Freedom*, 95. Three notable biblical examples of corporate discernment include the earliest selection of deacons in Acts 6:1-7, the selection of leaders for the first missionary journey (Acts 13:1-3), and the collective wisdom of the Jerusalem Council (Acts 15:1-29).

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 84-85.

my needs?” but “What is God needing of me?” . . . not “Am I on top?” but “Am I on tap?” “Am I available for God to use?” . . . not “How can I chart my own path?” but “How can I find and follow God’s path?” . . . not “Take charge of your life” but “Let God take charge of your life.” Our issue is not “See how special I am!” but “How Great Thou Art!”³⁸

According to Sweet’s questions, the once self-absorbed pilgrim now becomes a world-absorbed Christian, seeking a place to serve and lead and a missional calling to fulfill. Ryan points out that “the more authentic our desires, the more they will move us toward self-donation to God and others and away from self-centeredness . . . the distinction between what ‘I’ want and what God wants begins to blur.”³⁹ Having been realigned by the pain of suffering and the experience of dark nights of the soul, pilgrims’ desires come into complete alignment with the God who created those inmost desires.

The last area for discerning one’s passions on the Way of Christ is that of feeling a particular burden in the heart or soul. Allender defines a burden as “a passion that typically arises from the mesh of our story. As a result, to neglect our burden is to lose our soul.”⁴⁰ Burdens can come from anywhere, according to Willow Creek’s senior pastor Bill Hybels.⁴¹ Burdens, however, are more than need-based or pain-based; they are based on story. Pilgrims on the journey need to ask themselves this central passion question: “Where does my life story intersect with the needs of the world?” Another way

³⁸ Ibid., 85.

³⁹ Ryan, *Four Steps to Spiritual Freedom*, 95.

⁴⁰ Allender, *The Healing Path*, 207.

⁴¹ Bill Hybels, *The Volunteer Revolution: Unleashing the Power of Everybody* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2004), 95.

of phrasing the question is offered by Allender: “What brings a yes! to your soul when you give?”⁴²

The second marker of the tenth step on Christ’s Way, Passion Pursuer, is the call or mission itself. The Apostle Paul wrote in the Book of Romans: “For God’s gifts and his call are irrevocable” (Rom. 11:29). From this Scripture, it seems that gifts and calling go together. Hybels agrees: “Many people . . . discover an area of passion as they look at the personal skills they enjoy using. This might be anything from professional skills to hobbies or recreation.”⁴³ Then Hybels drives the point home that what people enjoy, they must be called to do: “When you’re serving in an area of passion, nobody has to fire you up to stay involved; you can’t help but show up. It feels like recess, when the bell rings and you get to do your favorite thing.”⁴⁴ The doing of one’s passion releases enormous energy and inward satisfaction.

J. Scott and M. D. Scott, well-known United Methodist leaders in the field of early Wesleyan studies and covenant discipleship, provide an outstanding chart for understanding “God’s Plan for Your Ministry.”⁴⁵ They list fourteen criteria with two blank columns so the pilgrim can furnish experiences and ministry “implications” for each column as follows: “nature of your calling; spiritual gifts; natural abilities; values; passion and pain; interests, desires of your heart; what energizes you; affirmation from

⁴² Allender, *The Healing Path*, 207.

⁴³ Hybels, *The Volunteer Revolution*, 82.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

⁴⁵ J. Scott and M. D. Scott, *Kingdom People*, 155. As a lifelong student of such spiritual gift and God-vocational discernment charts, I believe this one to be the most complete I have seen to date.

others; what were you doing when you were happiest; where have you been successful; feedback from others; assessment tools; whom you want to spend time with; [and] what God is saying to you in your devotions.”⁴⁶ Christguides, spiritual mentors, and/or pastors need to provide regular opportunities and encouragement for aspiring pilgrim leaders on the path to analyze these kinds of criteria to discern future direction and God’s call.⁴⁷ The important point is not how many calls one may experience in a lifetime but the fact that God calls each person to serve; and with ears and hearts open to the Spirit, God will make that call(s) known.⁴⁸

Step Eleven: Destiny Discoverer

As the eleventh step on the Way of Christ, Destiny Discoverer is one of the most exciting yet challenging to describe, because it is so individualized and unique to every Christian pilgrim and maturing leader. Each follower of God is put on this earth for a special purpose and mission. From the time of Abraham, God has called his servants to find their place and destiny in life. Such a place and destiny have one singular purpose: to be a blessing to others, just as Abraham was “blessed to be a blessing” (Gen. 12:1-3).

“Place” is an important element to the call of God for individual pilgrims, just as the land of Israel is vital to the Jewish understanding of self in relation to God. The

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ One of the major problems with spiritual gift inventories administered in the Church today is that they are given too early in the spiritual journey and process, long before pilgrims have made their way through the middle steps of wilderness and pain.

⁴⁸ There may be several calls during one lifetime. In my case, I experienced a general call to a sense of destiny for God’s work at age twelve; two distinct calls to pastoral ministry and church renewal, at ages twenty-one and thirty-five; and one later call to restoration, re-entry, and renewal of life vision at age fifty-five.

elementary school definition of a noun is a person, place, or thing. For Christian pilgrims, the “person” is Jesus Christ, and the “thing” is the unique call God has given to each pilgrim; and the “place” is the sphere of influence, the culture, the institution, the family of origin, the location of birth, the heritage of descendants, language, culture, gender identity, and so many other unique factors and qualifiers. The Apostle Paul states the case for unique “placement” well: “From one man he made every nation of men . . . and he determined the times set for them and the exact places where they should live (Acts 17:26-28). The psalmist says, “Such knowledge is too wonderful for me” (Ps. 139:6).

The two vital markers of Destiny Discoverer are “destiny revelation” and strengths-based ministry.⁴⁹ “Destiny revelation” is a phrase coined by Clinton, author of *The Making of a Leader* and longtime professor of Christian leadership at Fuller Theological Seminary. Clinton defines destiny revelation as “significant acts, people, or providential circumstances or timing that hint at some future or special significance to a life and add to an awareness of a sense of destiny in a life.”⁵⁰ Cole, who has written his book on the journeys of Paul based on Clinton’s leadership development model, says:

Not every leader experiences a destiny revelation, but when someone does, it is usually at this stage of life [young adult stage, 18-30]. The revelation will not be specific, and the leader will still need to stumble along in the lessons of life’s journeys, just like anyone else. The destiny revelation, however, usually holds some promise of future significance that helps the emerging leader get through the struggles.⁵¹

⁴⁹ See Clinton, *The Making of a Leader*, 238. Clinton’s protégé, Terry Walling, “OD774 Personal Renewal, Corporate Revitalization” (lecture, Fuller Theological Seminary, Pasadena, CA, June 2003), interprets Clinton’s work in this way: destiny revelation often results from “deep processing” or suffering.

⁵⁰ Clinton, *The Making of a Leader*, 238.

⁵¹ Cole, *Journeys to Significance*, 38-39.

Both Joseph and David experienced such destiny revelations during their early years, at the age of seventeen.⁵² Cole also notes the importance of such personal revelations being confirmed by several other independent parties, who can attest such direction being from the Lord (cf. Deut. 19:15; 2 Cor. 13:1).⁵³

If each pilgrim is called to a particular destiny or purpose of God, then developing an intimate fellowship with the Heavenly Father is of utmost importance in hearing correctly from God. The key question for step eleven is twofold: “Have I discovered my destiny in Christ? Have I allowed God to reveal my destiny in life, rather than striving to create my own ultimate destiny?”⁵⁴ In order to discern destiny, pilgrims must learn to spend time with God, much in the same way as God spent time with the first couple in the Garden of Eden (cf. Gen 3:8). Intimacy with God is central to discovery of destiny, just as dating and relational intimacy between couples provides the key to discovery of true love leading to marriage.

The “being” with God precedes the “doing” for God in the step of Destiny Discoverer. Even for pastors, mentors, and those walking with pilgrims, this is counter-intuitive for action-oriented, fast-paced, digitalized, twenty-four-hour online North American culture. Don Cousins, co-author of *Experiencing LeaderShift: Letting Go of*

⁵² Joseph spends at least thirteen years in preparation for his unexpected ascendancy in Egypt’s court, from age seventeen to thirty, according to David A. Seamands, *Living With Your Dreams* (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1990), 88. David spends identical years on the run from Saul, after being anointed to be king. See Charles R. Swindoll, *David: A Man of Passion and Destiny* (Dallas: Word, 1997), 130.

⁵³ Cole, *Journeys to Significance*, 39.

⁵⁴ This step is reflected in the popular program, *40 Days of Purpose*, begun in 2003, which presents a similar theme and message, asking pilgrims the leading question: “What on earth am I here for?” See Rick Warren, *The Purpose Driven Life* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2002), 15.

Leadership Heresies with Bruce Bugbee and a founding leader of Willow Creek Community Church, comments on this important point: “I spent many years in ministry feeling as though God called me into a relationship with Himself just to put me to *work*. I now understand that *God calls me to His work in order to strengthen our relationship*. While God could accomplish His purposes without you and me, He desires to accomplish His purposes *with* you and me.”⁵⁵ Pilgrims seeking to cultivate intimacy with God practice spiritual disciplines such as daily, conversational, two-way prayer (talking and listening); daily time in the Word, especially the Psalms; listening to favorite inspirational music; quiet times of reflection and solitude, including journaling; time spent with spouse and family in spiritual and wholesome, recreational pursuits; regular attendance at worship; participation in small groups; time spent in the beautiful outdoors of God’s creation; and time spent with mentors, pastors, spiritual guides, and/or accountability partners, among many others.

Also counter-intuitive to conventional North American cultural wisdom and leadership is the second marker for the Destiny Discoverer step: strengths-based ministry. Strengths-based ministry focuses on pilgrims’ gifts and assets rather than on deficits and weak points. The business practice of asset mapping or drawing up a list of available resources for a given project is similar. Today’s science is also mapping the human genome, not only for the purpose of identifying potential sources of disease but to promote human longevity and health. In the same way, church leaders need to cultivate

⁵⁵ Don Cousins and Bruce Bugbee, *Experiencing LeaderShift: Letting Go of Leadership Heresies* (Colorado Springs, CO: David C. Cook, 2008), 174.

the practice of identifying the callings, strengths, gifts, passions, avocations and developed natural and life skills of their people, so as to maximize their fruitfulness and effectiveness for ministry.

One of the cutting-edge North American churches to proceed in this direction of strengths-based ministry is Mosaic Church in Los Angeles, with senior pastor Erwin McManus. A few years ago, as I visited this congregation and picked up a brochure called *Imprint* after the morning service. Inside the brochure, I found three tracts for prospective seekers to discover their God-given destiny and “divine purpose”: “Discover your excellence (*StrengthsFinder*); Discover your personal style (MBTI) [or Myers Briggs Type Indicator], and Discover your spiritual impact.”⁵⁶ This is the closest model I have come across to a full-blown, strengths-finder approach to ministry. The fruit of this ministry is evidenced by the fact that the church leaders have “anointed and commissioned” hundreds of attending adults on multiple campuses to serve as self-supported “church staff.”⁵⁷ Mosaic Church, through its application of a strengths-based approach to leadership development and ministry, is reaching future generations and harnessing the strengths and positive gifts of hundreds of pilgrim leaders. Such churches as Mosaic breathe hope into the North American future for reaching postmoderns.

⁵⁶ Mosaic Church, *Imprint* (Los Angeles: Mosaic Church, 2006). Volunteers meet four basic requirements: “1) To live a holy life (understanding that no one does it perfectly, but to come clean when you fail); 2) To be an active participant in ministry; 3) To be a generous giver reflected in tithing; and 4) To live an evangelistic lifestyle.” See Eric Swanson, “‘Great to Good’ Churches,” *Leadership*, 24, no. 2 (Spring 2003):40.

⁵⁷ Eric Swanson, “‘Great to Good’ Churches,” *Leadership*, 40.

Step Twelve: Great Commission Leader

The final step of the Twelve Steps in the Way of Christ is the step of Great Commission Leader. The name “Great Commission Leader” is derived from what many indigenous leaders to be trained for pastoral work in the Philippines are being called.⁵⁸ Great Commission Leaders discover their moral imperative and align their lives with God’s work in the world. Such leaders have reached the culmination of their spiritual journeys, reproduce their lives in future generations, and make a lasting impact on the world for the sake of Christ. Given the precipitous decline of the mainline churches in North America, it is imperative that pilgrim leaders learn to impact and reach future generations with the Gospel of Christ, and not merely model servant leadership.

The two markers for this final step are commission (co-mission) and community. “Co-mission” means partnering with Christ in God’s work and trusting Christ to bear more than half the weight of responsibility. Unlike the earlier step of forgiveness, where pilgrims learn to take all the responsibility for their actions, Jesus promises pilgrim leaders an easy yoke and a light burden (Matt. 11:30). Jesus’ longest teaching discourse in the Upper Room before his departure focuses on him sending the promised Holy Spirit to assist the disciples in their kingdom work (cf. John 14-17). Jesus says in Matthew 28:18-19a, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations.” It is out of the authority and purposes of Jesus that North

⁵⁸ Danny Grimes, interview by author, Tulsa, OK, 2009. Grimes is a pastor who, at that time, had just returned from a mission trip to the Philippines, where he heard this term being widely used.

American leaders are called to fulfill the Great Commission (cf. Matt 28:18-20; Mark 16:15-18; Luke 24:46-49; John 17:18; 20:21-23; Acts 1:8; 10:42).⁵⁹

The Church of Jesus Christ is a covenant community, joined together in mutual love and faith through the death and resurrection of Christ, and bound by common agreements, standards and traditions, within the overall priority of Scripture and centrality of Christ. Brueggemann expands on this point:

Biblical anthropology is from the beginning *missional*. Biblical faith asserts that being grounded in this other One, who has purposes that are not our purposes characterizes our existence as missional, that is, as claimed for and defined by the One who gives us life. The metaphor of covenant thus poses the central reality of our life in terms of vocation. Vocation means we are called by this One who in calling us to *be* calls us to *service*. And in that service comes freedom.⁶⁰

In other words, in the covenant community of the Church, mission is the DNA and the calling of every pilgrim leader is to serve others in the name of Christ.

Jesus understood his ministry as one who “did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life (Mark 10:45).” The goal of this twelfth step on the pilgrim’s path in Christ’s Way is expressed well in the great Methodist hymn, *Here I Am, Lord*,⁶¹ which is based on the text of Isaiah 6:8: “Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, ‘Whom shall I send? And who will go for us?’ And I said, ‘Here am I. Send me!’” Every year, step twelve is demonstrated at the Oklahoma Annual Conference of the United Methodist

⁵⁹ Ajith Fernando, “Getting Back on Course,” *Christianity Today*, November 2007, 43, lists these seven references to the Great Commission in his article.

⁶⁰ Brueggemann, “Covenanting as Human Vocation,” 126.

⁶¹ “Here I Am, Lord” In *The United Methodist Hymnal: Book of United Methodist Worship* (Nashville: The United Methodist Publishing House, 1989), Hymn #593.

Church, where over one thousand voices are raised in praise to the Lord, singing this great hymn of the Church. Annually clergy and lay delegates are “sent to serve” in the name of Christ and under the authority of the Church. This closing, sending service reminds all present of the glorious mission of Christ.

Those who pastor, mentor, or walk with pilgrims must learn to nourish themselves while at the same time nurturing others. Nourishment of self and nurture of others are the two defining markers of servant leadership at its best. Greenleaf contrasts two types of the “servant-leader”: “leader-first and the servant-first.”⁶² He writes:

The servant-leader *is* servant first. . . . It begins with the natural feeling that one wants to serve, to serve *first*. Then conscious choice brings one to aspire to lead. That person is sharply different from one who is *leader* first, perhaps because of the need to assuage an unusual power drive or to acquire material possessions. For such it will be a later choice to serve—after leadership is established.⁶³

For far too many aspiring pilgrim leaders, servant leadership is a stepping stone to personal advancement rather than a mark of humility, suffering, and servitude.

God wants the participation and collaboration of every faithful pilgrim, whether the tasks are large or relatively small. Ron Anderson, president of Parkland Hospital in Dallas, tells the story of a woman he came to know and love who ran the laundry service of the hospital for more than thirty years.⁶⁴ Though she had many opportunities for promotion, she chose to stay as head of the laundry service because she felt she could “do

⁶² Greenleaf, *Servant Leadership*, 13.

⁶³ *Ibid.*

⁶⁴ R. Miller, *The Millennium Matrix*, 157-158.

the most good” right there.⁶⁵ R. Miller, relaying the story he heard from Anderson at a Real Estate Ministries luncheon in 2002, said this devoted woman used the laundry room to help those who needed a fresh start and a place to begin. “She worked with and developed them until they could get a promotion and a foothold on an upward ladder—an incredible and improbable dream for most of them.”⁶⁶ Ryan states the moral of this story well: “When we are in tune with the one action of God in our own actions, we become active agents for the reign of God in the world.”⁶⁷

Like the woman in the laundry room, pilgrim leaders have a “cause within,”⁶⁸ a created purpose and God-given destiny that only they can fulfill, since each human being is totally and irreplaceably unique. Andy Stanley—pastor of the growing, postmodern North Point Community Church in Alpharetta, Georgia—explains practically how the pilgrim leader forms this co-missional mandate, stating that this “cause within” carries the weight of “moral imperative” and aligns itself with “what God is up to in the world.”⁶⁹ Stanley explains the nature and feeling of this “moral imperative” by reiterating that the burden of the imperative grows gradually in the heart of the pilgrim until it is all

⁶⁵ Ibid., 157.

⁶⁶ Ibid., 157-158.

⁶⁷ Ryan, *Four Steps to Spiritual Freedom*, 120.

⁶⁸ Matthew Barnett, *The Cause Within You: Finding the One Great Thing You Were Created to Do in This World* (Carol Stream, IL: Barna/Tyndale House, 2011), title page.

⁶⁹ Andy Stanley, *Visioneering* (Sisters, OR: Multnomah, 1999), 25. Stanley actually uses the phrase, “God-ordained vision,” but since vision has been discussed previously under a different step, I am using the phrase, “cause within” to describe and explain Stanley’s principles, which I believe to be the same. In translation work, this is called the principle of dynamic equivalency, where different words are used, but the overall meaning remains the same.

consuming, and the pilgrim comes to believe that if he or she does not fulfill the mandate of the imperative, it will be “tantamount to an act of disobedience.”⁷⁰ Second, this cause within will be in line with “what God is up to in the world.”⁷¹ The critical issue of alignment returns to the fore, this time between the pilgrim’s cause for mission and God’s Great Commission.

Stanley says, “There will always be a correlation between what God has put in an individual’s heart to do and what he is up to in the world at large.”⁷² Stanley knows this reality, as he has witnessed God bless the growth of his congregation, not only with numbers but with great passion and vision, discipleship through small groups, and mission in the surrounding communities. Therefore, Great Commission leaders learn to discern what God is doing among a given people group and place, to align their causes with God’s causes, and to act on the deepest desires God has placed in their hearts. With the discerning help of other leaders, they seek to fulfill their compelling mandates. As the Apostle Paul summarizes, the love of Christ “compels” pilgrim leaders to action, so that “those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again” (cf. 2 Cor. 5:11-15).

A second marker for the development of Great Commission Leaders is the element of community. Community is the people place where leaders gather, worship, grow together in small groups, confess their faults, love unselfishly, rejoice with those who

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² Ibid., 26.

rejoice, and weep with those who weep (cf. Rom. 12:15). In other words, community means to share the full spectrum of life in Christ together. Community is the baseline for mature Christian leadership development and provides checks and balances on the visionary dreamer (cf. Acts 2:42). Many visionary dreamers get caught up, at some point, in their own self-aggrandizement; they become full of themselves, arrogant and condescending. Strong, healthy community helps the pilgrim to avoid this dynamic.

Bonhoeffer, in his famous treatise, *Life Together*, brings the community check and balance issue sharply into focus:

The man who fashions a visionary ideal of community demands that it be realized by God, by others, and by himself. He enters the community of Christians with his demands, sets up his own law, and judges the brethren and God Himself accordingly. He stands adamant, a living reproach to all others in the circle of brethren. He acts as if he is the creator of the Christian community, as if his dream binds men together. When things do not go his way, he calls the effort a failure. When his ideal picture is destroyed, he sees the community going to smash. So he becomes, first an accuser of his brethren, then an accuser of God, and finally the despairing accuser of himself.⁷³

Genuine Christian community keeps visionary leaders, pastors and laity alike, on track, humbly devoted to the cause of the whole group and not just to their personal desires or God-sized ambitions. However, the acknowledged leaders of the Church need to listen to these “dreamers” on the edges or fringes of the fellowship, because they are the leaders closest to the margins and masses and often are closest to the true causes of Christ.

On the positive side, community offers church leaders the opportunity to hone and develop their personal skills and life markers. This happens in two ways, one described

⁷³ Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Life Together: The Classic Exploration of Christian Community*, trans. John Doberstein (New York: HarperCollins, 1954), 27-28.

by Matthew Barnett and the other method by Tom Paterson. In *The Cause Within You*, Barnett discusses the establishment of the Dream Center in inner-city Los Angeles and writes about how church leaders find their “sweet spot.” He says, “It is at the intersection of your passion (what really matters to you), your gifts (what you do best), and your contribution (how you make the world better).”⁷⁴ In practical terms, this is known as a Venn diagram of three overlapping circles, used by many leaders, including Clinton, to guide pilgrim leaders in finding their ultimate contribution.⁷⁵ Essentially, the sweet spot is found in the overlap of the three circles: passion, gifts, and contribution. This provides mentors and pilgrim leaders a quick overview of their unique mix.

Another effective way for pilgrim leaders to find their sweet spot is by participation in a “mentoring constellation.”⁷⁶ The mentoring constellation reflects the four directions discussed in the pilgrim journey: “Upward Mentoring” (leaders mentoring the leader), “Co-Mentoring” with peers, and “Downward Mentoring,” where the pilgrim leader disciples an Emerging Leader.⁷⁷ The goal of these three kinds of mentoring in a mentoring constellation is to develop leaders who can lead organizations, share intimacy with Christ, develop future leaders, and expand ministry borders.⁷⁸

⁷⁴ Barnett, *The Cause Within You*, 43.

⁷⁵ I was introduced to the concept of a Venn diagram by Walling, “OD774 Personal Renewal, Corporate Revitalization.”

⁷⁶ Paul D. Stanley and J. Robert Clinton, *Connecting: The Mentoring Relationships You Need to Succeed* (Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 1992), 157-168.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

Another effective approach to developing Great Commission Leaders is found in life markers, turning points, and life gates as presented by Paterson in *Living the Life You Were Meant to Live*.⁷⁹ Life markers are boundaries or signposts, like the mile markers that accompany drivers on the interstate. They primarily help pilgrim leaders identify where they are in the spiritual journey, like the two markers described within each of the Twelve Steps in the Way of Christ. Turning points, on the other hand, are life milestones and denote “a significant event in one’s progress or developing.” Some examples are career milestones, graduation, marriage, new baby, first grandchild, significant loss, and the like.⁸⁰

The key difference between a marker and turning point is that once the pilgrim has passed through the turning point, “the future is *not* the same.”⁸¹ Life’s journey somehow has been irrevocably altered. As Paterson points out, turning points are not always major life events; they simply may comprise “natural transition from one stage of life to the next,” such as retirement.⁸² Life gates, according to Paterson, are “supra-turning points” or “supreme events” that impact all five life domains: “personal, family, church/faith kingdom, vocation and community.”⁸³ The identification of these boundary markers (or life chapters, turning points, and life gates) opens up a whole new self-understanding in relation to God. In each case, as Paterson concludes, the turning points

⁷⁹ See Tom Paterson, *Living the Life You Were Meant to Live* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1998).

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 92.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*

⁸² *Ibid.*, 93.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 109-126.

and life gates especially indicate movement “*dramatically* toward God or away from God,” with God always holding out the opportunity for each pilgrim to experience “Plan B as a means of reentering the stream of the fullness of His Life Plan.”⁸⁴

I walked through the steps of this process with Terry Walling as my life coach in 2007. The process involves learning to do a Life Map or Personal Calling Statement.⁸⁵ The end result of this nine-hour retreat is a one-page summary statement, sharing one’s vision, mission, purpose, and core values on a single page of paper. Following that exercise, the pilgrim begins work on the “Life Turning Points Matrix,” dividing the life markers into the five major “life domains” (noted earlier).⁸⁶ As the pilgrim places these life markers or turning point events on large sheets of easel pad paper or oversized post-it notes for walls, life patterns emerge for analysis. The life coach then helps the pilgrim leader to identify the three to five key life gates that make up the turning points.⁸⁷

This overall process opens up the life to a trained spiritual guide or mentor, breaking down walls, exposing secrets, cleansing motives, removing hidden blind spots, revealing life patterns and returning cycles, helping to set forth strengths and weaknesses as well as disclosing important mentors, leaders, and influencers along the way. The impact is simply life-changing and transforming. It helps pilgrim leaders to focus their

⁸⁴ Ibid., 124.

⁸⁵ The process involves writing sixty to sixty-five critical life incidents on post-it notes and placing them on a half sheet of poster board, using different colors of notes for distinct outcomes.

⁸⁶ Paterson, *Living the Life You Were Meant to Live*, 109.

⁸⁷ In nearly twenty years of pastoral ministry, I have not seen a better process for discovering personal destiny and identifying key elements for missional work and Great Commission leadership.

lives in ways never thought possible. For those in the second half of life, the process is especially indispensable; I did not complete my process until I was fifty-three years old. The final important question for pilgrim leaders to ask while on the twelfth step is this: “Am I ready to be used by God to influence and impact future generations with the Gospel of Christ as Great Commission Leaders?”

In summary, the key factor in the developmental journey of Destiny Discoverers and Great Commission Leaders is the divesting and cauterization of the pilgrims’ ego. As to the issue of strengths versus weakness, the North American Church needs both approaches: pain and promise, healing and hope, confession and affirmation. This is the reason for exploring earlier the concepts of cross and empty tomb, *Quo vadis* and *Christus Victor*. When the pilgrim walks intimately with God in full surrender to Christ and daily dependence on the Holy Spirit, hearing God both in Scripture and the inner voice, then pilgrims are truly free to pursue their passion and destiny for the good of others and for the blessing of the world and future generations.

CONCLUSION

This dissertation began with a discussion of the current state of the North American Church; loss of respect for the Church by the younger, postmodern generations; impact of the celebrity culture; erosion of confidence in institutional authority; spiritual hunger among postmoderns; and, their critical view of hypocrisy and judgmental attitudes on the part of church leaders. The second chapter identified eight key indicators of spiritual measurement today—demonstrating that what gets measured gets done—and the fact that the same tired measurements of buildings, budgets, and programs are no longer working. A new effort to develop a different type of indicator for spiritual growth and leadership development emerged, after a summary overview of the defining literature in five areas: allegorical classics, spiritual formation literature, human development, recovery literature, and leadership emergence theory.

Following the review of defining literature, the concept of the Twelve Steps in the Way of Christ, divided into three distinct segues, was introduced. The discussion turned to contrast the suffering in *Quo vadis* theology of the Catholic faithful with the triumphant, overcoming *Christus Victor* theology of the Protestant world, especially in North America. This discussion framed the overall presentation and led to an examination of the sufferings and victory of Christ, as presented in both the Old and New Testaments. The effort was made to access the most current biblical and theological scholarship on these subjects within the context of the pilgrimage journey of faith.

The third part presented the Twelve Steps in the Way of Christ one by one and then linked the steps together in a woven tapestry, while acknowledging the variegations and undulations in the spiritual pilgrimage journey. Three major metaphors were presented: light in the darkness, heat for the heart, and a voice on the path. These metaphors helped to contextualize the steps within each segue, so that they could be understood either as part of a continuous life journey or as separate, smaller journeys within the larger one.

The Twelve Steps in the Way of Christ perhaps represent the beginning of a new discipline linking spiritual formation with Christian and secular leadership theory. As I began this work, seeking to enlist a content reader, my advisor Arlene Inouye and I had a lengthy conversation by phone debating the pros and cons of various, qualified content readers with whom we were familiar. Time and again, I would raise a name for consideration, and Inouye would pause and sigh. Each time, I knew that the name presented would probably not be acceptable. Finally, after much discussion back and forth, she said, “Steve, you know, there are not very many professors and scholars who have a background in both spiritual formation and leadership theory.”¹ For me, that conversation was a defining moment and great gift in the development of this overall paper. She was absolutely right; the two disciplines have not been integrated together, as far as I can tell and based on extensive research. Hagberg and Clinton, in my opinion, represent the first scholars to cross the great divide between the two disciplines.

The Twelve Steps exist to address the challenge of reaching postmodern young people skeptical of the traditional presentations of the faith in existing churches. They are

¹ Arlene Inouye, interview by author, Fuller Theological Seminary, Pasadena, CA, January 27, 2010.

for people like Erin Stanley, a young woman in Kansas City, Missouri, who considers herself an agnostic at best. In an article for *Circuit Rider*, she makes this statement of her position on the Church as she has experienced it: “I cannot embrace this seemingly ultimatum-based faith, and I see Christianity’s rules for attaining eternal life among the most arrogant of religions I have learned about. Another point of contention is the way Christians claim to have a monopoly on morality.”² As faithful churchgoers and pilgrims on the spiritual road, some may grow weary of hearing this kind of criticism from the younger generations; but it would behoove the North American Church to listen, hear the pain of the protest, and seek to build a bridge rather than erect another barrier. The Church has enough walls already.

The Twelve Steps in the Way of Christ truly point North American Church leaders in a new direction for the twenty-first century—the direction of relational-based ministry rather than buildings, budgets and programs. Morgenthaler has said, “We lead out of who we are, out of essence, how we are showing up and presenting ourselves to the world.”³ This relational nexus is the future core and center of ministry for a relational-based, digital era and culture. As mentioned earlier, the twenty-first century is rapidly transitioning from the information age to the digital, convergence age. At the heart of convergence is being and doing—with being, authenticity, and relationship coming first. R. Miller captures this cultural milieu:

² Erin Stanley, “Why I Don’t Go to Church,” *Circuit Rider*, February/March/April 2010, 16.

³ Morgenthaler, “OD718 Beyond Hierarchy.”

These youth [of the emerging digital generation] do not trust nicely wrapped truisms like “Hate the sin, love the sinner.” Instead, they are attracted to people who have been through the fire, taken a stand, worked through failure, learned how to love the sinner and express themselves in their recognizable voice—not a borrowed, schooled, rehearsed, or clichéd voice. They want to dig deeper and find the fundamental *why* behind people’s convictions and the ancient stories.⁴

When I began my journey at Fuller Seminary in the Doctor of Ministry program eight years ago in 2003, I felt overwhelmed by the task, particularly entering the school at the age of forty-nine and being the oldest in my first seminar class. A young man of twenty-four introduced himself to the rest of the group, and I thought, “You are the old man in the group.” A dear friend and colleague in Oklahoma ministry, who has a PhD from a prestigious school, had shared with me that if I did not complete my doctoral work by the time I was forty-five years of age, there was no point to bother. It would not benefit my career whatsoever. I am so glad I did not listen to that friend. The last eight years at Fuller have broadened my horizons, put me back in touch with postmodern generations, and given me a new direction and focus for life and ministry. I certainly represent the traditional North American Church by age, generation, gender, and training, not to mention that I have been a United Methodist for most of my life. Fellow pilgrim leaders of my ilk must go through these steps as well in order to minister to people like E. Stanley.

The most daunting learning curve by far has been attempting to grasp the culture, language, and symbolism of the postmodern world. Fuller has been a great gift to that end. When I first learned about the cynicism and skepticism of postmodernism, I thought

⁴ R. Miller, *The Millennium Matrix*, 92.

to myself, “We are wasting our time trying to make the Scripture story relevant to a generation that does not see reality through the same lens.” Like my esteemed colleague, I was quipping to a whole generation, “Why bother?” I wonder how many of our churches in North America secretly say the same thing, with predictable results: smaller congregations, dwindling resources, discouraged older generations, multiple congregations competing for the same demographic of people, untrained and undisciplined leaders, and followers of Christ who neither grow nor step out with faith. Like the federal government, more money, bigger budgets, higher deficits, and stretched volunteers and resources do not produce different results. That is the definition of insanity: to keep doing the same things over and over yet expecting different results.

It is my hope is that this new approach of Twelve Steps in the Way of Christ will gather attention and garner interest in a new way of being and doing church. As McNeal says, “We’ve been asking the wrong question for the past twenty years: How do we do church better?” New wine must be put into new wineskins, as Jesus said (cf. Matt. 9:14-17; Mark 2:18-22; Luke 5:33-39). The Twelve Steps in the Way of Christ is my humble attempt to offer a new wineskin for the North American Church. It represents a bold effort and a tireless labor of love for the past three to four years. My hope and prayer are that by helping the Church in North America to shift paradigms and return to relational basics, both with God and one another, all within the exciting context of journey and pilgrimage, we can find new “earthing points” for new generations who are hungry for a Savior.⁵

⁵ Frost and Hirsch, *The Shaping of Things to Come*, 97.

APPENDIX A

MODERNISM VS. POSTMODERNISM AND TWELVE INDICATORS OF A MISSIONAL CHURCH

A1: Modernism vs. Postmodernism

The following is a cogent summary and comparison of both modernism and postmodernism:

“Nutrients” of Modern Soil

Monotheism
Rational
Religion/Facts Based Faith
Propositional
Systematic
Local
Individualistic
Predetermined Truth
Religion as a Positive Force

“Nutrients” of Postmodern Soil

Pluralism
Experiential
Mystical/Spiritual
Narrative
Fluid
Global
Communal/Tribal
Personal Preference/Choice
Christianity Viewed Negatively

*Source: Dan Kimball, *The Emerging Church: Vintage Christianity for New Generations* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2003), 59-61.*

A2: Twelve Indicators of a Missional Church

1. The missional church proclaims the gospel.
2. The missional church is a community where all members are involved in learning to become disciples of Jesus.
3. The Bible is normative in this church’s life.
4. The church understands itself as different from the world because of its participation in the life, death, and resurrection of its Lord.
5. The church seeks to discern God’s specific, missional vocation for the entire community and for all of its members.
6. A missional community is indicated by how Christians behave toward one another.
7. It is a community that practices reconciliation.
8. People within the community hold themselves accountable to one another in love.
9. The church practices hospitality.
10. Worship is the central act by which the community celebrates with joy and thanksgiving both God’s presence and God’s promised future.
11. This community has a vital public witness.
12. There is recognition that the church itself is an incomplete expression of the reign of God.

*Source: “Empirical Indicators of a ‘Missional Church,’” working document of the “Developing Congregational Models” team of the Gospel and Our Culture Network (GOCN) “Transforming Churches Toward Mission” Project, *The Gospel and Our Culture Newsletter* 10, no. 3 (September, 1998): 5-7. The GOCN team later dropped the word, “empirical,” from the description, according to team leader and professor at Western Seminary George Hunsberger, phone interview by author, Oklahoma City, OK, December 3, 2009.*

APPENDIX B

THREE POSTMODERN REVOLUTIONS AND MACHINE LIFE VS. ORGANIC METAPHORS

B1: THREE POSTMODERN REVOLUTIONS	
The Scientific Revolution	
<u>Modern</u> Mechanistic World Linear Deterministic Newton Mechanics Facts are Objective Universal Truth Based on Scientific Method	<u>Postmodern</u> Self-organizing, Mysterious World Nonlinear Creative, Open Quantum/Chaos Theory Facts are Interpreted No Universal Worldview (All is Relative_
The Philosophical Revolution	
<u>Modern</u> Distinction Between Subject/Object Idea of Progress Optimistic View of Humanity Individualism Through Reason, One Overarching Metanarrative Conveys Truth	<u>Postmodern</u> Symbiosis (All Things are Interrelated) New Telling of History Views Each Epoch Within Its Own Culture Realistic View (Recognition of Dualism/Conflict of Good and Evil) Community The World has Many Competing Narratives, None of Which are Universal Truth
The Communication Revolution	
<u>Modern</u> Conceptual Knowledge Propositional Knowledge (Facts) Knowledge as Information Language Corresponds to Truth	<u>Postmodern</u> Symbolic Knowledge Return to Myth, Image, Metaphor, Story, Analogy (Knowing in Community) Knowledge as Practical Wisdom (How to) Language is a Social Meaning or Authority
<i>Source: Robert E. Webber, Ancient-Future Faith: Rethinking Evangelicalism for a Postmodern World (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1999), 36-37.</i>	

B2: MACHINE LIFE VS. ORGANIC METAPHORS	
<i>Bill Easum extends the modern vs. postmodern comparison to that of a machine versus a more natural, organic, relational understanding reflected in the postmodern world.</i>	
Machine Life Metaphor Addition Quick Fix Restructure Inanimate Predictable Needs Oil Precision Replace a Part All Models the Same Works Only One Way Each Part Distinct and Separate Linear Logic Reengineering Restructuring Downsizing Replacement Parts One Size Fits All	Organic Metaphor Multiplication Long Term Nurture DNA Living Unpredictable Needs to Grow Fractal Graft or Replant All Organisms Different Grows in Many Ways Each Cell Contains the DNA Fuzzy Logic Planting Equipping Pruning Grafting Diversity
<i>Source: Bill Easum, Leadership on the Other Side: No Rules, Just Clues (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2000), 83.</i>	

APPENDIX C

JANET HAGBERG'S STAGES OF FAITH

- 1) Stage 1: *The Recognition of God*
Thesis: Faith is the discovery or recognition of God.
Characteristics: A Sense of Awe; A Sense of Need; A Natural Awareness; Greater Meaning in Life; A Sense of Innocence
Question: How and when did you first recognize God in your life? (Awe or need?)
- 2) Stage 2: *The Life of Discipleship*
Thesis: Faith is learning about God.
Characteristics: Meaning from belonging; Answers Found in a Leader, Cause, or Belief System; Sense of Rightness; Security in Our Faith
Question: When have you felt a part of a faith or spiritual community?
- 3) Stage 3: *The Productive Life*
Thesis: Faith is working for God.
Characteristics: Uniqueness in the Community; Responsibility; Value Placed on Symbols; A Spiritual Goal Reached
Question: Which of your talents/gifts do you feel good about and are willing to share?
- 4) Stage 4: *The Journey Inward* (Stage 4 Includes the Wall)
Thesis: Faith is rediscovering God.
Characteristics: Life or Faith Crisis; Loss of Certainties in Life and Faith; A Search for Direction, Not Answers; Pursuit of Personal Integrity in Relation to God; God Released from Box; Apparent Loss of Faith
Question: Has your faith fallen apart? When? Why?
- 5) Stage 5: *The Journey Outward*
Thesis: Faith is surrendering to God.
Characteristics: A Renewed Sense of God's Acceptance; A New Sense of the Horizontal Life; Sense of Calling, Vocation, or Ministry; Concern and Focus on Others' Best Interests; A Deep Calm or Stillness
Question: Do you have a glimpse of God's purpose for your life?
- 6) Stage 6: *The Life of Love*
Thesis: Faith is reflecting God.
Characteristics: Christ-like Living in Total Obedience to God; Wisdom Gained from Life's Struggles; Compassionate Living for Others; Detachment from Things and Stress; Life Underneath or on Top; Life Abandoned
Question: How is God everything to you?

Source: Janet O. Hagberg and Robert A. Guelich, *The Critical Journey: Stages in the Life of Faith*, 2nd ed. (Salem, WI: Sheffield Publishing, 2005), 48, 67, 86, 110, 114, 148, and 159.

APPENDIX D

CHRISTUS VICTOR: THE OVERCOMING LIFE OF CHRIST

Based on the Gospel Accounts of the Resurrection of Christ, Acts, Paul's Letters, Hebrews and Revelation

<u>Christus Victor Concept</u>	<u>Corresponding Scriptures</u>
1) Through the resurrection, Christ <u>overcomes unbelief</u> and “vindicates the truth of the Gospel.”	Matt. 12:39-42; 28:16-18; Mk. 8:31; 9:31; 10:34; Lk. 11:29-30; 24:45-48; Jn. 2:18-22; 11:25-26; Acts 2:31-37; 3:13-15; 4:10-12; 10:39-43; 17:31; 1 Cor. 15:1-8.
2) Through the resurrection, Christ <u>overcomes evil</u> through his perfect obedience, the complete goodness of his life on earth.	Rom. 1:4; 5:10, 17; 6:1-11, 22-23; 1 Cor. 15:17; 2 Cor. 5:21; Phil. 3:8-11; Heb. 5:7-10; 7:15-16, 23-25.
3) Christ's <u>overcoming power vanquishes God's enemies</u> , chiefly Heb. Satan and his hosts. Paul calls this the “triumph over the cosmic powers,” according George Eldon Ladd, <i>A Theology of the New Testament</i> (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1977), 434-435. A list of these “powers” and accompanying Scriptures on page 401).	Lk. 10:18; 1 Cor. 15:24-27; Col. 2:15; 2:14-15; Rev. 20:10.
4) Christ <u>overcomes death and gives believers “the assurance of life victorious over death” and the power to overcome in Christ.</u>	Jn. 11:25; Rom. 8:2, 11; 1 Cor. 15:20-23, 54b-57; Rev. 2:7, 11, 17, 26; 3:5, 12, 21; 12:11; 14:4; 21:7.

(Sources: G. Ernest Thomas, *The Meaning of the Resurrection in Christian Experience* (Nashville: Tidings, 1964), 9-19.)

5) The fourteen Post-Resurrection appearances of Christ to more than 500 followers likewise <u>vindicate and validate</u> the promises and claims of Christ.*	Matt. 28:2; Lk. 24:2-3; Matt. 28:5-6; Jn. 20:4-6; Jn. 20:16, 18 ; Lk. 24:34; Jn. 20:19; 20:29; Lk. 24:30-31; Jn. 21:4, 9; 1 Cor. 15:6; 15:7; Lk. 24:51-52; 1 Cor. 15:8-10.
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(Source: Raymond Chapman, *Stations of the Resurrection: Meditations on the Fourteen Resurrection Appearances* (Harrisburg, PA: Morehouse Publishing, 1998), 2-57.

NOTE: Thomas F. Torrance, *Atonement: The Person and Work of Christ*, ed. Robert T. Walker (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2009) says that the resurrection of Christ is a “central and dominant concept” (page 204) and that “the whole gospel is seen from the perspective of the resurrection of Jesus Christ in body and it is in his resurrection that he enters into his glory” (page 211). See also Lk. 24:26; Jn. 7:39; 17:1f.; Acts 2:33; Rom. 6:9). On pages 215-216 of this same work, Torrance also affirms the triumph of Jesus over the grave “by his sinlessness—he had no sin for death to hold him. In line with his *active obedience* as Son on earth offering to his Father in heaven a life of holiness and filial love, the resurrection of Christ is to be regarded as his own act in taking again the life that he had laid down ” (cf. Jn. 10:18). Christ “passed through [death’s] clutches by the perfection of his holiness.”

APPENDIX E

TWELVE STEPS IN THE WAY OF CHRIST: SUMMARY CHART

Step Name	Guiding Metaphor	Process	Discipleship Markers
1) God Seeker	<u>Light in the Dark/Journey Upward</u> God Searches; the Pilgrim explores God and self-identity	Quests for Love, Acceptance and Relationship; seeks ultimate reality in many forms	Who am I? Why am I here?
2) Christ Follower	Commitment to Jesus Christ; Learner and apprentice of Jesus in everyday life	Experiences Word and Grace in faith-building community; worships and grows in Christ	Who is Jesus Christ?
3) Spirit Believer	Surrenders whole life to Christ; filled with Holy Spirit Hears inner voice of God speak	Becomes who we already are—a son or daughter of God; prays, journals, small group participant	Who am I in Christ?
4) Emerging Leader	<u>Journey Inward/Explores</u> hopes, dreams, ambitions; Leader-servant	Assesses self in gifts and strengths; productive but still ego-driven; sees personal potential/desire	To whom shall I go?
5) Wilderness Wanderer	<u>Heat for the Heart/Journey Downward, Journey of Humility</u> Loss of way, bearings, moorings	On Potter's wheel; in blacksmith's forge; life crisis and woundedness; testing/tutoring in spiritual deserts	Where have I lost my way?
6) Pain Prisoner	Humiliation/Rejection Failure/Defeat—Dark Night; Broken, abandoned, loss of hope	Captive to addiction, self-defeating behavior, setbacks or tragic personal circumstances	Where have I become stuck?
7) Prisoner of Hope	Lament/Reassessment Repentance/Realignment Rebirth of hope	Hope dawns in soul by grace, acts of contrition, acceptance and taking responsibility; new focus on Christ	Where do I see glimmers of hope/glimpses of Jesus?
8) Humble Servant	Restoration/Transformation Facing the Cross/Empty Tomb Emptied of self	Identifies with the suffering and resurrection of Christ; pilgrim seeks to serve first and then lead	Has false self died so the true self in Christ can emerge?
9) Wounded Healer	<u>Voice on the Path/Journey Outward begins</u> ; Scars and Tears Restorer of others	Learns to share wounds and pain in covenant groups; holds self accountable to spiritual director	Have I received healing through the wounds of Christ?
10) Passion Pursuer	From Pain to Passion; Call/Mission/Burden on heart Other side of you	Identifies source of pain and finds renewed call to mission; spiritual yearnings explored again (Culmination of Steps 4-9)	Where does my life story/pain intersect with the needs of the world?
11) Destiny Discoverer	From Weakness to Strength; God reveals and strengthens; Being with God precedes doing	Discovers destiny through God moments and strengths; Maps/marshals personal assets	Have I discovered my destiny in Christ?
12) Great Commission Leader	Commissioned to Serve/ Committed to community Four dimensional leader	Impacts future generations and mentors future leaders; nourishes self while nurturing others	Am I ready to be used by God to impact future generations?

APPENDIX F

JESUS, MAN OF SORROWS: REJECTED, COMPASSIONATE SON OF MAN

On many occasions, Jesus is moved to frustration, compassion, angst or tears on account of others:

- *Jesus is moved to tears and great grief* by Lazarus, his good friend's, death (Jn. 11:35-36; "Then the Jews said, 'See how he loved him!'")
- *Jesus is moved with compassion to reveal his holy identity* as Messiah and overcome Jewish prejudice by the testimony of a Samaritan, the woman at the well (Jn. 4:26)
- *Jesus is moved to heal the sick by many, including the Syro-Phoenician woman and the Centurion, and even to raise a widow's only son from the dead* (Matt. 15:21-28; Lk. 7:1-10, 11-15)
- *Jesus is moved to compassion by the crowds*, for he sees that they are "harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd" (Matt. 9:35-36)
- *Jesus is moved with angst* by the failure of the rich, young ruler to accept his offer of discipleship and eternal life (Mk. 10:23)
- *Jesus is moved to frustration by the disciples' stubbornness* and slowness of heart to believe—"O you of little faith!" (cf. Matt. 8:26; 14:31; 16:8)
- *Jesus is moved to angst and tears* by the pain of Jerusalem—"How often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing!" (Lk. 13:34-35; Lk. 19:41-44)

Jesus totally identifies with our pain and suffering, not just in his excruciating death, but throughout his life:

- *Jesus is "despised and rejected by men*, a man of sorrows, and familiar with suffering" (Isa. 53:3a)
- *Jesus, according to tradition, experiences the loss of Joseph*, his earthly father, at a relatively young age (based upon the fact that Jesus is the eldest and provides for his family as the carpenter's son; also based on the fact that the Gospels do not mention Joseph at all after the birth narratives)
- *Jesus witnesses his own family turn against him* when they think he is crazy (Mk. 3:20-21)
- *In the same incident in Mark's Gospel, Jesus is called Beelzebub*, the Prince of Darkness, by the teachers of the law (Mk. 3:22-30; cf. Matt. 12:24-28; Lk. 11:14-20; Jn. 8:48-52)
- *Jesus is rejected by his own hometown* of Nazareth at the beginning of his public ministry (Matt. 13:54-57a; Mk. 6:1-4; Lk. 4:23-30)
- *Jesus is considered the friend of tax collectors and sinners*, not exactly a compliment in his day (Matt. 11:18-19; Mk. 2:13-17; Lk. 7:33-35; 19:1-10)
- *Jesus' authority is continually questioned*; his leadership or right to lead is challenged; his methods, like doing work or healing on the Sabbath, are rejected (Matt. 9:1-8; Mk. 2:1-12; Lk. 20:1-8 (authority questioned); Jn. 8:12-30; 8:31-47; 8:54-59 (leadership challenged) Mk. 2:23-28; (method of work on Sabbath rejected) Mk. 3:1-6; Jn. 7:21-24; Jn. 9:13-34 (healing on Sabbath rejected)
- *Jesus suffers physical want (hunger and thirst)*, as well as deprivation, especially on the cross, but also during his temptation (Jn. 19:28; Ps. 22:12-18; Lk. 4:2)
- *Jesus deliberately chose a life of poverty*, both of spirit and possessions (Matt. 5:3; Lk. 6:20—notice these are the first beatitudes in the respective accounts); at the cross, the soldiers gamble over the few earthly possessions Jesus owns, four garments in all, according to John's Gospel (Matt. 27:35; Mk. 15:24; Lk. 23:34; Jn. 19:23-24)
- *Jesus is homeless*, except for occasionally staying over at Peter's home (Matt. 8:14-17) or his friends in Judea, Mary, Martha and Lazarus (Lk. 10:38-42)--Matt. 8:20; Lk. 9:58)
- *Jesus is born in a stable or cave, with the animals and angels*, because there is no room in the inn at census time (Lk. 2:4-7, 16)
- *Jesus is with the wild animals and angels in the wilderness* of his forty-day temptation (Mk. 1:12-13)
- *Jesus experienced much offense at his teaching, even from those who became his disciples* (Matt. 11:6; 26:31; Jn. 6:66-67)
- *Jesus experienced the betrayal* of his closest friends and followers (Matt. 26:33-35; Mk. 14:50-52, 66-72; Lk. 22:54-62; Jn. 18:25-27)
- *Jesus is betrayed and loses one of his closest disciples*, friends and confidants to the dark side, Judas, the disciples' treasurer (Matt. 26:14-16; Mk. 14:10-11, 16-20; Lk. 22:1-6, 20-22; Jn. 13:21-30)—Jesus is betrayed at his final meal
- *Jesus loses his closest friend and cousin, John the Baptist*, to the sword of Herod (Matt. 14:1-12; Mk. 6:14-30; cf. Lk. 13:32)
- *Jesus repeatedly identifies with the prophet Jonah*, who dies angry as the story closes yet Jonah's story becomes the "sign" of Jesus' death, burial and resurrection, the only sign he will give "a wicked and adulterous generation" (Matt. 12:38-40; Lk. 11:29-32)
- *Jesus is rejected by the religious leaders* who knew better and yet choose to ignore the prophecies, the signs, the wonders, and the miracles (Matt. 13:57-58; Mk. 6:2-6; Jn. 1:46; Jn. 2:17-25; Jn. 4:46-54; Jn. 6:42; Jn. 7:50-52; Jn. 10:34-39)
- *Jesus dies a pauper* and would have been buried in a pauper's grave, were it not for the intervention of Joseph of Arimathea and the word of God fulfilled (Isa. 53:9; Jn. 19:38-42)
- *Jesus experiences at least three dark nights of the soul*, in this writer's opinion: losing John the Baptist to beheading, Gethsemane, and the moment when Jesus loses most of his followers, except the twelve (Matt. 14:1-12; Mk. 6:14-30; Matt. 26:36-46; Mk. 14:32-42; Lk. 22:39-48; Jn. 6:60-71)

APPENDIX G

DOROTHEE SOELLE'S ANATOMY OF SUFFERING

Phase One	Phase Two	Phase Three
mute numb explosive speechless moaning animal-like wailing	lamenting aware, able to speak psalmic language rationality and emotion communicated together	changing organizing rational language
<i>isolation</i>	<i>expression, communication</i>	<i>solidarity</i>
the pressure of suffering turns one in on himself	the pressure of suffering sensitizes	the pressure of suffering produces solidarity
autonomy of thinking, speaking, and acting lost	autonomy of experience (can be integrated)	autonomy of action that produces change
objectives cannot be organized	objectives utopian (in prayer)	objectives can be organized
reactive behavior		active behavior
dominated by the situation	suffering from the situation and analyzing it	helping to shape the situation
submissiveness	suffering	
<i>powerlessness</i>	<i>acceptance and conquest</i> in existing structures	<i>acceptance and conquest</i> <i>of powerlessness</i> in changed structures

Source: Dorothee Soelle, *Suffering* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1975), 73.

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