LIBERTY UNIVERSITY

JOHN W. RAWLINGS SCHOOL OF DIVINITY

Heart, Soul, Mind, and Strength: Understanding

Spirituality's Transformative Impact as Assisted by Intradisciplinary Integration

Submitted to Dr. Jonathan Sullivan

In fulfillment of the requirements for the completion of

the Doctor of Ministry Degree

Department of Christian Leadership and Church Ministries

by

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Liberty University John W. Rawlings School of Divinity

Thesis Project Approval Sheet

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THE DOCTOR OF MINISTRY THESIS PROJECT ABSTRACT

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Spirituality is an essential and deeply embedded part of Black Americans' psyche. The counseling field has largely overlooked the roles of spirituality and religious beliefs in the development of the consciousness of this demographic. In the treatment of Black Americans, particularly Black churchgoers, this can be a serious oversight. The purpose of this DMin action research thesis is to provide sufficient intradisciplinary integrative spiritual teaching to effect holistic coping strategies for Lake Providence's Mid-Week Bible Study Service members. The goal is to bring healing through an intradisciplinary integrative teaching approach utilizing psychology, theology, and spirituality. If the members of Lake Providence's Mid-Week Bible Study Service receive intradisciplinary integrative teaching, then holistic coping strategies could be created.

This research was conducted utilizing Participant Response Questionnaires. Ten members of the Lake Providence Missionary Baptist Church who attend the Mid-Week Bible Study Service were chosen to form the sample group. Gathered data was reduced to create recurrent themes of spiritual relationship, transformation, faith, the Holy Spirit, and storytelling. Results demonstrated that a pedagogy addressing integrative techniques utilizing cognitive and narrative therapeutic approaches along with an emphasis placed on spirituality provided spiritual and psychological revelation and a behavioral assist for the interviewees. The desired influence of this thesis project is to add to the underrepresented literature on the impact spirituality has on the cognitive behavior of Black American churchgoers relative to effecting holistic life outcomes.

Acknowledgements

Blessed be the Lord,
Because He has heard the voice of my supplications!
The Lord is my strength and my shield;
My heart trusted in Him, and I am helped;
Therefore my heart greatly rejoices,
And with my song I will praise Him.
— Psalm 28:6-7 (NKJV)

I give thanks to my Heavenly Father for His creation, to my Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ for His sustaining grace, and to the power of the Holy Spirit for guiding me into all knowledge. Truly, it was divine influence and favor that allowed me to complete the work required for this DMin degree. The journey began with a vision given by God, aided by the grace of Christ to endure the process, and brought to manifestation by the power of the Holy Spirit dwelling in me to finish the race.

My deepest and heartfelt thanks go to my wife, Chandra, who long ago made me believe in my abilities and helped me to recapture my passion for living and for productive significance. Her love, prayers, encouragement, and gentle nudging all contributed to the attainment of this finished product. She always challenges me to "finish well." That prompting drove me during this journey. I am blessed to have Chandra in my life. "I love you, always."

Many thanks to my mentor, Dr. Jonathan Edward Sullivan, for his belief in this project, for his kindness and steadfast encouragement in the duration of this work, and for his prayers. I would have had a more challenging time without his consistent and professional guidance in supporting me in every step of this process. To all the professors

along the way who were engaged in this project from conception to final writing stage, I say thank you.

Moreover, I want to thank my pastor, Reverend H. Bruce Maxwell, for his consent to allow me to utilize the membership of Lake Providence Missionary Baptist Church (LPMBC), Nashville, Tennessee to conduct this research. I thank all the member LPMBC participants from the Mid-Week Bible Study Service who made this project possible with their willing contributions for research data.

Special thanks are given to my parents, Richard T. Stokes and Christine Stokes-Oliver, and my deceased siblings, Stanley, Richard III, and Carl. Each of your spirits guided me through this project. I dedicate this work to each of you through our bond as family.

My prayer is that God uses this work to bless those who encounter this thesis, and that this thesis will contribute to His kingdom work here on earth... *for His glory*.

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Abbreviations

CBT   *Cognitive Behavioral Therapy*

CE   *Christian Education*

DMIN   *Doctor of Ministry*

LPMBC   *Lake Providence Missionary Baptist Church*

MWBSS   *Mid-Week Bible Study Service*

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Introduction

There is an increased expression on the part of many counselees that religion or spirituality compose crucial elements of their ideas and imaging of self and forms their worldview and belief system. Hence, in recent years, psychology has taken notable interest in religion and spirituality.[1] In fact, various data underscores the significance of religion and spirituality in the meaning-making processes in the lives of the individuals to whom counselors provide their therapeutic services.[2] However, Black American churchgoers seldom make up the targeted focus group in the discussion and literature relating to counseling praxis addressing religion and spirituality as elemental to the therapeutic intervention. As a result, there is a seeming lack of knowledge as to how the cultural-influencing components of religion and spirituality within the Black church experience can shape their views and form holistic mental health coping strategies. This problem is reflected in the implications for less competent secular or pastoral counselor education and praxis regarding this group.[3]

Further developed, religion and spirituality are core elements of many Black Americans' lives. Black religious tradition is a well-researched and expounded upon subject concerning the experiences in the Black church. Prior analysis, both in literature and in individual experiences as a Black American churchgoer, of the religious and spiritual influence on Black Americans

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[1] David H. Rosmarin and Harold G. Koenig, eds., *Handbook of Spirituality, Religion, and Mental Health,* (San Diego: CA: Elsevier Science & Technology, 2020), xvii-xx, ProQuest Ebook Central.

[2] Jeffrey E. Barnett and W. Brad Johnson, "Integrating Spirituality and Religion into Psychotherapy: Persistent Dilemmas, Ethical Issues, and a Proposed Decision-Making Process," *Ethics & Behavior* 21, no. 2 (March 2011): 148, https://doi-org.ezproxy.liberty.edu/10.1080/10508422.2011.551471.

[3] Darryl P. Plunkett, "The Black Church, Values, and Secular Counseling: Implications for Counselor Education and Practice," *Counseling and Values* 59, no. 2 (October 2014): 208, https://doi org.ezproxy.liberty.edu/10.1002/j.2161-007X.2014.00052.x.

support the argument that spirituality is a rooted value system in the Black church. Peer examination speaks to how these spiritual values and experiences influence Black Americans in forming worldviews and life strategies that reflect their religious and spiritual needs. As such, this writer's teaching ministry is highlighted with an emphasis on edifying churchgoers on the value and effectiveness of incorporating religion and spirituality in developing transformative behaviors in all facets of their lives to create a holistic formation within their life experiences. This thesis will argue for the benefits of an integrative approach combining religion and spirituality into psychotherapy with an emphasis on Black Americans, in general, and Black churchgoers, specifically. An integrative teaching approach of psychology, theology, and spirituality would provide effective coping strategies for Black church members.

Ministry Context

Demographics

Lake Providence Missionary Baptist Church (LPMBC) is a Baptist denominational church located in Nashville, Tennessee. Its membership is predominantly Black with other multicultural ethnic groups (White, Asian, African, Caribbean, Hispanic) comprising about five percent of the church's membership. The current church congregation has approximately 4,000 members on the church membership roll. The average attendance on any given Sunday worship service ranges from 800 to 1,200. This attendance figure holds for each individual service whether at 8:00 AM or 11:00 AM. However, the 8:00 AM service tends to have more older attendees and has the largest attendance figures.

LPMBC has a makeup of varied socioeconomic backgrounds. There is a large professional, educated population in the congregation comprised of doctors, lawyers, college educators, business owners, and corporate executives. However, the social structure of the

congregation encompasses all intervals of the social, educational, and financial ladder. Although LPMBC is a large church with a progressive grouping, it is a "big church with a big heart and small church feel" where fellowship and communal connection is emphasized and modeled by leadership and encouraged as practiced behavior by the congregants.

<div align="center">LPMBC's Beliefs</div>

Christian education is a core element of the church's values along with integrity, faith, and ministry. In addition, LPMBC envisions a Christian ministry that reaches all people with the Gospel from the cradle to the grave. The mission at LPMBC is to achieve ministry in-reach and outreach through sound biblical teaching and preaching. Further presented, as a Missionary Baptist Church, Lake Providence subscribes to the tenets set forth in the Church Covenant and Articles of Faith. Moreover, LPMBC affirms our beliefs as follows:

- We are saved by grace through faith, not of works.

- We believe the Holy Bible is the final authority for answers to this life.

- We believe that the Holy Scriptures are inerrant and infallible.

- We believe in the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, that He and He alone is the only way to the Father (God).

- We believe in a Triune God, which is to say; God is three persons who are yet one in essence and substance representing Himself as God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit.

- We believe that marriage is biblically based on the union of a man and woman.

- We believe God has called men to the preaching ministry and to the office of pastor.[4]

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[4] "What We Believe: Our Beliefs," Lake Providence Missionary Baptist Church, Nashville, TN, last modified January 2021, https://www.lpmbc.org/Pages/index.php?id_PAGE=34.

We believe in worshipping the Lord in spirit and in truth; that there exists one Lord, one faith and one baptism.

<div align="center">LPMBC History[5]</div>

Founding Period

The year was 1868, five years after the Emancipation Proclamation, and three years after the Civil War ended that this historic Missionary Baptist Church was formed. It was in the quaint little sparsely populated community on the side of what is now Nolensville Road, Nashville, Tennessee. Scattered here and there on adjoining farms that were former slave plantations were a faithful few who had been meeting in various homes along with their children who still believed in and served the God they had found in their dark days of slavery. Having no permanent place for worship these loyal and devout servants of God had unshaken faith in God, and deep down in their hearts lingered a belief that someday they would have a permanent place in which to worship their God and to teach and train their children. It was during these times that the people cried out to God for deliverance. He heard their cries and sent an itinerant preacher into the community by the name of Reverend Larry A. Thompson. Suddenly, and without announcement, he appeared among this small band of Christians preaching and teaching God's word. A short time later he called the scattered few together under a big oak tree on the farm of Sam Overton, and there he organized what is now the Lake Providence Missionary Baptist Church and served as the first pastor.

Shortly after the first year of pastoring in his new "house of worship," Reverend Thompson resigned and moved to the Indian Territory to further spread the word of God. However, before his departure he named the community and church Lake Providence because of

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[5] "History," Lake Providence Missionary Baptist Church, Nashville, TN, last modified January 2021, https://www.lpmbc.org/Pages/index.php?id_PAGE=33. All items under this heading are from the cited website.

a stream of water that flowed through the area, and that it was the divine providence of God that brought him into the community. Following the resignation of Reverend Thompson, 20 other men became pastor through the year of 1931.

Growth and Expansion (1931)

The deacons extended a call to the Reverend Doctor Samuel H. Simpson who was then pastor of the Greater St. John Missionary Baptist Church. On Friday, November 6, 1931, in a special called meeting, Reverend Samuel Henry Simpson was elected pastor of Lake Providence. With the arrival of Reverend Simpson, Lake Providence gained new hope. A mortgage debt on the church greeted him but with faith in God, confidence in the membership, and self-determination, he gave his plan and without a single objection it was accepted by the church. Within one year from that time, the debt was satisfied in full. Reverend Simpson with his tact of leadership and pastoral ability led this congregation to a new level but still he desired to do more. In October 1950, the old church building was demolished, and soon the construction of the new edifice began. On the fifth Sunday in September 1951construction was completed, and the congregation, which was led by Reverend Simpson, marched from the old church building across Nolensville Road into the preceding edifice. He served the church for forty-four years until ill health prevailed. On February 18, 1976, God saw fit to call him home for a well-deserved reward.

Growth and Change (1976)

Upon the home going of Reverend S.H. Simpson, Lake Providence called her own son, the Reverend H. Bruce Maxwell, to the pastorate. He was installed and licensed to preach on November 14, 1976. Since this grandiose event, the church family has been blessed with an upsurge of growth. On November 13, 1988, a groundbreaking ceremony was held, and the

construction of a new edifice began. On the fourth Sunday in October 1989, construction was completed and the congregation that was led by Pastor Maxwell marched from the parking lot into the 4506 Nolensville Road location. The blessings of the Lord have truly been with this congregation enabling it to retire the debt occasioned by the 1988 construction in half of the allotted time. On July 23, 1995, a Mortgage Burning Ceremony was held to commemorate satisfaction of that debt.

LPMBC's Building Committee was appointed to develop plans to address the continued growth of the ministry. After much prayer, the Building Committee identified 36 acres of land approximately two miles south of the past edifice and presented this property to the congregation as the future site and current site of Lake Providence. In December 2019, a 20 million dollar building debt had been satisfied in less than 15 years and a mortgage burning ceremony took place on December 31, 2019. Under the leadership of the current shepherd, Pastor H. Bruce Maxwell, LPMBC continues to reflect on our great heritage and rededicate ourselves to serving the Lord. Without Him our ancestors would not have been able to sustain the struggles, hardships, and other adversities that confronted them during these emerging years. LPMBC will celebrate its 153rd church anniversary in June 2021. Lake Providence still practices the principle on which it was founded: "Through Christ All Things Are Possible."

<div align="center">LPMBC Ministries</div>

Overview

LPMBC takes seriously its commitment to serving its congregation in a manner that encourages discipleship through relationship, education, and community. As such, there are numerous ministries that are facilitated by laypersons comprised of members, deacons, and associate ministers. For example, there are over 54 various ministries that address congregational

concerns and needs. These ministries address the children, divorced couples, vacation Bible school, cancer support, men and women, young adults, seniors, and tutorial classes just to name a few. It is evident that serving God's people is a main call for LPMBC in honoring its core values, mission, and vision. The Mid-Week Bible Study/Service is the ministry this writer facilitates, and it also serves to provide the focal address for this action research project.

Mid-Week Bible Study/Service

The Mid-Week Bible Study/Service (MWBSS) was created in 2015. The vision and mission are to provide a period of worship prior to Sunday services that allows the LPMBC membership to spiritually refuel. It is held each Wednesday at noon. The time was chosen to allow people who work an opportunity to come, on lunch break, to take part in a worship event. It is facilitated by three Associate Ministers of LPMBC of which this writer is one of those ministers. The structure is a combination of exegetical Bible study, sermonettes, and focused topical studies on biblical subject matter from theological resources. The ministry has grown significantly since its inception in accordance with God's favorable grace.

The MWBSS develops LPMBC's core value of Christian education. Christian education defined in a Black church context urges congregants to rise up and take part in God's strategy for their deliverance; to overcome spiritual barriers to avail the redemption presented by Jesus in this world and the next.[6] The premise undergirding this significant developmental component is the idea that Christian education allows for the increased ability to conform to the Great Commission found in Matthew 28:19-20, "Go, therefore, and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to follow all that I

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[6] Lora-Ellen McKinney, *Christian Education in the African American Church: A Guide for Teaching Truth* (Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 2003), 4, Amazon Books.

 in commanded you. . ."[7]

The MWBSS seeks to implement a spiritually inspired integrative therapeutic approach in its methodology and pedagogy. It desires to best use the tools of psychotherapy, religion, spirituality, education, and technology (e.g., conference calling during the COVID-19 pandemic) to elevate the capability of the God's people to live better and serve Him more effectively. The MWBSS aspires to create sustainable learned coping strategies in the lives of the people as modeled in the expressed concept and expectations that Jesus holds for His creation (Jer 29:11). The notion is to produce spiritual growth through hope and opportunity within the membership.

As centered in a Black church, this writer views his role as facilitator of the MWBSS as assuming an added set of responsibilities: "As [a servant] in a servant church, [I am] called to a ministry of liberation and reconciliation in the church of Jesus Christ."[8] Thus, this facilitator's integrative intervention fostered within a Christian education style seeks to manifest opportunities for holistic outcomes through proffering therapeutic and spiritually-centered values for individual, family, and collective functioning.[9] For example, cognitive and narrative counseling dynamics practiced as intradisciplinary integration (psychology, religion, and spirituality) formulate this writer's preferred pastoral care approach. It is a concept that recognizes behavior as formed through thought processes (cognitive) and gives specific credence to the indigenous story-telling heritage (narrative) within Black culture that formulates meaning

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[7] All scripture citations are taken from the *New American Standard Bible*, unless otherwise noted.

[8] McKinney, *Christian Education in the African American Church*, xii.

[9] Ibid.

for sustaining, healing, and guidance.[10] Producing the "fruit of the Spirit" is the anticipated result for the congregants (Gal 5:22-26).

Moreover, the MWBSS is tasked with teaching its members the benefits of understanding the ability of the spiritual foundations inherent within Black faith heritage to create meaning-making when utilizing the gospel in a healing construct (2 Tim 3:16). The process becomes an in-reach effort that helps the community of believers comprehend and apply the learned teaching of Christ in a manner that gives guidance to their lives. Integrative pedagogy joins with the congregant's belief systems and values to affirm their dignity; it reinforces their agency to establish solutions to navigate a reliable course in life. If done effectively, the methodology implemented in the MWBSS will teach meaningful, holistic, and relevant curative and spiritually focused ideas that competently address the member's needs and challenges. As facilitator, this writer intends to present God in a relational and incarnational manner to enhance the possibility that outcomes are fostered that manifest applicable benefits (Ps 103:1-12).

Problem Presented

In the most recent period of the latter 20th century, the therapeutic counseling profession has gained an increased awareness of the value of the Black church in the lives of many Black Americans.[11] However, this awareness seems to lack an in-depth formation in developing a deeper expression of comprehending how Black Americans' views concerning secular counseling are fashioned by their church experiences. This apparent deficient insight could be

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[10] Edward P. Wimberly, *African American Pastoral Care*, Revised Edition (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2008), 8. Cf. Mark R. McMinn, *Psychology, Theology, and Spirituality in Christian Counseling*, Revised and Updated (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 2011), 10; Cf. P.B. Helsel, "A Life with Roots: Narrative Pastoral Care and Communities of Identity in the Parable of the "Good Soil," *Pastoral Psychology* 61, no. 4 (August 2012): 485-486, https://doi-org.ezproxy.liberty.edu/10.1007/s11089-011-0416-x.

[11] Nancy Boyd-Franklin, *Black Families in Therapy, Second Edition*: *Understanding the African American Experience* (New York: Guilford Publications, 2003), 3-4, ProQuest Ebook Central.

suggestive of a paucity of multicultural competence concerning Black Americans, in general, and Black American churchgoers, specifically.[12]

In fact, closer observation of the significance the Black church holds for Black Americans uncovers values rooted in the Black religious beliefs that are deeply entrenched in the Black church. Black religious tradition is steeped with values that are realized and adopted because of experience in the Black church. These values may play a factor in decision making by Black American churchgoers as to whether they engage in the counseling process or other mental health services.[13] Prayer and interpersonal spiritual relationship with God are values held by Black American churchgoers. These basic values of Black religious tradition hold great sway in forming coping strategies regarding emotional issues for some Black churchgoers. The aforementioned religious dynamics coupled with a natural skepticism of secular counseling due to reproof and shame, negative expectations of white counselors, and a cultural mistrust affect Black churchgoers' attitudes to counseling like those found in the general Black population.

This writer's church, Lake Providence Missionary Baptist Church, as mentioned previously, is a predominantly Black church congregation in Tennessee. This writer has experienced his own previous mental health issues. Some of the psychological issues this writer has experienced are visible in his church members and are identifiable in other members of the Black community. The literature does not adequately address these concerns in the scope that allows for the understanding of the benefits availed in integrative psychotherapeutic approaches utilizing psychology, theology, and spirituality. This is problematic to this writer. The problem is

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[12] Plunkett, "The Black Church, Values, and Secular Counseling," 208.

[13] Ibid., 208-209,212.

that members of Lake Providence's MWBSS appear to lack intradisciplinary integrative teaching concerning spirituality's ability to effect holistic coping strategies.

Purpose Statement

Spirituality is an essential and deeply embedded part of the Black American's psyche.[14] The counseling field has largely overlooked the roles of spirituality and religious beliefs in the development of the psyche. In the treatment of Black Americans, particularly Black churchgoers, this can be a serious oversight.[15] Religious beliefs and practices are not merely systematic rituals within the Black experience. Rather, Black people have a sense of spirituality that is knitted into the framework of their culture and manifests as a main trait of the Black consciousness and spirit.

Moreover, primary to this dialogue about Black American churchgoers and counseling is an understanding of the expression attitudes, values, and Black religious tradition as characterized in cultural context. According to *Merriam-Webster's Online Dictionary* (2021), an attitude is a position assumed for a specific purpose, a mental position regarding a fact or state, a feeling or emotion toward a fact or state. Values are defined as something (such as a principle or quality) intrinsically valuable or desirable (e.g., social principles, as goals, or standards held or accepted by an individual, class, and society). In this essay attitudes and values are deemed as having equivalent meaning as it relates to the manner in which Black churchgoers act, feel, or think about the social principles and standards within the Black church.[16] Black religious tradition is explained as universal religious thought of Black Americans in relation to how

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[14] Boyd-Franklin, *Black Families in Therapy*, 126. Cf. Godfrey Gregg, "I'm a Jesus Girl: Coping Stories of Black American Women Diagnosed with Breast Cancer," *Journal of Religion and Health* 50, no. 4 (December 2011): 1040, https://www.jstor.org/stable/41349857.

[15] Boyd-Franklin, *Black Families in Therapy*, 126.

[16] Plunkett, "The Black Church, Values, and Secular Counseling," 209.

scripture is "a living reality in the concreteness of their existence."[17] Black religious tradition is a design within Black theology where truth is based on the content of the Black experience.[18]

This writer holds primary experiences reflected in the interpersonal spiritual and religious interactions with LPMBC church members and other members of the Black community. This connection serves as a driver for this writer's desire to be God's redeemed witness to bring healing to others. This writer's primary testimony about his religious and spiritual roots is that He "brought me out of the horrible pit" of mental and spiritual darkness (Ps 40:1-5). The vision is centered on spirituality's transformative ability to avail healing for others as well (Prov 29:18). Concern of the apparent lack of understanding of integrative teaching serves as a driver to preach "righteousness in the great congregation" (Ps 40:9). The motive is to bring healing to others through an intradisciplinary integrative teaching approach utilizing psychology, theology, and spirituality. The purpose of this DMin action research thesis is to provide sufficient intradisciplinary integrative spiritual teaching to effect holistic coping strategies for Lake Providence's MWBSS members.

Basic Assumptions

The Bible says that knowledge is acquired by those with a discerning mind and sought through one's hearing by those who are wise (Prov 18:15). Christian education is a core value at LPMBC; it is promoted and developed in all ministries. Characteristics of Christian education teachings and the potential for learning on the part of membership may be concluded through use of qualitative measures. The purposed intradisciplinary integrative pedagogy as utilized within the MWBSS ministry facilitation is fashioned to competently present spirituality as a useful

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[17] Plunkett, "The Black Church, Values, and Secular Counseling," 209.

[18] Ibid. See also, Boyd-Franklin, *Black Families in Therapy*, 126.

coping strategy to the membership. The feeling is that collectively and/or individually the membership may envision the process as helpful in assuming personal agency for life enhancing transformation. The successful application of the teaching methodology should be seen over time as spiritually mature traits within the behavior of the MWBSS participants.

Moreover, it is strongly held by this writer those integrative techniques utilizing cognitive and narrative therapeutic approaches along with an emphasis placed on spirituality could provide holistic results. Given reviewed literature that posits each approach as capable of assisting in the counselee's religious and/or spiritual consciousness and behavioral development, the postulation is that benefits should exist for the MWBSS group.[19] The narrative construct holds favor as a procedure within the pastoral care praxis among Black American worshippers. The suggestion is offered that when Black pastors approach pastoral care from a narrative viewpoint they assist persons and families in visualizing God's operative presence in their lives and thereby congregants may obtain healing and wholeness.[20] Therefore, the assumption by this writer is that the congregants within the MWBSS could holistically and spiritually profit from an intentional teaching practice driven by intradisciplinary integrative techniques.

Finally, the overarching assumption at work in this research process is the conviction that relationality is at the heart of pastoral counseling. The specific nature of the relationality is forming a counseling alliance built through sharing done in love (1 John 4:7-8; John 13:34-35).

This defining trinitarian dynamic of love is central to aiding group interactions with a

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[19] Jan De Jongh van Arkel, "Recent Movements in Pastoral Theology," *Religion & Theology* 7, no. 2 (January 2000): 153, https://search-ebscohost-com.ezproxy.liberty.edu/login.aspx?direct=true&db=lsdar&AN=ATLA0001999257&site=ehost-live&scope=site. See also, David H. Rosmarin, PhD et al., "Integrating Spirituality into Cognitive Behavioral Therapy in an Acute Psychiatric Setting: A Pilot Study," *Journal of Cognitive Psychotherapy* 25, no. 4 (2011): 298-310, https://search-proquest-com.ezproxy.liberty.edu/docview/906290470?pq-origsite=summon.

[20] Wimberly, *African American Pastoral Care*, 1, 3-7.

focus on therapeutic and spiritual alliance aided by the incarnate behavior of this facilitator. The Trinity exists as a model for human relations (Gen 1:26); therefore, the major assumption in facilitating the MWBSS is the hope that showing the loving relationality that the triune God offers might provide a model for a counseling partnership that may well engender transformative outcomes.[21]

Definitions

Action research

"Action research is a systematic approach to investigation that enables people to find effective solutions to problems they confront in their everyday lives. . . action research seeks to engage the complex dynamics involved in any social context. It uses continuing cycles of investigation designed to reveal effective solutions to issues and problems experienced in specific situations and localized settings, providing how people. . .may increase the effectiveness and efficiency of their work. In doing so it also seeks to build a body of knowledge that enhances professional and community practices and works to increase the well-being of the people involved."[22]

Competency

As it relates to psychotherapy, the therapist, clinician, or practitioner must be able to professionally perform therapeutic tasks or skills with the necessary level of cognitive proficiency that appreciates the ethical, social, and cultural dynamics concerning the counselee, client, or patient.

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[21] Neil Pembroke, *Renewing Pastoral Practice: Trinitarian Perspectives on Pastoral Care and Counselling* (Abingdon, UK: Taylor & Francis Group, 2007), 58, ProQuest Ebook Central.

[22] Ernest T. Stringer, *Action Research*, 4th ed. (Los Angeles, CA: Sage Publications, 2014), 1.

Holistic

Therapeutic care that acknowledges and treats the whole person with consideration given to mental and social factors instead of just the symptoms of a disease.

Incarnate

As presented in counseling relationships, the counselor embodies or represents the divine personality qualities of Jesus Christ as seen in authentic, compassionate, truthful, empathetic, and caring counselor behaviors.

Integrative psychotherapy

Integrative psychotherapy combines theories and counseling mediations from two or more theoretical psychotherapy methodologies.

Interdisciplinary integration

Interdisciplinary integration connects two or more unique disciplines (e.g., psychology and theology) to locate links between the two fields.[23]

Intradisciplinary integration

Intradisciplinary integration happens within a discipline such as the fields of counseling and psychology; it is theologically and spiritually responsible in a way that is true to psychology, theology, and spirituality.[24]

Intervention

Any action meant to intervene with and prevent or change a practice, as in treatment undertaken to halt, manage, or alter the course of the pathological process of a disease or disorder; action on the part of a psychotherapist to manage the struggles and challenges of a

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[23] McMinn, *Psychology, Theology, and Spirituality in Christian Counseling*, 29.

[24] Ibid.

counselee. The choice of intervention type is driven by the kind of problem, the training of the

therapist, the counseling environment, and the inclination and capacity of the counselee to

continue with the treatment.[25]

Pastoral Counseling

Pastoral counseling presents as a methodology addressing mental health care in a manner

that utilizes the understanding of psychology and the behavioral sciences in conjunction with

spirituality, religion, and theology. Pastoral counseling focuses on the promotion of welfare,

symptom mitigation, increased coping, positive behavioral transformation, and better

relationships with self and others; it considers shifts in a person's spiritual life, values, meanings,

and fundamental commitments as vital.[26] The term, *pastoral counseling*, will be used

interchangeably with *pastoral care* and, for purposes of this study, signifies congruent meaning

as posed within this definition.

Pastoral Counselors

"Pastoral counselors are *bilingual* because they are trained in the languages

of both spirituality/religion/theology and psychology. Pastoral counselors integrate the languages

of spirituality/religion/theology and psychology by using a diversity of methods. . . Pastoral

counselors are *bicultural* because they have graduate training in both religious, spiritual,

theological education and a mental health discipline. . . Pastoral counselors' religious, spiritual,

theological education and competence are perhaps the discipline's foremost distinction."[27]

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[25] "Intervention," *APA Dictionary of Psychology*, American Psychological Association, last modified 2020, https://dictionary.apa.org/intervention.

[26] Elizabeth A. Maynard and Jill L. Snodgrass, eds., *Understanding Pastoral Counseling* (New York, NY: Springer Publishing Company, 2015), 6, ProQuest Ebook Central.

[27] Ibid.

Religion

A formalized or functional set of distinguished beliefs and practices that submit to the controlling power of a higher power, a personal god utilized by people to determine meaning within human life and its struggles for the provision of fulfillment and promotion of personal transformation.

Theology

Theology considers the major tenets of the Christian faith such as knowing God, revelation, the Trinity, God's attributes and works, humanity, sin, Christ, the work of Christ, salvation, the Holy Spirit, the church, and the last things.[28]

Spirituality

The state of deep relationship to God. Christian spirituality is the outworking, then, of God's grace in the human soul, beginning with conversion and concluding with death or Christ's second advent. It is marked by growth and maturity in Christlike life. It implies community and fellowship, a sense of the eternal dimension in all one's existence, and intense awareness of the present before God. The Spirit-filled life manifests the Spirit of Jesus in a practical manner as the fruit of the Spirit which is love, joy, peace, patient, kind, good, faithful, gentle, and self-controlled (Gal 5:22-23). This is true spirituality— a continuous command, "Be filled with the Spirit," who should be neither quenched (1 Thess 5:19) nor grieved (Eph 4:30)." [29]

Limitations

This action research project qualitatively examines participants from a chosen ministry

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[28] Christopher W. Morgan and Robert A. Peterson, *Christian Theology: The Biblical Story and Our Faith* (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 2020), xii, ProQuest Ebook Central.

[29] J. M. Houston, "Spirituality," in *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, eds. Daniel J. Treier and Walter A. Elwell (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2017): 1524, ProQuest Ebook Central.

within LPMBC's 54 ministries. The writer understands that the qualitative measures from a small and specific sample size and the reported outcomes may not be a true reflection of nor present as useful for a broader sample group. Hence, the qualitative results submitted cannot be postured as totally dependable. Moreover, the members of the MWBSS are primarily regular attendees who are well-versed in the Word. Even so, the therapeutic influence of the teachings by the facilitator on the group is a variant that cannot be controlled. The reception, understanding, and application of the teachings and principles will vary among the participants. Jesus recognized this limitation in His parable about the Sower (Matthew 13:1-9). Human agency to accept or reject instructions poses as an acknowledged barrier for the overall effectiveness of the process.

The interview process has uncontrollable options. First, the willingness of the membership to participate in the study poses as an unknown. If enough people do not agree to be interviewed, then the findings and the argument for the study will be compromised. Second, the motivation and honesty of the interviewees is subjective as this relies solely on the integrity of the interviewee. Third, given the protocols emanating from COVID-19, the planned personal interviews with the sampled group are not available to the facilitator. The observations would have allowed access for primary reflection on gathered data. This writer will use phone contact that utilizes a questionnaire for gathering information; however, the success of this methodology depends on availability of membership and full response to each research question. Unavailability of enough respondents or interviewee's reluctance to address each queried area will hinder this research effort. Fourth, the spiritual formation attained by the interviewees cannot be accounted for. Hence, this writer may limit the objectivity of the process through his perceived level of spiritual maturity. The threat is to impose the writer's spiritual projections on the research group members. Fifth, a hurdle forms in that a person may agree to the interview,

participate in the interview, but then decide not to allow the use of their data or decide to cut the interview short by withdrawing from further interaction with the researcher.

Lastly, this writer's methodology has its limitations. Literature reviews show that both qualitative and quantitative methods have been used, separately and jointly, in research applying integrative therapy techniques and spirituality.[30] Therefore, this writer's use of a stand-alone qualitative method for findings may lack the accuracy of a combined study using both qualitative and quantitative methods or using only a quantitative method. Interpretive action research studies have limitations relative to the expertise "of the researcher and the experience and understanding of those centrally involved in the issue explored—the (MWBSS group members)."[31]

Delimitations

The intended goal of this project is to enhance the spiritual maturity of the MWBSS members such that they may obtain useful coping strategies. The research is based on this control group for several reasons. First, this writer facilitates this ministry and thereby has control of the literature that is reviewed in the ministry setting. In addition, the study focus is limited to those congregants who have chosen to follow Christ and seek to enhance their level of spiritual maturity through theological teaching. Moreover, the rationale for delimiting the possible range of subject matter is because the project is not intended to evangelize or develop discipleship in a traditional manner. It is, however, assumed through facilitator and group interaction with the integrative methodology that the membership might gain beneficial knowledge that will lend to a more holistic life that encompasses a stronger Christian witness.

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[30] Edward B. Davis et al., "Using Qualitative and Mixed Methods to Study Relational Spirituality," *Psychology of Religion and Spirituality* 8, no. 2 (May 2016): 92–97, https://web-b-ebscohost-com.ezproxy.liberty.edu/ehost/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?vid=1&sid=9196c0ea-b618-499c-b55f-31be0e9985d5%40pdc-v-sessmgr04.

[31] Stringer, *Action Research*, 36.

The period for utilization for the intradisciplinary integrative techniques will cover the duration of this ministry. The integrative approaches presenting psychology, religion, and spirituality will be accommodated competently by the facilitator but not to the impairment of sufficiently attending the problem that has been presented. Therefore, all literature reviewed for use in the facilitation of this ministry will have a substantiated theological and psychological construct that will be developed fully to avail the best chance for effectiveness in addressing the problem.

Effective coping strategies is a general problem among the Black American population.[32] This facilitator cares about the Black American population as a whole relative to its emotional and spiritual well-being. However, this facilitator's focus on the problem presented in the research study affects the stakeholders of the MWBSS membership. Hence, this study will be bound by those who attend LPMBC and are in the group forming the MWBSS. Moreover, this study cannot cover every plausible perspective or address every single idea or data set that seems to be interesting. [33] As a result, this project will exclude those who are not members of LPMBC's current MWBSS group at the time this study is conducted. Finally, it should be noted that the delimitations mentioned preclude a broader application of any findings from this research and present as tentative at best.[34]

Thesis Statement

Meaning-making holds pivotal and important interest in the life activity of humankind. In psychology, researchers who are attentive to matters of meaning have given their attention to a

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[32] Plunkett, "The Black Church, Values, and Secular Counseling," 208.

[33] Tim Sensing, *Qualitative Research: A Multi-Methods Approach to Projects for Doctor of Ministry Theses* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2011), 20.

[34] Ibid.

focus on the phenomenological connection between meaning-making and coping; they have examined separately or in conjunction the roles of religiosity and spirituality in meaning-making and coping for individuals.[35] Extending this theory, argument exists for a judicious awareness and assessment of the role of spirituality in the lives of Black American counselees. The chosen method is integrative in approach as it utilizes psychotherapy, religion, and spirituality as a tool expressly for the assessment of relative elements in Black Americans' lives. The undertaking seeks to present insights into the ways in which spiritual beliefs have become an integral part of the survival system of Black people and how they may manifest themselves in the therapeutic process.[36] This construct aligns with this writer's argument that pedagogy offering an integrative approach of cognitive and narrative therapy elements coupled with religion and/or spirituality could provide useful transforming results for the church members of the MWBSS (John 10:10).

Further examined, indications of spirituality which imply its use as a coping system have been expressed during research interviews with many Black counselees. These gauges should be studied and balanced with all other psychological or social metrics recognized in the assessment process. For example, research posits that among the most commonly expressed clues by believers of spirituality consist of God's ability to solve the individual problems; God is punishing the person for sinful behaviors; and the Church is their salvific hope.[37] Spiritual reframing is a very valuable skill with Black Americans given that research has shown that people who grow up in a "traditional Black community" are often equipped with a system of

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[35] J. S. Mattis, "Religion and Spirituality in the Meaning-Making and Coping Experiences of African American Women: A Qualitative Analysis," *Psychology of Women Quarterly*, 26, (December 2002): 310, https://journals-sagepub-com.ezproxy.liberty.edu/doi/pdf/10.1111/1471-6402.t01-2-00070.

[36] Boyd-Franklin, *Black Families in Therapy*, 126.

[37] Ibid.

core beliefs, particularly spiritual ones.[38] One popular reframe in Black religious experience is the perception that God will know what the believer's needs are and will supply them (Phil 4:19); also, God takes on our burdens because He cares for the believer (1 Pet 5:7). This idea underscores the believer's inner strength and the relational power of their faith and belief system.

This writer ascribes to the same belief system and relies on a personal relationship with Jesus Christ as central to meaning-making and coping approaches. Considering this assertion, sustainable holistic outcomes from this writer's own therapeutic encounters serve as a primary testament of how an intradisciplinary integration approach can frame a healing intervention that manifests useful coping strategies. If the members of Lake Providence's MWBSS receive intradisciplinary integrative teaching, then holistic coping strategies could be created.

CHAPTER 2: CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Literature Review

Spirituality is important in achieving emotional healing.[39] Mark McMinn suggests that spiritually-based psychotherapy makes a measurable difference in the therapeutic intervention: As such, those engaging in pastoral counseling and pastoral care have been encouraged to contemplate contributions they could offer to this curative methodology.[40] In this regard, pastoral counseling has been influenced by Christian counseling's recent adaptation of an intradisciplinary integrative approach to psychotherapy that incorporates psychology, theology,

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[38] Boyd-Franklin, *Black Families in Therapy*, 126. See also, "A Religious Portrait of African-Americans," *Pew Research Religion & Public Life Project*, January 30, 2009, last modified 2021, http://www.pewforum.org/2009/01/30/a-religious-portrait-of-african-americans/#.

[39] McMinn, *Psychology, Theology, and Spirituality in Christian Counseling*, 19.

[40] Ibid. Cf. De Jongh van Arkel, "Recent Movements in Pastoral Theology," 152.

and spirituality as interwoven disciplines aimed at creating healing outcomes.[41] The literature

review attends an integrative psychotherapy approach with focus on informing Black

churchgoers at the Lake Providence Missionary Baptist Church's MWBSS about spirituality's

ability to effect coping strategies.

<div align="center">Integrative Psychotherapy: A Christian Approach</div>

Counselees sometimes seek and require therapeutic approaches that address a holistic

approach to achieve healing outcomes. Secular psychotherapy methods often do not uncover the

fulness of issues that the counselee may be experiencing. For example, a person who presents

with depressive disorder may have causation emanating from issues of guilt due to sin in their

lives. By a review of Scriptures, the counselor may be able to help the individual find the areas

of sin in their lives, admit their fallenness, and "ask God for forgiveness."[42] Hence, many people

realizing there is something more to their problem are faced with decisions about how to get help

that will assist them in the best manner for healing and coping strategies. Will they find someone

that will help them toward improved emotional and spiritual health? Traditional psychological

systems utilized in singularity are helpful but may not always provide rounded healing results for

the individual who desires spiritual or religious care.[43] In this regard, it is posited that

psychological approaches and even perception can produce some truth, though not as reliable as

the same level of truth that is revealed in the Bible.[44] However, psychology has elements that can

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[41] McMinn, *Psychology, Theology, and Spirituality in Christian Counseling*, 17, 10.

[42] Ibid., 4.

[43] Jennifer Marie McCarron, "An Integration of Biblical Principles in Counseling: Psychology Filtered Through Scripture," (Senior Honor Theses, 150, Liberty University, Lynchburg, VA, 2004) 9, https://digitalcommons.liberty.edu/honors/150.

[44] Ibid.

offer useful meaning to the Christian's who wish to pursue Christ.

This observation grants value to psychology, however, more is needed for the individual desiring a stronger devout intervention. There is an identifiable segment of the population that desires spiritually and religiously sensitive counseling. This literature review disclosed qualitative studies that found that the larger number of respondents favored help from a pastor than from a psychologist, social worker, psychiatrist, or community mental health center: Similarly, in an analog study with middle-aged adults, respondents considered religiously sensitive counselors more trustworthy, likable, and approachable than unreligious counselors.[45] Further developed, recent polling suggests that 74% of Americans identify as Christians noting that religion is an important, if not very important, aspect of their lives.[46] Additional studies have also uncovered that clients receiving psychological care express a desire to have their "spiritual beliefs and practices to be explicitly addressed."[47] Empirically validated treatment procedures and biblical counseling using Scripture as the source have formed religious counseling specialists that "integrate Christian theology and psychological techniques and help their clients with both spiritual and emotional growth."[48] The paradigms of interdisciplinary and

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[45] McMinn, *Psychology, Theology, and Spirituality in Christian Counseling*, 4.

[46] Jake Johnson, "A Hermeneutic of Divine Relationship: Implications for the Education and Training of Christian Marriage and Family Therapists, *Christian Higher Education* 19, no. 4 (2020), 243, https://doi.org/10.1080/15363759.2019.1687051. Cf. Frank Newport "Five Key Findings on Religion," U.S. Gallup News, December 23, 2016, http://news.gallup.com/poll/200186/five-key-findings-religion.aspx.

[47] Johnson, "A Hermeneutic of Divine Relationship," 243.

[48] McMinn, *Psychology, Theology, and Spirituality in Christian Counseling*, 5. See also, Tracy E. Robert and Virginia A. Kelly, eds. *Critical Incidents in Integrating Spirituality into Counseling* (Alexandria, VA: American Counseling Association, 2014), xi, ProQuest Ebook Central.

intradisciplinary counseling constructs are examined for elucidating an integrative approach to Christian counseling and the symbiotic concept found within pastoral counseling.

Interdisciplinary Integration

Christian counselors are tasked with the struggle of what approach best helps counselees. Thus, what has resulted in the later twentieth-century is the concept of integrating Christianity with psychology—*interdisciplinary integration*. "Interdisciplinary integration brings together two or more different disciplines— psychology and theology, for example— and attempts to find connections between the two fields."[49] The work is mostly theoretical. According to Jake Johnson interdisciplinary integration grows from probing the counselee seeking to find their beliefs about God or other beings of supremacy, humankind, iniquity and grief, resolution, and hope and then applying counselee's responses to enhance the therapeutic process.[50] Christian counselors have begun to participate in the integration movement more fully after initial resistance has moved toward measured acceptance.

McMinn cites varying stages of interdisciplinary integration, melding psychology and theology, into a framework for Christian counseling. The first stage began before 1975 when an array of articles announced basic concepts that mostly held no relation to one another. Integration models experienced rapid growth during the second stage between 1975 and 1982 wherein the integration journals were overflowing with graphic illustrations of how Christianity and psychology can be correlated.[51] The third stage finds widespread acceptance and implementation of the integrative model, and since 1982 the advance has become pertinent and

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[49] McMinn, *Psychology, Theology, and Spirituality in Christian Counseling*, 29.

[50] Johnson, "A Hermeneutic of Divine Relationship," 243.

[51] McMinn, *Psychology*, *Theology, and Spirituality in Christian Counseling*, 7.

pragmatic. Empirical studies enhanced with Christian values have assisted the fortifying of a scientific base for claims. Sizable progress has been made in interdisciplinary integration.

Even so, some argue that progress is muted by a deficiency in the theological roots and practices of Christian counseling that utilizes an interdisciplinary paradigm. Archibald Hart laments this is a major interest in the way Christian counseling is conducted presently. Hart is concerned that Christian counselors have uncritically and with only cursory attention to proper theological consideration adopted secular psychological concepts into the Christian worldview of counseling.[52] This is problematic for Hart. He contends that Christian counselors have hurriedly overlooked inherent Christian theological foundations in developing an understanding of a "Christian" approach to integrative counseling; hence, this rush to integration will lead to "a major correction" in the interdisciplinary integrative approach.[53]

Moreover, Hart advances a wisdom theology that centers a caring praxis that incorporates the creation and redemptive visions of God as paramount to interventions seeking to avail solutions to the counselee's daily living issues (Wisdom of Solomon 7:7).[54] Hart points to Mark McMinn as having summoned notice to the significance of theology in counseling. He postures McMinn's belief that effective Christian counselors multitask by attending theological perspectives of biblical understanding, Christian tradition, historical and systematic theology while also engaging with the psychological tasks of counseling.[55] Counselor competency is

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[52] Tim Clinton and George Ohlschlager, "Introduction to Christian Counseling: The 21st Century State of the Art," in *Caring for God's People God's Way*, ed. Tim Clinton, Archibald Hart, and George Ohlschlager (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, Inc., 2005), 17.

[53] Ibid.

[54] Ibid.

[55] Ibid. See also, McMinn, *Psychology, Theology, and Spirituality in Christian Counseling*, 328.

enhanced when it is built on a theological core wherein God impacts living, caring, relationship, and truth.

Intradisciplinary Integration

Intradisciplinary integration occurs within the disciplines of counseling and psychotherapy. In other words, how does the counselor implement religious values and beliefs into the therapeutic intervention with the counselee? This integration approach is a new frontier for Christian counselors in not only understanding the relationship between psychology and theology, but how to effectively use the Christian faith in counseling praxis.[56] "Intradisciplinary integration occurs within a discipline," which is to say, "within the fields of counseling and psychology that is theologically and spiritually responsible. . .and "in a way that is faithful to psychology, theology, and spirituality."[57] Counselor training is geared toward understanding the interrelated ways of considering the intricate association of psychology, theology, and spirituality in a manner that effectively integrates these mentioned categories.

Helpful to contributing to counselor success is a definition for intradisciplinary integration. McMinn classifies intradisciplinary integration as both conceptual and relational within the Christian counseling construct. Theoretically, significant ideas from theology, psychology, and counseling philosophy are judged for usefulness for application within a discipline of Christian counseling: Practically, intradisciplinary integration in Christian

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[56] McMinn, *Psychology, Theology, and Spirituality in Christian Counseling* 26. Cf. Everett L. Worthington, Jr. "Constructing a Trail Up the Mountain of Intradisciplinary Integration," *Journal of Psychology and Christianity* 32, no. 1 (Spring 2013): 75-76, http://ezproxy.liberty.edu/login?qurl=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.proquest.com%2Fdocview%2F1357043177%3Faccountid%3D12085.

[57] McMinn, *Psychology, Theology, and Spirituality in Christian Counseling*, 29.

counseling is completely relational and develops from the counselor's relationships with God and others, and fundamentally has sway over their clients' relationships.[58]

Of note, intradisciplinary integration as a Christian-accommodative treatment has been studied for comparison to secular counseling treatments. Results demonstrated that when comparing religiously accommodated treatments against secular treatments in a design looking at each construct separately, the Christian-accommodative treatments did not perform better than the strictly matched secular treatment on psychological outcomes.[59] However, the spiritual outcomes analyzed within the Christian-accommodative treatments outperformed the secular treatment on a standalone basis.[60] The implication is that a Christian counselor could assert a Christian accommodative treatment like intradisciplinary integration as useful for effecting outcomes that are good psychologically but are even better spiritually for Christian counselees.

Intradisciplinary integration produced potential weaknesses when examined in closer research. First, matching the theologies of the counselor and the counselee is vital. The research studies Christian counselees paired with Christian therapeutic approaches. This dynamic poses the possibility that intradisciplinary integration may not be effective when a Christian counselee is exposed to treatment methods predicated on other religiously influenced treatment such as Judaism or Islam.[61] Also, a loosely fashioned spiritual treatment cannot be expected to work on every Christian counselee.

Second, the variability was high within the research study basis the type and amount of

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[58] McMinn, *Psychology, Theology, and Spirituality in Christian Counseling* 30.

[59] Worthington, Jr., "Constructing a Trail Up the Mountain of Intradisciplinary Integration," 77.

[60] Ibid.

[61] Ibid.

religious adaptation utilized. For example, praying with a counselee once could be called religious accommodation while infusing Christian theology and Christian praxis constantly in the intervention is also a religiously accommodated treatment.[62] The question then becomes what exactly what forms a religiously accommodated counseling approach? The fact is Christian counseling practitioners do not know the amount, the type, or the length of an intervention may have influence either in a positive or negative manner.[63] Third, tailoring an appropriate treatment also depends on if one identifies as theologically moderate, mainline, or liberal. The research study noted here was done with theologically conservative counselees.

Finally, cognitive and CBT psychotherapies have been utilized in the proffered research study as these methodologies are useful for attending to beliefs and values explicitly.[64] Therefore, evaluative data cannot be theorized on how Christian accommodation would form within psychodynamic psychotherapy or in other cathartic approaches; this includes explicitly Christian approaches like Mark McMinn's intradisciplinary integrative approach utilizing psychology, theology with a centering of spirituality.[65] Explicit investigation is needed on other approaches to determine any religious accommodation value for each method. Effective and competent Christian counseling acknowledges the limitations present within an integrative religiously accommodative approach.

However, spiritual commitment by the counselor to the renewed values of the gospel is needed to introduce religious issues into the counseling setting basis intradisciplinary integration. Counselors should understand spirituality and the process of spiritual formation as integral

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[62] Worthington, Jr., "Constructing a Trail Up the Mountain of Intradisciplinary Integration," 77.

[63] Ibid.

[64] Ibid.

[65] Ibid. Cf. McMinn, *Psychology, Theology, and Spirituality in Christian Counseling*, 26-30.

components concerning healing outcomes for those being counseled. God's Spirit must be

availed in the life of the counselor and in the counseling intervention to forge the connections

leading to spiritual formation development from an intradisciplinary integrative process.

Christian values can and should enhance or modify theories of traditional counseling in a

relevant and practical manner. This thesis will incorporate both interdisciplinary and

intradisciplinary paradigms in thematic formulations with greater focus on the spirituality aspect

within intradisciplinary integration aimed at affording coping strategies for members of the

MWBSS.

Counseling Relationships

Counseling interventions are as varied as the counselees being treated. However,

there are vital elements for attending to the emotional needs of people that are common to

the disciplines within professional caregiving (e.g., counseling, psychology, psychiatry, social

work, mental health advocacy, and creative arts therapy).[66] These helping professions share in

common the foundations of listening, observation, assessment, empathy, and skills to help

individuals change and heal.[67] In addition, counselors benefit from the acquisition of the

important skills of interviewing, empathy, active listening, treatment planning, promoting

change, and developing a strong therapeutic alliance.[68]

Tracy Prout and Melanie Wadkins form the idea for the counseling intervention as an

alliance between counselee and counselor created to affect an environment conducive to

effecting healing outcomes. Prout and Wadkins illuminate this interpersonal dynamic of alliance

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[66] Tracy Prout and Melanie Wadkins, *Essential Interviewing and Counseling Skills*: *An Integrated Approach to Practice* (New York, NY: Springer Publishing Company, 2014), xix, ProQuest Ebook Central.

[67] Ibid.

[68] Ibid.

by proffering that the mutuality of the counseling relationship is an association that is to be

nurtured and developed aimed at providing the desired help the counselee wishes to experience.

This shared connection amongst therapist and client is frequently described as the *therapeutic*

alliance; moreover, research has reliably exhibited that therapeutic alliance is a vital component

in the success of psychotherapy. [69] Therapeutic alliance places great weight on the power of

interpersonal relationship to effect healing outcomes.

Also, David. G. Benner offers that counseling is more than simply giving opinionated

directives as to what the counselee should or should not do basis the counselor's opinion or from

Scripture. Rather, counseling relationships work best when the counselor guides in a caring,

helping manner that is seen as authentic and genuine by the counselee in setting priorities and

determining and maintaining desired focus (1 Pet 5:7-10).[70]

Benner offers this concept as "being with" a person in an interpersonal manner that is

representative of the "covenant relationship that God offers His people" with His presence

amidst their struggles, brokenness, and suffering (Ps 46:10; Matt 28:20; Josh 1:9).[71] To further

develop this devout concept of "being with" as a relational element in counseling, Benner infers

that the underbelly of counseling can be seen as the counselor's intentional behavior of being

with the counselee. Benner explains the relational aspect of being with the counselee this way:

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[69] Prout and Melanie Wadkins, *Essential Interviewing and Counseling Skills*, 4. See also, Craig S. Cashwell and J. Scott Young, eds., *Integrating Spirituality and Religion into Counseling*: *A Guide to Competent Practice,* Third Edition (Alexandria, VA: American Counseling Association, 2020), 39, ProQuest Ebook Central. Cashwell and Young expand this concept of "alliance" as they offer: ""Grounded in a strong working alliance, a counselor's role is to assess client beliefs (including religious and spiritual beliefs) that may be exacerbating psychological problems. The counselor's function is then to gently perturb these beliefs with alternative hypotheses and information" (16).

[70] David G. Benner, *Strategic Pastoral Counseling*: *A Short-Term Structured Model*. 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2003), 26.

[71] Ibid., 26-27. Cf. Clinton and Ohlschlager, "Introduction to Christian Counseling: The 21st Century State of the Art," 23. See also, Prout and Melanie Wadkins, *Essential Interviewing and Counseling Skills*, 156.

"Counseling is first and foremost about being, not doing— not so much about the skillful application of techniques as about being a certain kind of person and bringing that self to counseling in a helpful manner." The distinction in counseling lies in the personal integrity of the counselor; in who the pastoral counselor is as a caring individual in a reflection of their psychospiritual well-being.[72] Therefore, the spiritual well-being of the pastoral counselor is the single most dominant factor in the effectiveness of the counseling intervention. It is difficult to promote Christian disciplines to the counselee if the counselor has not developed those traits in his or her life. If a counselor fails to exemplify, even to an inadequate degree, the imports and tenets that lie behind his or her counseling assertions then they will be gravely restricted in assisting others.[73] Beneficial results are realized when the counselor and counselee form a therapeutic alliance of mutual respect, interactive connection, and counselor spiritual well-being.

Cultural Sensitivity: Counseling Relationships with Black Americans

The counseling relationship requires sensitivity to meaningful social and cultural experiences relative to Black Americans. Forming a coalition is heavily reliant upon developing trust and recognizing ethnic traditions as influencing the tenor of the counseling environment. This social composition aligns with researched findings by Vetta L. Sanders Thompson that Black Americans want a therapeutic style that stresses building a relationship that is coherent with the interpersonal nature noted in the Black American community.[74]

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[72] Benner, *Strategic Pastoral Counseling*, 26-27.

[73] Ibid., 27.

[74] Vetta L. Sanders Thompson, Anita Bazile, and Maysa Akbar, "African Americans' Perceptions of Psychotherapy and Psychotherapists," *Professional Psychology: Research and Practice, Culture and Ethnicity in Mental Health Service Delivery* 35, no. 1 (February 2004): 25, https://web-a-ebscohost-com.ezproxy.liberty.edu/ehost/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?vid=1&sid=8302a839-476b-4650-8ec7-c2de01dabad9%40sdc-v-sessmgr03. **NOTE:** The terms Black, Black Americans, and African American may be used interchangeably with reference being made to the same people group.

Cultural and Ethical Competency

Key insight into the importance of considering the interpersonal nature of counseling is seen in the contributions of François Wessels and Julian C. Müller as they indicate that ethical judgment in counseling requires mindfulness of client spirituality. They mention this dynamic is consistent with ethical the standard of practice found in the American Counseling Association's Code of Ethics and Standards which establishes that counselors should respect the counselee's welfare diversity, personal needs, and values as a demonstration of professional competence.[75]

Craig Cashwell and J. Scott Young add to the key element of ethical competency when dealing with the social nature of counselees. Cashwell and Young proffer that to ignore a counselee's spiritual and religious perception is culturally insensitive. Furthermore, in some circumstances, this insensitivity may present as unethical because spiritual and religious viewpoints are strongly held personal beliefs given the centrality these understanding hold in the counselee's life for ascribing their place in the world.[76] These thoughts are pertinent for counseling Black Americans in a competent, sensitive, and ethical manner reflecting the vital nature of religion and spirituality for this group. Review of the literature will contextualize these key aspects in Black Americans' belief praxis.

Religion and Spirituality in Black American Culture

Religion and spirituality are important in the life experiences of Black Americans. Religious beliefs and spirituality are essential to the psychological well-being and resilience of

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[75] Francois Wessels and Julian C. Müller, "Spirituality in Narratives of Meaning," *Hervormde Teologiese Studies* 69, no. 2 (January 2013): 5, http://ezproxy.liberty.edu/login?qurl=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.proquest.com%2Fdocview%2F1314906187%3Faccountid%3D12085. Cf. "ACA Code of Ethics," *American Counseling Association* (Alexandria, VA, 2014): 3-8, https://www.counseling.org/resources/aca-code-of-ethics.pdf.

[76] Cashwell and Young, eds., *Integrating Spirituality and Religion into Counseling*, 37-38.

many Black Americans and should therefore be a fundamental factor in the assessment and

treatment process according to Nancy Boyd-Franklin.[77] Boyd-Franklin argues that since religion

and spirituality are meaning-making elements in Black Americans social understanding

"psychologists of all ethnic, racial, and religious backgrounds" are tasked with grasping the

"diversity of religious beliefs among African Americans," and the role of the church family in

the lives of some of their Black counselees.[78] Hence, therapist's expertise must account for an

exploration of beliefs of counselees who are participating in religious practice via churches or

other faith-based organizations to include less apparent forms of spirituality in the lives of Black

Americans.[79]

Linda Chatters establishes the significant role of the Holy Spirit in Black Americans

beliefs and worship practices. Hence, competent counselors must regard ideas about a Black

person's spiritual disposition and the importance of spirituality within their religious traditions.[80]

Relative to the pastoral responsibility basis Black religious traditions, Tonya Armstrong posits

that the church must allow for the desires of the parishioners in a distinctive cultural, theological,

and strategical reflection that attends the faith community's emotional and spiritual needs.[81]

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[77] Nancy Boyd-Franklin, "Incorporating Spirituality and Religion into the Treatment of African American Clients," *The Counseling Psychologist* 38, no. 7 (October 2010): 977, http://ezproxy.liberty.edu/login?qurl=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.proquest.com%2Fdocview%2F758108690%3Faccountid%3D12085.

[78] Ibid.

[79] Ibid, 996.

[80] Linda M. Chatters, Robert Joseph Taylor, Kai M Bullard, and James S. Jackson, "Spirituality and Subjective Religiosity among African Americans, Caribbean Blacks, and Non-Hispanic Whites," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 47, no. 4 (December 2008): 735–736. https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=lsdar&AN=ATLA0001695801&site=ehost-live&scope=site.

[81] Tonya D. Armstrong, "African-American Congregational Care and Counseling: Transcending Universal and Culturally-Specific Barriers," *Journal of Pastoral Care & Counseling* 70, no. 2 (June 2016): 119, https://doi.org/10.1177/1542305016634666.

Support for the worth of spirituality and religion as meaning-making and coping strategies in Black Americans' lives is also located in the findings of researcher Beverly Lynn in her work with Black American women breast cancer survivors. Their personal testimonies indicate how this group were dependent upon their faith and trust in God to help them cope with illness and treatments. These women "trusted in the Lord" through their religious and spiritual practices of prayer, Scripture readings, church attendance, and shared transparency in church small group ministries (Prov 3:5-6; Ps 107:19-21).[82] Consequently, health caregivers who encounter Black Americans are advised to engage the patient's affiliated church to acquaint themselves with the types of religious and spiritual practices that could be used as a way for Black patients to cope with illness.[83]

Adding to the literature identifying the enduring value of religion and spirituality for Black Americans, Jennifer R. Curry observes that for Black Americans religion and spirituality may be central to endorsing meaning-making about oppressive circumstances or other stressful life events; "moreover, many African Americans, rely on religion and spirituality as a source of hope, liberation, and material and emotional support."[84] Curry suggests it is possible for marginalized groups like Black Americans to transcend the limits of socialized meanings of daily life that include control by majority groups, oppression, and racism through the construction of

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[82]Beverly Lynn, Grace J. Yoo, and Ellen G. Levine, "Trust in the Lord": Religious and Spiritual Practices of African American Breast Cancer Survivors," *Journal of Religion and Health* 53, No. 6 (December 2014): 1714, https://www.jstor.org/stable/24485276.

[83] Ibid.

[84] Jennifer R. Curry, "Addressing the Spiritual Needs of African American Students: Implications for School Counselors," *Journal of Negro Education* 79, no. 3 (Summer 2010): 409, https://web-b-ebscohost-com.ezproxy.liberty.edu/ehost/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?vid=4&sid=70a1e71d-ff37-4d2d-887c-bff0c2bf3d06%40pdc-v-sessmgr06.

individual practices and meanings associated with religious and spiritual beliefs.[85] This assertion is like the earlier stated finding that spirituality and religion helped African American women as coping mechanisms for dealing with breast cancer.

Emphasis is placed on recognizing the culturally significant value of religion and spirituality for Black Americans because the purpose of this thesis argues that sufficient intradisciplinary integrative spiritual teaching will create holistic coping strategies for the MWBSS members. Literature reviews substantiate the relevancy of this rationale. However, Black American churchgoers rarely form the specific focus group in the conversation. Hence, there is seeming lack of expertise concerning how the cultural guiding factors of religion and spirituality within the Black church experience can shape their views and form holistic coping strategies. So, it is important that this writer's purpose statement is substantiated by a scholarly review establishing the relational importance of religion and spirituality to the focus group of Black churchgoers. The intent is to help fill the apparent gap in the literature. Couched in the counseling relationship [teaching endeavors] with Black American churchgoers is the concept that religious and spiritual values have usefulness in transforming the behavior of individuals such that faith is activated, and hope is spawned (Rom 12:2; 2 Cor 4:16-18).

<div align="center">Pastoral Counseling: Guiding God's People</div>

Contemporary pastoral counseling has developed in the landscape of general psychological counseling with both experiencing a twentieth-century advancement within an expansion of the therapeutic field. Even so, pastoral counseling has suffered identity issues inside the therapeutic culture in the form of tension between the pastoral and the psychological.

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[85] Curry, "Addressing the Spiritual Needs of African American Students, 409.

As such, varying forms of pastoral counseling have more closely mirrored modern psychotherapy than historic Christian soul care while some pastors have dissociated themselves totally from psychotherapy, desiring a preference for strictly biblically based spiritual counsel.[86] However, an area of compromise does exist wherein importance can be given to both Christian values and the usefulness of modern therapeutic psychology. The observation is made by Benner that pastoral counseling can be guided by both pastoral and psychological tenets. This occurs when counseling upholds the prolific traditions of Christian soul care while integrating suitable perceptions of modern therapeutic psychology; as such, the integrity of the pastoral role is upheld, and the unique properties of Christian ministry are also safeguarded.[87]

Soul Care

Pastoral counseling is a form of counseling that calls on the Holy Spirit to aid attunement and surrender to the truly Wonderful Counselor in the caring of souls—"soul care" (Isa 9:6).[88] The term "care of souls" has its source in the Latin *cura animarum— cura* translated "care" in fact holds the mutual notion of care and cure. "Care refers to actions designed to support the well-being of something or someone. Cure refers to actions designed to restore well-being that has been lost. The Christian church has historically embraced both meanings of *cura* and has understood soul care to involve nurture and support as well as healing and restoration."[89]

Further developed, "soul" in the Hebrew is the word *nepesh* and in the Greek it is translated as *psyche*; however, academics propose that a better translation is either "person" or

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[86] Benner, *Strategic Pastoral Counseling*, 13.

[87] Ibid.

[88] Ibid.

[89] Ibid.

"self." In other words, the soul is not a body part of the individual but is in fact the total self, the total personhood. We do not simply have a soul; we are soul— just as we are spirit, and we are embodied: A human being is a living and vital whole (1 Thess 5:23; Mark 12:30).[90] Benner extends this concept of soul care attending the whole self. Benner believes that the whole person is a soul, including the body; however, the focus for the soul is relegated to the inner world of thinking, persona, and inclination.[91] "Care of souls can thus be understood as the support and restoration of the well-being of a person in his or her depth and totality, with particular concern for the inner life."[92] The value of authentic soul care is never entirely concentrated on any one particular facet of a person's being such that other characteristics of the person are excluded. For this writer, caregiving that is coherent with soul care shuns the supremacy of problems but engages the pastoral counselor with the idea of nurturing and growing the whole person.

Elements of Soul Care

Historically, Christian soul care has had various means of expression but has consistently formed an integral part of the life and mission of the church. Four transformative elements of soul care are noted: healing, sustaining, reconciling, and guiding.

- *Healing* entails endeavors to help someone conquer a deficiency and move toward wholeness. These curative efforts can involve physical healing as well as spiritual healing, but the focus is always the total person, whole and holy.

- *Sustaining* refers to acts of caring designed to help a hurting person endure and transcend a circumstance in which restoration or recuperation is either impossible or improbable.

- *Reconciling* implies efforts to reconstruct broken relationships. The presence of this component of care demonstrates the communal, not simply individual, nature of Christian soul care.

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[90] Benner, *Strategic Pastoral Counseling*, 14, 24.

[91] Ibid.

[92] Ibid., 14. See also, Eric L. Johnson, *God, and Soul Care*: *The Therapeutic Resources of the Christian Faith (*Westmont, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2017), 8, ProQuest Ebook Central.

- Finally, *guiding* refers to helping a person make wise choices and thereby grow in spiritual maturity.[93]

Adding to the therapeutic elements of soul care inside pastoral care and pastoral counseling, Howard Clinebell Jr. and Bridget Clare McKeever speak to interpersonal transformation based on the features found in soul care. Clinebell and McKeever formulate pastoral counseling as a helpful means that allows the church to operate as a healing place. An effective congregational-centered pastoral care and counseling program in a church can transform the relational environment of a faith community; it can make churches life-transforming places that cultivate people toward wholeness during their lives.[94]

In combination, the elements of soul care are undertaken to present all people as spiritually mature in Christ as transformed believers (Col 1:28; Rom 12:2). The goal of soul care is to care for people's souls in ways that not only acknowledges their personhood but also engages and addresses them in the most distinctly human aspects of their inner lives. Herein lies the explanation for the primacy of the spiritual and psychological facets of the person's inner world in soul care.[95] In summation, the main goal of Christian soul care and pastoral counseling as its facilitator is attaining holistic spiritual formation as a completeness of spiritual growth that images the character of Christ within His people (2 Cor 3:18; Rom 8:29-30).[96]

Incarnate Pastoral Counseling: "The Good Shepherd" and His Sheep

Being with others in their struggles existentially portrays the heart of pastoral counseling

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[93] Benner, *Strategic Pastoral Counseling*, 15.

[94] Howard J. Clinebell, Jr. and Bridget Clare McKeever, *Basic Types of Pastoral Care and Counseling*: *Resources for the Ministry of Healing and Growth*, Third Edition (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2011), 11, ProQuest Ebook Central.

[95] Benner, *Strategic Pastoral Counseling*, 14-15.

[96] Ibid., 15, 35.

in action. This Christlike behavior of being with, according to Benner, portrays the pastoral counselor as truly compassionate and able to offer an incarnate form of care that shares the counselee's suffering in caring empathy (1 Pt 5:7).[97] McMinn identifies and supports Benner's embodied concept of incarnate counseling by saying that as pastoral counselors attain methodologies and spiritual disciplines that progressively transform them the chances that they will reflect the Christlike attributes of His humility, compassion, forgiveness, and redemptive capacity increases.[98]

In support of the incarnate view, Richard L. Dayringer addresses the model of relational counseling as well. This writer finds agreement with Dayringer's idea that the main religious purposes of the pastoral counseling relationship are to generate a consciousness of God's redemptive work; it is also intended to convey approval and forgiveness in the counseling relationship which is fashioned according to the relationship God extends to humankind. Efforts within a genuine pastoral counseling encounter is a lot more than instruction or methods.[99] Truth must be the main focus and emerge as incarnate within discussion during the counseling relationship. The words of Christ gave meaning to His life; "the same should be true of the relationship-centered pastoral counselor."[100]

The Good Shepherd

> *"I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd gives His life for the sheep."* – John: 10:11
> *"I am the good shepherd, and I know My own, and My own know Me.* – John 10:14

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[97]Benner, *Strategic Pastoral Counseling* 14-15.

[98] McMinn, *Psychology, Theology, and Spirituality in Christian Counseling*, xxii.

[99] Richard Dayringer, *The Heart of Pastoral Counseling: Healing Through Relation*ship, Revised Edition (New York, NY: Routledge, Digital Printing 2010), 32-33, Google Scholar Books.

[100] Ibid.

Scott Floyd believes pastoral counselors are to care in the way God demonstrates His compassion and empathy towards humankind (1 Pet 5:7-10); they are used by God to show His caring character to His creation through Christlike comfort, compassion, empathy, and genuine presence with the other (Matt 28:20; Ps 23:4).[101] Incarnational counseling is Christlike in that the pastoral counselor not only responds with compassion, respect, and congruence but does more than that by also accepting the suffering individual. The essence of this devout relationship is the counselor's intimate concern for the pain the counselee feels.

Moreover, Benner maintains that the pastoral counselor enters the life and experience of the sufferer; the counselor takes the suffering upon themselves, and eventually overcomes the suffering through the works of God's grace and power of the Holy Spirit in the counselor towards the individual (Acts 1:8).[102] Tim Clinton and George Ohlschlager assist Benner's recognition of the influence of the Trinity upon empathetic pastoral counseling. Clinton and Ohlschlager add to the literature of the Triune influence within effective pastoral counseling as they posit that all counseling is dyadic in the idea that it is experienced by two persons in a horizontal dimension. What transcends into Christian counseling is when the counseling becomes uniquely triadic relative to God's presence in the vertical and supernatural dimension: In Christian counseling the Holy Spirit is the third person intervening all counseling sessions.[103] Since the vertical dimension is unique to Christian counseling, it is crucial that therapists initiate healing activities "with the

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[101] Scott Floyd, *Crisis Counseling*: *A Guide for Pastors and Professionals* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 2008) 18-19, 39.

[102] David Benner, "The Incarnation as a Metaphor for Psychotherapy," in P*sychology & Christianity Integration: Seminal Works that Shaped the Movement*, eds. Daryl H. Stevenson, Brian E. Eck, and Peter C. Hill (Batavia, IL: Christian Association for Psychological Studies, 2007), 250.

[103] Clinton and Ohlschlager, "Introduction to Christian Counseling," 15.

relational God—with Father, Son, and Holy Spirit."[104]

Further developed, Benner argues that his mentioned dynamic is metaphor for psychotherapy mirroring the incarnation of Christ (John 1:1-5, 14-18).[105] Benner also suggests that this vivid involvement of the counselor in the life of another is the living image of the *"Good Shepherd"* (emphasis my own) acting in the role of a "soul friend" (John 10: 7-16, 15:15; Heb 13: 20 – *"Great Shepherd"*).[106] One becomes a "soul friend" or spiritual guide is by virtue of the traits of insight, love, and the capacity to make the sufferings of others their own (Matt 11:29-30).[107]

The question begs, "How does the pastoral counselor's entering into the suffering individual as a "soul friend" in a manner akin to the Good Shepherd produce change? The answer lies in the form of tough, disciplined, and personally costly love whose mode of communication is involvement and whose effect is healing; the curative factor in this process is *love* (1 Cor 1-13; Mal 4:2; Jer 17:14).[108] Love requires offering of oneself to another, becoming accessible to the burdens of the other and to be present to participate in their labors (Gal 6:2). Love inspires the person to transfer their internalized upheaval and turmoil upon the counselor who then attempts to diminish the uncertainties and make things more logical and less menacing. The assuming of the counselee's fraught worldview and emotional angst represents the incarnational counseling aspect of psychotherapy and manifests the Good Shepherd motif.[109]

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[104] Clinton and Ohlschlager, "Introduction to Christian Counseling," 15.

[105] Benner, "The Incarnation as a Metaphor for Psychotherapy," 250.

[106] Ibid., 251.

[107] Ibid.

[108] Ibid.

[109] Ibid., 250.

The synthesizing of Benner's concept of incarnational counseling begins with considering the role of the psychotherapist as a metaphor symbolizing the incarnation of Christ. The incarnational idea is like the habit children have of attempting to purge parental depravity by transferring the cruelty upon themselves; as noted by object theorists, this behavior is a reflection of the *imago Dei*.[110] Consideration is then given to situations this object theory process may also present in psychotherapeutic relationships. In light of this hypothesis, Benner concludes "that the incarnational element of psychotherapy may be one of the basic curative factors present in any successful therapy."[111]

This writer postulates that pastoral counseling intervention becomes beneficially transformative when the counselor adopts an incarnate shepherding role that reflects the Good Shepherd. This shepherding role identifies this writer's adopted pedagogy for the targeted group in this thesis.

Congregational Care

The shepherding motif is a strong driver for this writer in identifying his role as pastoral counselor in satisfying the purpose of this essay. The congregational members of the MWBSS ministry are seen as his "sheep" who are God's own people that he is charged to lead and care for with a "true heart" and "skillful hands" (Ps 78:70-72). This writer places great weight on congregational care: It is the essential expression of the shepherding motif within incarnational counseling that endorses the *imago Dei*. This assertion finds literature support in the offerings of Benner as he positions both incarnate counseling and congregation care at the heart of relational ministry.

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[110] Benner, "The Incarnation as a Metaphor for Psychotherapy, 247-248.

[111] Ibid.

Further developed, Benner understands pastoral counseling to have an integral and meaningful connection to the church. In fact, the feeling is that both the pastor and counselor must have a church-based vision whereas the congregation imagines and comprehends that the pastor's counseling is key to the work of the church.[112] Congregational care administered through pastoral counseling identifies as assisting hurting people to bring their emotional wounds, struggles, fears, and apprehensions into dynamic healing contact with the God who is known by His people as the Wonderful Counselor (Isa 9:6).[113] This writer's primary desire from pastoral counseling within the congregation is to facilitate the presence of God. This intercession is the most important act this writer as pastoral counselor can provide. It legitimizes the counseling encounter through offering a direct contact with God that brings His People closer to Him for transformative healing, guidance, nurturing, and reconciliation.[114]

Congregational and incarnate pastoral counseling are both relational behaviors. Pastoral counseling within the congregation finds the caregiver feeling anxious, troubled, and even the feeling grief of the other with concern and love that regards others over self (Phil 2:3; 1 Cor 10:24; Rom 12:10).[115] Congregational care does not focus on the subjective needs of the caregiver but rather concentrates on the objective assessment of the other's needs.[116] Caring for God's people relationally reflects incarnational traits that are specific to the *imago Dei*: It is care

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[112] Benner, *Strategic Pastoral Counseling*, 60, 40.

[113] Ibid.

[114] Ibid.

[115] John Patton, *Pastoral Care in Context*: *An Introduction to Pastoral Care* (Louisville, KY: Presbyterian Publishing Corporation, 2005), 17, ProQuest Ebook Central.

[116] Patton, *Pastoral Care in Context*, 17.

that affords teaching and pastoral counseling that forms an interpersonal alliance that manifests transformative therapeutic and spiritual outcomes of spiritual growth, healing, and unity.

Theological Foundations

Reviewed literature shows support from theologians for the acceptance of the integration of social sciences into Christian education.[117] Social sciences are those disciplines in which humans make up the studied group. The theological concern for this writer questions if the secular integration of theories found in psychoanalysis by pastoral counselors and Christian educators devoutly speak to what is needed to provide theologically principled teaching to believers. Within the Christian tenets formed by biblical constructs, how do pastoral counselors and Christian educators synthesize social science theories in teaching Christians to become mature individuals who are transformed into the image of Christ?[118]

The utilized approaches of the social sciences are useful for their learning theories tied to development of cognition or intellect of the individual or group. The pastoral counselor and Christian educator place great relevance on the sciences (e.g., psychology, philosophy) that assist

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[117] Patricia L. Nason, "Luke 2:52 As a Basis for How We "Do" Christian Education," *Christian Education Journal* 16, no. 3 (December 2019): 511, http://ezproxy.liberty.edu/login?qurl=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.proquest.com%2Fscholarly-journals%2Fluke-2-52-as-basis-how-we-do-christian-education%2Fdocview%2F2315509210%2Fse-2%3Faccountid%3D12085.

[118] Nason, "Luke 2:52," 511. Nason says this in posing her stance on the importance of the Bible within Christian education facilitation and interventions. "Understanding [the Bible] requires the work of the Holy Spirit in the Christian's life. The original text was God-breathed and is without error (2 Tim 3:16), is divine authority (Matt 5:17-18) and is sharper than a two-edged sword (Heb 4:12). Because the original meaning is often lost as translators try to make the Bible more palatable and understandable to individuals in today's culture, one must study the original text and God's meaning of the words to get an accurate understanding of the truth. It is important that one examines the context of the Scripture. When studied properly, the Scriptures provide God's standard for how we live and how we scrutinize the circumstances and ideas that confront our daily lives. Therefore. . . the standard for interpreting all things, especially in reference to philosophical ideologies, is the Bible" (514). See also, Leyland Ryken, *The Word of God in English: Criteria for Excellence in Bible Translation* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2002), Amazon Books. Ryken agrees with Nason that theology that is utilized with philosophical ideologies that have a "sectarian" element must be guided by "a legitimate sense" wherein "scholars. . .are theological guardians of the truth. . .through one's theology" which "should be derived from the Bible" (125, cf. 124-137).

human development in the area of sustainable growth and maturity.[119] However, within the construct of integrating theology and theory the counselor and educator face a dilemma of theological or theoretical for emphasis in developing spiritual formation in the human subject.[120] The theologian chooses the faithful path of theology while the sciences lean toward an engagement of scientific theory. As such, the argument for this researcher goes to a theological interpretation as the overarching integrative component. It is contended that pertinent biblical data and theological perspectives of the Christian doctrine of humanity as they relate to spiritual (Christian) formation form the contextual basis for pastoral counseling and Christian education praxis.[121]

Spiritual formation is the main doctrine that drives pastoral counseling and Christian education. Consider what Paul wrote to the church in Colossae, "We proclaim Him, admonishing every person and teaching every person with [in] all wisdom, so that we may present every person complete [perfect] in Christ. For this purpose I also labor, striving according to His [working] power which [in power] works mightily within me" (Colossians 1:28-29). Enabling spiritual formation in the believer is the aim for the pastoral counselor and Christian educator. This is their commitment of service to God and the people whom they serve as His spiritual representative.

Moreover, the understanding of spiritual formation is informed by theology and social science theory. However, a distinctively Christian theology is an essential and inimitable element

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[119] James R. Estep and Jonathan H. Kim, eds., *Christian Formation: Integrating Theology and Human Development* (B&H Academic, Nashville, TN, 2010, 3, Amazon Books.

[120] Ibid.

[121] Estep and Kim, eds., *Christian Formation: Integrating Theology and Human Development*, 4-5.

that gives valuable insights and a lasting voice to the process of spiritual formation.[122] The

theological presupposition is that humans are spiritual beings with the ability, by God's grace, to

experience Him.[123] From a biblical perceptive, wherein the church and Scripture are fundamental

to attending spiritual formation, the impact of a theological structure creates a legitimate

approach toward spiritual formation even within an integrative methodology.[124]

The desired effect of theology is not acquiring simple understanding located only in the

mind (Col 2:18). More accurately, the eventual goal is a spiritual transformation of the heart of

the believer (Rom 12:2; Mark 12:30-31).[125] The Christian's learning of God guides them to faith

and contrition, persuades them to revere and worship him, and induces them to behave in service

to Him out of love and dedication. This is the formation of a heart that images an authentic

disciple of Christ (Matt 28:16-20). Pastoral counseling and Christian educational methods may

be assisted from a theory established on the social sciences but in the end must be grounded in

Christian theological concepts.[126]

Spiritual Transformation:

The Goal of Pastoral Counseling and Christian Education

God desires that all believers mature into the fullness of Christ for the purpose of being

restored to His image through engaging in the process of spiritual growth. Pastoral counseling

and Christian education that is faithful to God and His word teaches that Christ requires

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[122] Estep and Kim, eds., *Christian Formation: Integrating Theology and Human Development*, 5.

[123] Ibid., 239

[124] Ibid. See also, Nason, "Luke 2:52," 511-514.

[125] Anthony G. Reddie, "Transformative Pedagogy, Black Theology and Participative Forms of Praxis," *Religions* 9, no. 10 (October 2018), 4-5, https://www.mdpi.com/2077-1444/9/10/317.

[126] James R. Estep, Jr., Michael J. Anthony, and Gregg R. Allison, *A Theology for Christian Education* (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 2008), 24, ProQuest Ebook Central.

humankind to have a right relationship with Him and with others; as such, this allows for His

creation to grow in several different ways with the result being a spiritually converted heart and

mind (John 13:34; 2 Pet 3:18; Col 1:10). Moreover, Luke 2:51-52 teaches obedience to a loving

God who desires to be the focus of our lives. This writer argues that this Scripture's mention of

Jesus "increasing in wisdom and stature" (cf. 1 Sam 2:26; John 1:80) are outcomes that reveal

the transformation into the image of God's son that represent the ultimate goals of pastoral

counseling and Christian education.[127] Spiritual maturity lends to transformative growth "in

favor with God and people" (Luke 2:52).

Spiritual Transformation: Changed "Thinking," Changed Behavior

Spiritual experiences are defined as meaning-making experiences which are existentially

relevant and sometimes, though not always, objectively unique compared to one's normal

experience: One type of spiritual experience is a transformation type.[128] Spiritual transformation

can be viewed as profound, identifiable second-order changes in the ways in which a person

relates to God.[129] First order change is restricted to the present set of coping skills an individual

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[127] Nason, "Luke 2:52" 522. Cf. Estep, *A Theology for Christian Education*, 21-24. Estep offers, "True spiritual transformation is far more than delivering content or measuring behavior. [Believers] need knowledge, but it is more a means rather than an end. The end is discipleship, which requires the ability to understand a lesson and apply it to daily living (24); McMinn, *Psychology, Theology, and Spirituality in Christian Counseling*, 35. Within the integrative therapeutic process, McMinn acknowledges the importance of theological conceptual elements framing effective integrative counseling as he posits, "Properly conceived, intradisciplinary integration flows out of a deep appreciation for theology and a profound personal transformation caused by a life in Christ" (35).

[128] Chris A. M. Hermans, "Spiritual Transformation: Concept and Measurement," *Journal of Empirical Theology* 26, no. 2 (2013): 165, https://web-b-ebscohost-com.ezproxy.liberty.edu/ehost/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?vid=1&sid=0cd29d8f-6c54-4ddd-ab6b-2d5079ce6520%40sessionmgr103. Cf. J. Harold Ellens, "Spirituality and Religion in Clinics and Congregations," *Spirituality in Clinical Practice* 1, no. 2 (June 2014): 102, https://web-a-ebscohost-com.ezproxy.liberty.edu/ehost/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?vid=1&sid=9774dc9b-baae-432d-a622-3add6f8a70ee%40sdc-v-sessmgr02.

[129] Steven J. Sandage and F. L. Shults, "Relational Spirituality and Transformation: A Relational Integration Model," *Journal of Psychology and Christianity* 26, no. 3 (Fall 2007): 264, https://search-proquest-com.ezproxy.liberty.edu/docview/237252429/fulltextPDF/D1AA9FF0034945E2PQ/1?accountid=12085.

operates within, whereas second-order change encompasses a more intricate systemic

transformation that modifies coping strategies and methods of totally relating to a construct.[130]

This mentioned order of change is exemplified in Romans 12:2 as Paul says, "And do not be

conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind." The notion of

"thinking," the activity of the individual's mind, is a significant pattern in Romans as it occurs

twenty-one times.[131] Andrew B. Spurgeon, in his commentary *Romans: A Pastoral and*

Contextual Commentary, adroitly illuminates the hermeneutic importance of Paul's text in

Romans for presenting the cognitive process as a catalyst for transformative behavior. Spurgeon

offers this observation

> People's *thoughts* either free them or accuse them (2:15), Paul maintains that believers
> are justified by faith and apart from works of the law (3:28), Abraham's faith was
> credited to him (4:3, 22– 24), in return for a person's work, wages are credited to them
> (4:4), the believers' faith is credited to them as righteousness by God (4:5– 6, 8– 11),
> believers are to count themselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ (6:11), they are to
> consider their present sufferings as not worth comparing with future glory (8:18), and
> God regards faith children, rather than biological children, as Abraham's true children
> (9:8).[132]

Spiritual Transformation: "A Soothing Aroma to the Lord"

In view of Spurgeon's' exegetical interaction with Roman's "thinking" processes, it is

argued that spiritual transformation presents in the believer as a spiritual coming alive with new

life that springs forth in elevated levels of holy worship and service. The confirmative secular

guided deeds of self-aggrandizing are replaced with changed behaviors that are reverent in tone

and designed to be "a soothing aroma to the Lord" (Lev 2:2, 9). Spiritually transformed worship

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[130] Sandage and Shults, "Relational Spirituality and Transformation, 264.

[131] Andrew B. Spurgeon, *Romans: A Pastoral and Contextual Commentary* (Carlisle, PA: Langham Creative Projects, 2020), 201, ProQuest Ebook Central.

[132] Spurgeon, *Romans: A Pastoral and Contextual Commentary*, 201.

and service that form as "a most holy. . .[offering] to the Lord" (Lev 2:3). When the mind is spiritually transformed then the believer can present their bodies "as a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is [their] spiritual service of worship" (Rom 12:1). Their spiritual behavior transcends into an abiding, relational experience with God that emerges as a developmental dynamic that lends meaning amid the ambiguities of life (Ps 91:1; John 15:5; Jas 4:8-10). Moreover, research has revealed that people who report significant and intense spiritual and religious changes also demonstrate improved and positive cognitive-behavioral changes that replace the preceding psychologically experienced controlling stress and emotional unrest (Phil 4:6-7; Isa 26:3). It is suggested that spiritual transformation is an ongoing process in the life of the believer as they are recurrently challenged to adapt to changing social and environmental contexts.

Spiritual Transformation: Increasing in Favor and Wisdom

The theme of transformation is developed further. In his commentary, *The Gospel According to Luke*, James R. Edwards says that Luke 2:52 articulates the same perspective God holds in His view concerning Jesus is, arguably, the same wish He holds for humankind relative to spiritual growth.[133] Luke 2 traces Jesus' childhood from infancy and includes His early childhood visit to the temple in Jerusalem (Luke 2:41-52). Verse 52 comes after Jesus affirms to His parents that His mission is to declare the gospel in "my Father's house" (v.49). Edwards explains that spiritual maturity as demonstrated Luke 2:52 reveals that Jesus "grew up, increased in wisdom, and in favor with God and people."

In addition, Edwards argues that this "final perspective in the infancy narratives

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[133] James R. Edwards, *The Gospel According to Luke*, (Commentary) (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2015), 101-102, ProQuest Ebook Central.

belong to God. In addition to "angels, shepherds, Simeon, Anna, and many others . . . Luke adds

God's own point of view concerning Jesus. He enjoys divine favor."[134] This observation can be

extended to all those who sincerely seek God (Ps 42:1) and desire to grow in His spirit, in His

love, and in His divine guidance (Col 1:10; cf. Prov 3:5-7; 1 Pet 2:2). The overarching meaning

taken from Luke's summary statement in verse fifty-two is that the life of Jesus discloses what a

human life which is alive with God's Spirit and wisdom resembles.[135] The last entry in the

infancy narratives confirms God's divine purpose for Jesus' incarnation: to bring salvation to

people.[136]

Spiritual Transformation: Partnering with God and "the Light"

This writer hopes the Christian education based upon an intradisciplinary integration

pedagogy proffered within the MWBSS meaningfully elucidates the salvific intent God holds for

humanity (John 3:16; Eph 2:8-9; 1 John 4:9). The aspiration is to spark an intentionality in the

MWBSS members to search for relational spirituality with the presence of God (Ps 91:1-6) and

internalize a longing to cultivate spiritual intimacy and Godly obedience (Phil 4:8-9; John

14:15).[137] In essence, a spiritual transformation that develops from a "partnering with God" that

lends to spiritual growth; development that manifests as walking in good works (Eph 2:10),

struggle resolution, and creation of sustainable coping strategies (1 Cor 3:6-9).[138]

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[134] Edwards, *The Gospel According to Luke*, 101-102.

[135] David E. Garland and Clinton E. Arnold, *Luke*, (Commentary) (Grand Rapids, MI: HarperCollins Christian Publishing, 2011), 144, ProQuest Ebook Central.

[136] Edwards, *The Gospel According to Luke*, 102.

[137] Sandage and Shults, "Relational Spirituality and Transformation," 262-265.

[138] Joshua A. Wilt et al., "Partnering with God: Religious Coping and Perceptions of Divine Intervention Predict Spiritual Transformation in Response to Religious−spiritual Struggle," *Psychology of Religion and Spirituality* 11, no. 3 (August 2019): 278, http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/rel0000221.

Furthermore, the goal of this facilitator for the MWBSS is to convey a Christian understanding of spiritual transformation in a clarifying manner that affords the MWBSS congregation a new sense of joy and peace in the presence of God (Rom 15:13). The members gain an infusion of the unequivocally gracious gift of His divine presence. The members can experience an intense relational spirituality.[139] Spiritual connectivity that fosters an intimacy wherein, "the Light," His "light" (John 8:12; Ps 119:105; Prov 6:23; Isa 60:1) illuminates the pain derived from self-defeating behaviors and replaces them with a transcendent attachment that grants new spiritual insights and forms an in-depth relation to the sacred and to self.[140]

In continuation of the scriptural theme of "the light," one finds in Psalm 119:105 the psalmist declaring that "Your word is a lamp to my feet, and a light to my path." In this passage, the metaphor of light and lamp alludes to a life radiated with light, God's initial creation (Gen 1:3–5) and separated from the uncreated darkness that could never comprehend nor conquer the light (cf. John 1:5).[141] The meaning here is that God's Word has guiding value in the life of the believer; worth that affords benefits for a life aligned with the omnipotent reign of the sovereign God. In New Testament context, Jesus' ascription that "I am the Light of the world; the one who follows Me will not walk in the darkness but will have the Light of life" is a Christo exclusive

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[139] Sandage and Shults, "Relational Spirituality and Transformation," 262-264.

[140] Michael Card, *John*: *The Gospel of Wisdom* (Commentary) (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2014), 109, ProQuest Ebook Central. Card offers this metaphorical and historical perception of "the light" as he says, "The references to the light may indicate that it is still Tabernacles and Jesus is still in Jerusalem. On the last day of Tabernacles (see Jn 7:37) the illumination of the temple was celebrated. The Torah scrolls were removed and replaced with a candlestick in an allusion to Proverbs 6:23, Psalms 119:105 and Isaiah 60:1. This prayer would be offered on the occasion: "Oh Lord of the universe, thou commanded us to light the lamps to Thee, yet Thou art the Light of the world." Jesus could be connecting to this image as he had connected to the image of the water in John 7:37. Since light was another name for the Messiah (Is 9:1-2; 42:6; 49:6; Mal 4:2), perhaps all these images are coming together in this passage; the historical perspective from Exodus 17 as well as the various passages from the prophets.

[141] C. Hassell Bullock, *Psalms*: *Volume 2 (Teach the Text Commentary Series)*: *Psalms 73-150* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2017), 357, ProQuest Ebook Central.

claim placing Jesus as the preeminent light source; He is the sole and singular (*the*) light of the

world.[142] Hence, those following Him will "never walk in darkness" but can have a certainty of

what behaviors Jesus would want the believer to walk in given His life narratives. Jesus, unlike

the competing world's lights, promises here to give His followers the special wisdom ("the

Light") that they need to live a quality "Life."[143] This is the promise this facilitator desires to

have the members of the MWBSS ingrain in their thinking to realize transformed behaviors that

can create a quality "Life," a real life in Christ.

<div align="center">Biblical Principles: Scripture's Role in Pastoral Counseling</div>

God is the primary source of Scripture. As such, Scripture assists divine activity in

forming human belief. Integrative counseling approaches within true pastoral counseling efforts

heavily rely on Scripture to offer a message of hope, reconciliation, grace, and healing to the

counselee.[144] It is an indispensable means for knowing God; traditionally it has been viewed as

the essential basis for Christian theology.[145] Scripture is most importantly a message, a

communication from God to humankind; Scripture is a word from the Lord.[146] In its simplest

construct, Scripture is centrally a matter of God's talking, of His communicating relevant

knowledge for righteous living, of his speaking suggestions to us. God's testimony of truth and

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[142] Frederick Dale Bruner, *The Gospel of John*: *A Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2012), 506, ProQuest Ebook Central.

[143] Ibid.

[144] David N. Entwistle, *Integrative Approaches to Psychology and Christianity: An Introduction to Worldview Issues, Philosophical Foundations, and Models of Integration*, Third Edition (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2015), 262, ProQuest Ebook Central.

[145] McMinn, *Psychology, Theology, and Spirituality in Christian Counseling*, 123.

[146] Alvin Plantinga, *Warranted Christian Belief* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, Incorporated, 2000), 251, ProQuest Ebook Central.

divine authority attested to in His Word; it is His divine testimony.[147]

Contemporary theologians across virtually all spectrums of opinion "has acknowledged that any Christian theology worthy of the name 'Christian' must, in some sense of the phrase, be done 'in accord with Scripture.'"[148] In this regard, the Bible is centered as original text that was inspired by God and is inerrant (2 Tim 3:15-16), proclaims His sovereign and divine authority (Matt 5:17-18), and is sharper than a two-edged sword (Heb 4:12).[149] Proper study of God's word avails His prescripts for righteous living and how one devoutly discerns the situations and thoughts that challenge the individual's daily life.

Scripture: Historical Context

Theological pragmatism requires the judicious use of good exegesis to identify the historical and literary contextual meaning of the Scripture.[150] Developed further, 2 Timothy 3:16-17 states, "All Scripture is inspired by God and beneficial for teaching, for rebuke, for correction, for training in righteousness; so that the man or woman of God may be fully capable, equipped for every good work." The hermeneutical engagement by Thomas Cartwright, in the commentary *1-2 Thessalonians, 1-2 Timothy, Titus, Philemon*, says that 2 Timothy 3:16-17 speaks to the sufficiency of Scripture as proper source, authority, and content for godly living.

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[147] Plantinga, *Warranted Christian Belief* , 251-252.

[148] Ibid.

[149] Nason, "Luke 2:52 As a Basis for How We "Do" Christian Education," 514.

[150] Ryken, *The Word of God in English,* 123, Amazon Books. See also, Gordon D. Fee and Douglas Stuart, *How to Read the Bible for All Its Worth*, Fourth Edition (Grand Rapids, MI: Harper Collins Christian Publishing, 2014), 30-32. Fee and Stuart elucidate the hermeneutical value of proper contextual interpretation as they say, "The most important contextual question you will ever ask — and it must be asked over and over of every sentence and every paragraph — is: What's the point? We must try to trace the author's train of thought. What is the author saying, and why does he say it right here? Having made that point, what is he saying next, and why? This question will vary from genre to genre, but it is always the crucial question. The goal of exegesis, you remember, is to find out what the original author intended" (31-32).

The historical context of 2 Timothy 3:16-17 forms around the Apostle Paul in his pastoral labor encouraging Timothy to continue in the steadfast teaching of the faith as Paul has instructed him. Paul is warning Timothy because the society is being corrupted as the people have turned to moral decadence and are being influenced by false doctrines (2 Tim 1- 9).[151] The truth of the gospel is being challenged by heretical doctrines and people have become "lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, holding to a form of godliness although they have denied its power" (vv. 4-5). With "having a form [*morphōsis*] of godliness," Paul uses the same construction found in Romans 2:20: "having a form [*morphōsis*] of knowledge": the meaning here is an outward appearance as these people are false believers, maintaining to be godly, but "as far as the faith is concerned, are rejected" (2 Tim 3:8).[152] They are wolves in sheep's clothing (Mark 7:15; Acts 20:29). Therefore, the occasion and purpose in verses 4 and 5 finds Paul defending the gospel's weight over the turmoil and apostasy within the Ephesian church.

Scripture: Literary Context

In a literary context, as it connects to the circumstances presented in 2 Timothy 3:1-9, Paul's meaning in 2 Timothy 3:16-17 is to establish God's Word as the standard for dealing with any other behavior or doctrine that presents as antithetical to the Word. Paul presents God's word as sufficient because it is "inspired by God and beneficial for teaching, for rebuke, for correction, for training in righteousness" (v. 16). Paul stresses to Timothy in 3:16 a fourfold purpose for Scripture: concerning the hypothetical reason, to teach the truth and to reprove falsity ("for teaching, rebuking"), concerning the practical reason, to free one from evil and to lead him to

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[151] Donald Guthrie, *The Pastoral Epistles* (Commentary) (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2009), 136, ProQuest Ebook Central.

[152] Robert W. Yarbrough, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, (Commentary) (Chicago, IL: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2018), 240, ProQuest Ebook Central.

good living ("correction and training in righteousness").[153]

Verse seventeen finds Paul asserting the outcome of Scripture's foundation and effectiveness, "so that the man or woman of God may be fully capable, equipped for every good work." He stresses its effect on Timothy: he will be able to rise to meet whatever challenge presents itself— "be thoroughly equipped." Most translations declare independently the second word of the verse in Greek *artios* ("complete, capable, proficient") and the last word, the participle *exērtismenos* (equipped, fitted out for something).[154] The English Standard Version is an example: "that the man of God may be complete [*artios*], equipped [*exērtismenos*] for every good work."[155] Paul's language in verse seventeen underscores what the Scripture's effect is (1) on what the servant of God is and then (2) how that person is equipped.[156]

The historical and literary context indicates that Paul is speaking with attention and emphasis on the pastoral utility of the Scriptures he has imparted to Timothy for conducting his ministerial calling apologetically and as a pastoral leader. In reflection, understanding of the Scripture also prepares the pastoral counselor and Christian educator to competently administer the Word of God. Christian theology that is truly Christian must always center Scripture as the most direct way of knowing God and the means for special revelation that defeats animism and other heresies.[157] Christian theology supported in Scripture forms the theological footing of this writer's pastoral counseling praxis as facilitated in the MWBSS.

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[153] Yarbrough, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, (Commentary) , 342.

[154] Ibid.

[155] Ibid.

[156] Ibid.

[157] McMinn, *Psychology, Theology, and Spirituality in Christian Counseling*, 125.

"Come, follow Me": Life-Changing Discipleship

"Go, therefore, and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to follow all that I commanded you; and behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age."
— Matthew 28:19-20

The call of Jesus, as voiced in The Great Commission (Matt 28:19-20), is for His followers to become disciples who then make other disciples (cf. Acts 14:21). Jesus' technique of achieving life change is by investing in just a few people at a time: His model shows how discipleship can become a self-replicating process with continuing influence throughout the ages (Matt 4:18-22; Mark 3:16-20; John 1:35-51).[158] The process is an ongoing call to discipleship. Christian discipleship entails an invitation and positive response to the appeal to follow the gospel of Christ in a manner that involves personal attachment and commitment (Mark 1:19-21). Discipleship is reflected in the desire a Christian must mature in their faith. This yearning is both magnificent and biblical. It is adroitly illustrated in Jeremiah 17 where the prophet says, "Blessed is the man who trusts in the Lord. . . For he will be like a tree planted by the water. . . its leaves will be green, and it will not be anxious in a year of drought, nor cease to yield fruit." Discipleship, in its most reverent form, is a wholehearted answer to the call of Jesus to "come follow Me" (Matt 4:18, NIV).

Discipleship as Spiritual Leadership

The church in general, and specifically the Black church, must be intentional about assisting its congregants in becoming spiritually mature believers. Spiritual maturity's foundations are taught. Hence, the believer must engage in a deliberate undertaking of an immersion in instructional biblical tenets that lend to growth in spiritual cognition and behavior.

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[158] Greg Ogden, *Transforming Discipleship*: *Making Disciples a Few at a Time* (Westmont, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2010), Description Page, ProQuest Ebook Central.

The overarching desire is a move toward discipleship of the individual which will then lead to the making of other disciples through spiritual leadership modeling. For example, the spiritual leadership model of Jesus in the discipleship of the twelve is prescriptive for the development of people (Matt 28:20).[159] Discipleship is the teaching of other believers in the Christian principles of fellowship, servanthood, loyalty, and commitment to proclaiming and following in the gospel of Christ. Discipleship effectively begins when people are challenged to grow spiritually through consistent, practical, and spiritual teachings (Matt 5). As such, spiritual maturity occurs in the individual that develop discipleship patterns that may be taught for adoption by other believers. The outcome is that the church is blessed in its discipleship mission to create disciples who then make other disciples (John 15:8; Acts 6:7).

The church must develop spiritual leaders through discipleship. "A spiritual leader is one who is able to influence people from where they are to where God wants them to be through the power of the Holy Spirit" (Acts 1:8).[160] In contrast, a positional leader is commonplace. Positional leaders are in the fore because of placement by title and status; however, they are ineffective in operating within a spiritually effective realm in moving people toward the kingdom

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[159] MyRon P. Edmonds, "Leading Like Jesus: A Curriculum to Disciple African-American Males Into Becoming Spiritual Leaders in the Home, Church, and Community at the Glenville Seventh-day Adventist Church in Cleveland, Ohio" (DMin diss., Andrews University, Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary, Berrien Springs, MI, 2014), Abstract Section (Conclusions), https://digitalcommons.andrews.edu/dmin/42. See also, Reggie McNeal, *A Work of Heart: Understanding How God Shapes Spiritual Leaders* (Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, Incorporated, 2011), 56, ProQuest Ebook Central. McNeal explicates the spiritual leadership model of Jesus in terms of "relationship skills" lying at the heart of effective leadership, and he uses reference to Luke 2:52 to establish this assertion. McNeal writes, "Luke summed up these early years of Jesus with Mary's simple remembrance that her firstborn son grew in "wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men" (Luke 2:52). The fact that Jesus grew in favor with people signals that he mastered the basic relationship skills that lie at the heart of leadership effectiveness. The initial task for all leaders is the building of basic human relationship skills" (56).

[160] Edmonds, "Leading Like Jesus," 8. Acts 1:4-8 – ". . .He commanded them not to leave Jerusalem, but to wait for what the Father had promised, "Which," He said, "you heard of from Me; for John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now." So, when they had come together, they began asking Him, saying, "Lord, is it at this time that You are restoring the kingdom to Israel?" But He said to them, "It is not for you to know periods of time or appointed times which the Father has set by His own authority; but you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you. . ."

of God.[161] Developing disciples requires good spiritual leadership from both men and women in the church. Even so, within the Black culture and context spiritual leadership is lacking among Black males. This point causes pause given the role the Bible places men in as leaders of their households (Eph 5:23). This researcher argues that there needs to be an intentionality by the Black church toward a devotion of time and effort to developing spiritual leaders, spiritual disciples, both male and female.

Explained further, the express purpose is to make disciples who can then make other disciples who become spiritual leaders. The result serves a two-fold purpose. First, there is a fulfillment of God's purpose for the Christian's calling (Ps 57:2; 1 Cor 7:17; Eph 4:1-6; Matt 28:18-20).[162] Second, we as a Church go on being a learning community as we grow in depth of relation with each other and God.[163] Disciples of Jesus learn to become spiritual leaders who are grounded in wisdom. They can affect righteous direction in all stages of the Christian's journey in their life while also providing transformative influence in the lives of those with whom they share the gospel.

The Jesus Model: Discipleship as Relational Community

The drive for developing disciples in the Black church is centered on encouraging people to see a communal spiritual need that requires them to embody a purpose and destiny greater than themselves; discipleship becomes an affirmation of the privilege of allowing God to work

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[161] Edmonds, "Leading Like Jesus," 8.

[162] Francis Chan and Mark Beuving, *Multiply: Disciples Making Disciples* (Colorado Springs, CO: David C. Cook, 2012), 27-30, ProQuest Ebook Central.

[163] Rowan Williams, *Being Disciples*: *Essentials of the Christian Life* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2016), 5, ProQuest Ebook Central.

through the authentic self. [164] The overarching concept is that a disciple is to give oneself wholly in submission to the service of the Master in servitude to the kingdom work of God and in celebration and building of community.[165] This sense of shared community is chronicled in Black culture. It emerges as a sense of collective meaning, interpretation, and formation of group identity. This communal identity shapes, defines, and redefines the worldviews of the participants involved in the Black community created out of this social and related experience bond.[166] As such, this cultural dynamic influences the relational perspectives of the community members concerning religious expressions, fellowship, and development of family and friends. In a similar sense, community is essential to grasping the theological paradigm of Jesus' relational leadership modeling found in the framing of discipleship.

Jesus' core family of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit presented him with community. This Trinitarian community lives in eternal relationship with one another. The canon of the Trinity discloses the deep-seated truth that at the nucleus of the universe is a God who lives in relationship.[167] This explains why love abides because God is love, and He exists in loving community (1 John 4:16).[168] Hence, being created in God's image means, to a certain extent, that humankind has been wired from conception to exist in community. Humankind develops the sense of self only through relationship with others. Human beings are born into a web that is

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[164] Eric Arnold Johnson, "An Examination of the Theology and Methods of African American Male Discipleship" (master's thesis, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2001), 16, ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global, https://www-proquest-com.ezproxy.liberty.edu/pqdtglobal/docview/230668116/7F1D0BA4B6384D35PQ/7?accountid=12085.

[165] Johnson, "An Examination of the Theology and Methods of African American Male Discipleship," 16.

[166] Ibid., 8-17.

[167] McNeal, *A Work of Heart*, 60.

[168] Ibid.

formed by relationships. Humans cannot raise ourselves; "we are dependent on others for our very survival from the moment of our conception."[169] This why Jesus from beginning to present does His work in community as exampled by Him calling the twelve disciples unto Himself. The construct for Jesus' discipleship model it to cultivate a learning community. Learning is foundational to the heart and purpose of becoming and making disciples.[170]

Jesus formed His band of disciples into a learning community. A community where they interacted with each other in questioning predispositions and preconceptions while ferreting out an individual's views and concepts. This all occurred in a milieu that was secure and void of fear of being rejected or discarded from the group. This was because Jesus established the ground rules for the community; in Jesus' community truth acted in love.[171] This combination is the basis for an occurrence of authentic community in all leadership groups. This whole piece holds as framework for how this researcher wishes to use the MWBSS setting in the formation of a learning community that elevates discipleship.

Moreover, this researcher desires to develop an environment where teaching and ministry results in demonstration by the MWBSS membership of an ability to operate as the disciples did when Jesus sent them out on mission— "to proclaim the kingdom of God" (Luke 9:2, CSB; cf. Luke 9:1-6; 10:1-24); in addition, they attach to The Great Commission in an interpersonal reverence for the concept of communal transformation. It is desired that the MWBSS members become disciples who reflect tenets of spiritual leadership allowing them to move on people's hearts in a biblical and practical manner that is life changing. The magnitude of their

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[169] McNeal, *A Work of Heart*, 60.

[170] Ibid., 61.

[171] Ibid.

proclamations replicates in the hearers a feeling of shared communal goals. God's Word is

ministered in a decisive way that others are led to want to inhabit the building blocks of worship,

fellowship, belonging, and witness that is germane to a genuine Christian community.[172] If the

pedagogical encounter is done effectively, then learned discipleship will result in a longing of the

MWBSS group members to "go ye therefore and make disciples" (Matt 28:19-20). The desire

becomes an intentional pursuit of others in the manner they pursed Christ. It is a quest to offer an

invitation of the spiritual redemption and abiding relationship that Christ offers. Discipleship

responds to the salvific message that God's Word offers humankind to make other disciples

 through a relational engagement buttressed by His love (John 13:35) and His truth (John 14:6).

<div align="center">The Black Church:</div>

<div align="center">The Cultural Womb of the Black Community[173]</div>

The Black church represents the largest institutional segment in Black communities. This

notion presents as the main understanding of the Black culture in America. Reliable investigators

have consistently underscored the fact that Black churches were one of the few stable and

coherent institutions to emerge from slavery.[174] Consequently, Black churches became and

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[172] Bill Clem, *Disciple*: *Getting Your Identity from Jesus* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2011), 100, ProQuest Ebook Central.

[173] C. Eric Lincoln and Lawrence H. Mamiya, *The Black Church in the African American Experience* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1990), 8, as stated in Christopher Taylor Stokes, "Leaning on the Lord: Divine Immanence Contextualized within the Black Religious Experience" (essay, Liberty University School of Divinity, 2019), 35.

[174] Lincoln and Mamiya, *The Black Church in the African American Experience*, 7. See also, Tanya Brice and Kimberly Hardy, "Introduction: Special Issue on the Black Church and Social Reform," *Social Work & Christianity* 42, no. 3 (Fall 2015): 275–276, https://search-ebscohost-com.ezproxy.liberty.edu/login.aspx?direct=true&db=asn&AN=108995336&site=ehost-live&scope=site, as stated in Stokes, "Leaning on the Lord," 36; Albert J. Raboteau, *Slave Religion*: *The Invisible Institution in the Antebellum South* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, Incorporated, 2004), 320, ProQuest Ebook Central. Raboteau affirms the posture of the Black Church that rose from its roots in slave religion as he says, "As the one institution which freed blacks were allowed to control, the church was the center of social, economic, educational, and political activity. It was also a source of continuity and identity for the black community. In their churches, black worshipers continued for decades to pray, sing, preach, and shout as they or their parents had during slavery" (320).

remain dominant influencers in the community while also being the "womb of black culture and number of major social institutions and cultural traditions of black people."[175] The Black Church is a multifaceted organization that intersects the realms of economics, politics, culture, and education in the Black environment. It maintains a place of religious, social, and cultural prominence.

Black Sacred Cosmos [176]

The religious component of Black churches is found in the Black sacred cosmos.[177] This universe forms as a unique Afro-Christian worldview created by Black people that reflects the syncretism of African and White Protestant traditions during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries; it infuses all the social institutions and cultural mores of Black people. As such, Black Christians have differing nuances and spiritual attachments to their theological views even though the general structure of beliefs, practices and formation are like White churches.

Elucidated further, the preeminent God of deliverance (*palat*) maintains a much higher and significant spiritual position in Black worship practices as compared to other cultures (Ps 18:2; 2 Sam 22:2). Beginning with the experiences of former slaves and up to these contemporary times, Black people's religious beliefs have affirmed their trust in the Lord (Prov 3:5-6). This transcendental belief in the Lord has historically delivered them from oppressive situations much like God delivered the children of Israel through Egypt and the Exodus (Exodus

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[175] Lincoln and Mamiya, *The Black Church in the African American Experience*, 17, as stated in Stokes, "Leaning on the Lord," 36.

[176] Lincoln and Mamiya, *The Black Church in the African American Experience*, 17.

[177] Ibid.

6:1-13; 12:31-42; 14:1-30). [178] This religious and cultural insight explains, to a degree, why

Black worship and religious experiences are also much more ecstatic, emotionally expressive,

and enthusiastic compared to Whites.[179] It is suggested that the effect of the emotional display in

Black worship is nuanced as being spiritually tempered and focused within a desire to invoke an

intervening relational response from a divinely relational and immanent God (John 15:4).[180] The

Black sacred cosmos also reflects the deepest values of African Americans, considering the

necessity of freedom as an expression of complete belonging and allegiance to God.[181]

Though valued for its spiritual character, the Black Church requires a deeper look as a

social institution.[182] For example, the Black Church preserves morals, reinforces family life, and

is the final mediator of good and right for the Black community: Further, the Black church holds

the "potential for political awakening" and is "a center for social betterment" and racial

consciousness.[183] Hence, the Black Church may be viewed in terms of presenting as an "ethnic

community-prophetic" model wherein a more positive interpretation is given to the Black

Church.[184] This model stresses the significance of the Black Church as a center for fostering a

feeling of the ethnic self and a community of human interest among its members (Phil 2:3-16;

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[178] Raboteau, *Slave Religion*, 320. CF. Peter J. Paris, "The Theologies of Black Folk in North America: Presidential Address to the American Theological Society, March 2012," *Theology Today* 69, no. 4 (January 2013): 385-389, https://doi.org/10.1177/0040573612463033.

[179] Lincoln and Mamiya, *The Black Church in the African American Experience,* 17.

[180] Stokes, "Leaning on the Lord," 13.

[181] Lincoln and Mamiya, *The Black Church in the African American Experience,* 17.

[182] Stokes, "Leaning on the Lord," 36.

[183] Shirley A. Waters White, "A Consideration of African-American Christianity as a Manifestation of Du Boisian Double-Consciousness," *Phylon* 51, no. 1 (Fall 2014): 33, http://www.jstor.org/stable/43199119.33.

[184] Lincoln and Mamiya, *The Black Church in the African American Experience*, 11.

Eccl 4:9-12).[185] In other words, Black cultural heritage is pertinent to the address of vibrancy and

life in the Black community as it shares significance with the Black religious traditions. Much of

Black culture was fashioned in the heart of Black religion and the Black Church; as such, the fall

of the Black religious tradition portends grave impact for the conservation of Black culture given

the compelling and symbolic nature of the Black Church within its community.[186]

"Dialectical Model of the Black Church"[187]

To add dimension to the understanding of the Black Church, it is necessary to indicate

the Black Church presents as a dialectical model. The church's historical and continued

interactions along the spheres of politics, economics, education, and culture place it as a

significant institutional sector replete with the tensions associated with these societal elements;

hence, to categorize the Black Church in a single typology of simply "other-worldly" or

"compensatory" is flawed and does not present the whole picture as only aspects of truth are

availed.[188] Black churches as social institutions, because of their complex cultural role, demand a

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[185] Lincoln and Mamiya, *The Black Church in the African American Experience*, 11. See also, Robert Cosby, "Older African American Adults: Understanding the Role of the Black Church's Support in the Community, *Journal of Religion & Spirituality in Social Work: Social Thought* 39, no. 4 (October 2020): 353-354, https://doi.org/10.1080/15426432.2020.1780183; Raphael G. Warnock, *The Divided Mind of the Black Church*: *Theology, Piety, and Public Witness* (New York, NY: New York University Press, 2013), 77, ProQuest Ebook Central. Warnock places an important emphasis on the usefulness and effectiveness of the Black Church in ideological persuasions relative to racial uplift, ethnic identity, and communal responsibility. Warnock says this, "For black people, inside and outside the churches, have long held a deep communal expectation and a general assumption that the work of racial uplift is integral to the responsibility and vocation of the black church. It is an abiding assumption recorded, among other places, by St. Clair Drake and Horace Cayton, in their engagement of the people of Bronzeville. They observe that "both members and non-members expect the church to play a prominent part in 'advancing The Race,' and they often judge the institution from this angle alone." Benjamin E. Mays and Joseph W. Nicholson confirm this communal sentiment when they state that, among blacks in rural and urban areas, "it is taken for granted that Negro ministers will courageously oppose lynching, Jim Crow law, and discrimination" (77). The Black Church and the Black community are inextricably linked in a shared hallowed, moral, and social perspective.

[186] Lincoln and Mamiya, *The Black Church in the African American Experience*, 10.

[187] Ibid., 17, as stated in Stokes, "Leaning on the Lord," 36-37.

[188] Lincoln and Mamiya, *The Black Church in the African American Experience* 10-18.

more dynamic and reflective view considering the comprehensive burdens in their communities

compared to the social and political onus assumed by most White and ethnic churches. C. Eric

Lincoln and Lawrence H. Mamiya offer this in-depth address to the "dialectical model of the

Black Church"

> The dialectical model of the Black Church is helpful in explaining the pluralism and the
> plurality of views that exist in black churches and black communities. For example, in
> regard to politics the dialectical model of the Black Church clarifies Gayraud Wilmore's
> statement that black churches have been "the most conservative" and "the most radical"
> institutions at the same time. It also helps to clarify Manning Marable's political
> assessment of what he has called the "ambiguous Black Church." Unless one understands
> that black churches are involved in a dynamic series of dialectical tensions, a serious
> [misreading] of these institutions can occur. . .the usual tendency is to collapsethe
> dialectic and assert one side of the polarity, [resulting] in a simplistic view.[189]

The Black Church has always expressed itself as a religious community engaging the

shadows of tradition and change, of establishment and transformation right beside praise and

worship. It is necessary to put forth the dialectic tensions that exist in the Black Church for two

purposes. First, the Black Church is an institution that is constantly involved in a series of

dialectical tensions (e.g., other-worldly versus this-worldly, charismatic versus bureaucratic, or

resistance versus accommodation) that are polar opposites that shift between the polarities in

historical time.[190] Second, asserting these dialectical tensions is necessary to obtain a holistic

view of Black churches relative to the particular social conditions, situation, leadership, and

membership of any single church basis its orientation to any pair of dialectic polarities.[191] The

Black Church runs the danger of oversimplification when the literature postures particular

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[189] Lincoln and Mamiya, *The Black Church in the African American Experience*, 16, as stated in Stokes, "Leaning on the Lord," 36-37.

[190] Lincoln and Mamiya, *The Black Church in the African American Experience*, 11-14. See also, Warnock, *The Divided Mind of the Black Church*, 76-77.

[191] Lincoln and Mamiya, *The Black Church in the African American Experience*, 11-12. See also, Warnock, *The Divided Mind of the Black Church*, 76-77.

insights in a framework that makes the observed elements the major defining categories. Moreover, the dialectical model provides a further unbiased examination of Black churches as social institutions because it allows for a wider, more comprehensive perspective.[192] Considering the dialectical nature of the Black Church grants a view larger than a simplistic positive or negative appraisal based on individual reflection. The result places Black churches along a progressive expanse that adeptly considers change in reaction to shifting social environments.

Notably, W. E. B. Du Bois's meaning-making of Black experiential consciousness reflects the dialectical model of the Black Church. Du Bois posits that the phenomenology of Black consciousness articulates as a "double consciousness" that summarizes the plight and potential of the African and Euro-American heritage of Black people; "two struggling souls within one dark body." [193] Although Du Bois understood that Black Americans needed full liberty of choice and self-expression to not only exhibit total autonomy but to take agency for the realization of their human potential, he did not proffer any final decree of this double consciousness. The Black Church institutionalizes the dialectical tensions and persistent battles that Du Bois wrote about.[194] Black churches are not abstract or made-up social institutions, but they embody the shared double-consciousness of the Black American subculture articulating itself as a religious community in the changeable shadow of an established tradition.[195]

Present and Future Strategy:

Educating God's People for Unity and Transformation

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[192] Lincoln and Mamiya, *The Black Church in the African American Experience*, 16.

[193] Lincoln and Mamiya, *The Black Church in the African American Experience*, 16. Cf. Waters White, "A Consideration of African-American Christianity," 33.

[194] Lincoln and Mamiya, *The Black Church in the African American Experience*, 16.

[195] Ibid.

> "And He gave some as apostles, some as prophets, some as evangelists, some as pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the building up of the body of Christ; until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ."
> —Ephesians 4:11-13

Acts 2: A Model for Christian Education

The process that enables a church to grow and remain fruitful entails ministry that empowers, equips, and mobilizes through the purposeful proclamation of God's Word.[196] The Holy Spirit empowers; the teachers/preachers equip with the decreed Word; and the people respond through steadfast belief of the doctrine and enact its edicts in their life activities (Acts 2). In the collective sense, this process can be viewed as Christian Education (CE) in action designed to build God's Kingdon in these times and going forward.[197] The attention to CE in the church is to assist clergy and laity in creating growth that manifests as spiritual maturity and motivation of the church's congregation whether they are CE teachers, leaders, or members. Moreover, this researcher suggests that within this context, the Black Church can become that instrument in the hands of God that reflects the empowering Scripture found in Acts 2. The church can model the apostles wherein it becomes a powerful force of righteousness and salvation assisted by CE ministry; it can realize similar outcomes the apostles achieved in Acts 2. For example, the hearts of the people are changed with the messages from the Scriptures that are preached, taught, and modeled by the CE leaders and teachers (Acts 2:14-42).

CE is about conducting God's Great Commission to the apostles in Matthew 28:18-20.

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[196] Rev. Jerome Council, "Using the Acts Model for Christian Education Ministry: A Fruitful Means of Building God's Kingdom," *Black and Christian.com*, June 17, 2021, http://blackandchristian.com/articles/pew/council-9-01.shtml.

[197] Council, "Using the Acts Model for Christian Education Ministry."

The same CE concept found in Acts 2 is suggested for implementation by the leaders and

workers in today's Black church which includes the MWBSS at LPMBC. This model presents as

a strategy for effectively carrying out the mission given to the church by Christ of "teaching,

baptizing, and making believers whose lives are ready for the transformation process of the Holy

Spirit."[198] CE in its essence is about lifting up Jesus in Christian service and obedience to the

calling God has placed in the lives of those called "to bring good news of Good things" (Rom

10:15; 11:29; cf. Heb 5:4). Even so, the ministry of proclaiming the gospel is for all believers (2

Tim 2:15; 2 Cor 4:1-18). CE helps edify the saints to fulfill their mission of ministry (Eph 4:12).

Educating the People of God

The common characteristic of transformative leadership as filtered through CE is the

intentionality of fostering an educational ministry as a core value of the church.[199] Educational

ministry is a core value at LPMBC; it drives this research project in fulfilling this researcher's

call for service to God and His people.[200] This rationale aligns with the theological foundation

formed in Ephesians 4:11-12 wherein CE leaders are teaching and equipping the saints for the

work of the ministry in the world through promoting church unity (Eph 4:1-3) and developing

spiritual maturity (Eph 4:13).[201] Sitting under CE teaching is simply to "learn Christ" (Eph 4:20);

it refers to learning the basics of the gospel about Christ as well as its ethical implications (Eph

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[198] Council, "Using the Acts Model for Christian Education Ministry."

[199] J. Tribble, *Transformative Pastoral Leadership in the Black Church* (New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan US, 2005), 132, ProQuest Ebook Central.

[200] See page 13, footnote 4 of this essay for a listing of the beliefs and core values of LPMBC of which Christian Education is central for achieving "ministry in-reach and outreach through sound biblical teaching and preaching."

[201] Council, "Using the Acts Model for Christian Education Ministry." See also, Frank Thielman, Ephesians (*Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament*) (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2010), 247, ProQuest Ebook Central.

5:2).[202] The Black Church is advised to move forward in the theological vein that comprehends CE as the teaching "connection" of the body that empowers congregants to move from infancy to spiritual adulthood through presenting a loving witness to the truth of the gospel (Eph 4:14-16).[203]

Also, it is proffered that CE teaching is done in higher efficacy when the teacher is competently aware of the power of teaching by personal example. This influencing dynamic of presenting the authentic self to elicit transformative behavior is located in Philippians 4:9. In this mentioned verse the Apostle Paul writes to the congregants at Phillipi, "As for the things you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, practice these things, and the God of peace will be with you." CE teaching takes the aspect of transformational pastoral leadership as the desired outcome of the pedagogical engagement is to have the congregants "be transformed by the renewing o their minds" (Rom 12:3). CE formulates in various processes (preaching, workshops, educational programs, mentorship), but its significance lies in its inspired and earnest commitment to educating the people of God.[204] The same desire and commitment hold true for this researcher toward the members of the MWBSS. The aspiration is to theologically construct the possibility of spiritual transformation that offers future vison of continuity and change in the light of deepened relationship with and enhanced knowledge of God (John 15:5; Jas 4:8; Jer 33:3). The teaching engagement is designed to shepherd the members of the MWBSS in their struggle of survival , healing, and wholeness in this life's experiences while allowing for future

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[202] Thielman, *Ephesians* (*Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament*), 277.

[203] Ibid., 262.

[204] Tribble, *Transformative Pastoral Leadership in the Black Church*, 132.

salvation in heaven.[205]

The Need for a Better-Trained and Better-Educated Clergy[206]

The Black Church is advised to consider the policy recommendation for present and future church growth related to addressing the need for a larger group of well-trained and better-educated Black clergy.[207] This issue has been visited in the past by Black scholars and theologians, yet data demonstrates an appearance that, in large measure, the Black Church has not seriously considered adjusting its approach. The present and future needs of the Black Church require the controlling powers to realize the ever-changing cultural and educational demands of the Black community calls for genuine attention to this accentuated matter. Empirical research and field experiences reveal that the clergy of Black churches that are highly trained and educated are conducting the most creative and innovative forms of ministry.[208] In addition, findings indicate that the better-educated clergy are inclined to be more creative and aware of the needs within their congregation and the peripheral demands of the Black communities they serve. Although formal seminary education does not resolve all the problems of the Black Church, the time is quickly passing where a less educated preacher can effectively lead their congregation from utter energy and determination.[209] The increase in the educational level of the congregants in the Black Church must be paralleled with the same upward level of education within the clergy that serves them. The best-case scenario finds the Black preacher who possesses a formal education and who is also steeped in Black religious tradition.

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[205] Tribble, *Transformative Pastoral Leadership in the Black Church*, 135.

[206] Lincoln and Mamiya, *The Black Church in the African American Experience*, 399.

[207] Ibid.

[208] Ibid.

[209] Ibid.

The ministry of the Black Church has a low professional school graduation rate as compared to practitioners in other professions.[210] Hence, it is felt that professional education could help improve the proficiencies and helpfulness of Black clergy. For example, effectiveness could be raised in the areas of spiritual, theological, and biblical interpretation, in addition to preaching and counseling; also, improvement in church administration related to finances, social and political awareness, and moral responsibility may also show enhancements.[211] The current age of technological expertise and specialty occupations demands clergy who can relate on a wide spectrum to meet human needs and also provide holistic ministry that addresses the social, physical, and spiritual needs of God's people.

Finally, while a sincere call from God is still a prerequisite for Black preachers, the practical consideration going forward would be to intentionally address increasing the educational levels for the pastor and teachers and incorporate CE as part of the church's profile to service an emergent Black congregation.[212]

Theoretical Foundations

This DMin project accesses theoretical concepts from an intradisciplinary integration approach as the guiding precepts framing the orientation of this research. Intradisciplinary integration is defined by Mark McMinn in the following manner

> Intradisciplinary integration in Christian counseling is both conceptual and relational. Conceptually, it draws upon important ideas from theology, psychology, and counseling theory and offers practical suggestions for how these concepts are applied within the discipline of Christian counseling. And practically, intradisciplinary integration in

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[210] Lincoln and Mamiya, *The Black Church in the African American Experience,* 400.

[211] Ibid., 399.

[212] Ibid., 400.

> Christian counseling is thoroughly relational— emerging out of a counselor's relationships with God and others, and ultimately influencing clients' relationships.[213]

Intradisciplinary integration seeks to answer the question of how religious values and beliefs can be implemented in the counseling relationship in an ethical and transformative way. The desire is to develop an alliance with the counselee that affords a practical intervention that takes advantage of the connection between psychology, theology, and spirituality.[214] The perspective from each discipline is ideally integrated into the person and each discipline is acknowledged to be existentially connected.

Further examined, each perspective is assumed to offer types of awareness and discernment that are useful in the counseling intervention as each contains a language that relates to diagnosis and treatment.[215] Each discipline, individually and collectively, may highlight aspects of the self and its situation thus allowing therapeutic analogies that might be drawn between them that may lend availability for the counselee to imagine helpful coping strategies.[216] Following this line of thought, this research project speculates that the effectiveness of the intradisciplinary integrative approach for the members of the MWBSS is built upon the view and assumptions related to the centrality of religion and spirituality in the lives of Black Americans for meaning-making experiences. For African American clients, religion and spirituality may be important to promote meaning-making about oppressive circumstances or other stressful life

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[213] McMinn, *Psychology, Theology, and Spirituality in Christian Counseling*, 30.

[214] McMinn, *Psychology, Theology, and Spirituality in Christian Counseling*, 30. Cf. Cashwell and Young, eds., *Integrating Spirituality and Religion into Counseling*, 39.

[215] George R. Ross, *Evaluating Models of Christian Counseling* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2011), 30, ProQuest Ebook Central.

[216] Ibid.

events. [217] Intradisciplinary integration is a possible aid in addressing this cultural component. The cultural utility of intradisciplinary integration will be developed further later in this section.

<center>Intradisciplinary Integration in the Counseling Relationship</center>

Working definitions of counseling relationship, psychology, theology, and spirituality are needed for examining their connections and individual interactions within the counseling process Psychology and theology are two areas in interdisciplinary integration that Christian counselors must display the necessary and sufficient competence in the counseling relationship; however, if theory is to manifest into useful therapeutic praxis there is also a need to comprehend spirituality.[218] Spirituality when added to the interdisciplinary integrative mix allows both the counselor and counselee to interact with God in a way that facilitates God's divine personality and actions to create spiritual formation through the interaction.[219]

Spirituality moves the person away from fantasies of self-sufficiency; it causes one to view one's helplessness and dependence on a gracious God. It is only when there is a genuine recognition of one's human weakness that Christ's power can work in and through us (2 Cor. 12:10; cf. Phil 4:13; Gal 2:20). The counseling relationship that is directed by the competent use of the elements of intradisciplinary integration holds the supposition that the counselee will acknowledge personal deficiencies in a cathartic release that leads to a renewed dedication to the values espoused in the Christian counseling intervention.

Counseling Relationship

The counseling relationship between therapist and client is something to be nurtured,

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[217] Curry, "Addressing the Spiritual Needs of African American Students," 409.

[218] McMinn, *Psychology, Theology, and Spirituality in Christian Counseling*, 9-10. Cf. Ross, *Evaluating Models of Christian Counseling*, 1.

[219] McMinn, *Psychology, Theology, and Spirituality in Christian Counseling*, 11.

fostered, and developed in a way that affords the counselee the experience of relief that they seek. This collaborative bond between therapist and client is often referred to as the therapeutic alliance.[220] Research has reliably exhibited that therapeutic alliance is a vital component in the usefulness of psychotherapy. Prout and Wadkins quote expert therapist Irvin Yalom who says, "It's the relationship that heals, it's the relationship that heals, it's the relationship that heals."[221]

As such, one can assert that an understanding of counseling at its essence forms as a structured way of being with a person who seeks help in a manner that characterizes empathy and authentic care (1 Pet 5:7). David Benner believes that counseling is first and foremost about being, not doing; it is less about skillful application of techniques but more about being a certain kind of person and bringing that true self to counseling in a helpful manner.[222] *Being with* is defined as an interpersonal character display by the counselor that emulates the caring presence Jesus shows to His people (Isa 41:10); it correlates to the shepherding model this writer adheres to in facilitating the MWBSS.[223] The pastoral counselor's ability to bring strong interpersonal skills to the counseling relationship is central for holistic and sustainable outcomes.

Psychology

The postulation that psychology and religion have historically been inextricably linked may come as a surprise to many twentieth and twenty-first-century psychologists who view psychology as a stand-alone social science untouched by philosophy or theology.[224] However, in proper view, the Latin origin of the word *psychologia,* first used by Maruic in 1524, "referred to

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[220] Prout and Wadkins, *Essential Interviewing and Counseling Skills*, 4.

[221] Ibid.

[222] Benner, *Strategic Pastoral Counseling*, 26-27.

[223] Ibid.

[224] Ross, *Evaluating Models of Christian Counseling*, 11.

one of the subdivisions of pneumatology that emphasized "the human spirit" and later referred to the "doctrine of the human mind."[225] Contemporary psychology has experienced a paradigm shift. The attention has alternated from moving away from a focus on the mind through self-analysis and inquiry to concentrating on behavioral responses and patterns. Currently the mental state and the behavioral observations hold equal weight in analysis of meaning and purpose.

What is psychology? George R. Ross defines psychology as a field of inquiry that is occasionally identified as the science of the mind, at times as the science of behavior that is concerned with how and why organisms do what they do; it covers an enormous range.[226] The American Psychological Association (APA) says, "psychology is more and more meaningfully defined in terms of the particular field under study rather than as a whole, making it less of a unified discipline and more an umbrella for a loose confederation of sub-disciplines."[227] For example, psychology under this definition covers fields that include experimental and clinical counseling, school psychology, theoretical and philosophical psychology, and psychology and religion.[228] For purposes of this research project the conceptualization of psychology will be viewed as the study of behavior and underlying emotional experiences.[229]

Theology

Theology is centered on a focused study of God. Theology has been defined as "that discipline that strives to give a coherent statement of the doctrines of the Christian faith, based

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[225] Ross, *Evaluating Models of Christian Counseling*, 11.

[226] Ibid.

[227] Ibid.

[228] Ibid.

[229] Ibid.

primarily on the Scriptures, placed in the context of culture in general, worded in a contemporary idiom, and related to the issues of life."[230] Hence, theology desires to explore and articulate the significant principles of the Christian faith. Scripture stands as the commanding origin that informs theology concerning all truth about God. Theology is constantly conducted and conveyed in historical and literary context; its meanings are exegeted in a present and relevant manner while respecting original biblical content.[231] Theology seeks to review all relevant doctrines and tie them together in a logical and cohesive manner with the intent to not contradict Scripture or mislead the audience. Also, there are various categories of theology. However, for the purpose of this research the attention will center on a systematic theological typology. Consideration is given to the systematic theological properties of revelation, God, Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit, humanity and sin, salvation, and the church.[232] Addressing these systematic theological categories allows this writer to present a more intentioned, purposed, and thorough discussion on the research problem and to better elucidate the offered thesis.

Spirituality

Research has demonstrated that many people hold spiritual and religious values. Studies have shown that high percentages of Americans indicate they have a religious preference and there is an expanding assortment of spiritual beliefs.[233] Consequently, it reasonably follows that an increasing number of counselees express a desire that their spiritual and religious beliefs

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[230] Estep, *A Theology for Christian Education*, 12.

[231] Estep, *A Theology for Christian Education*, 12. See also, Fee and Stuart, *How to Read the Bible for All Its Worth*, 30-32.

[232] Estep, *A Theology for Christian Education*, 12.

[233] Kenneth I. Pargament, *Spiritually Integrated Psychotherapy*: *Understanding and Addressing the Sacred* (New York, NY: Guilford Publications, 2007), 16, ProQuest Ebook Central.

and practices are recognized and perhaps obliged during the intervention attending their psychological care.[234] Establishing a working definition for spirituality is a task. The challenge is there are a diverse group of meanings given to this concept. Within this observation, spirituality, or the search for the sacred has been regarded as a universal human potential.[235] Even so, the spiritual experience is a process, contextual, and very much a personal revelation according to the individual who has the experience. People at varying developmental levels portray their respective spirituality in a unique way. One's meaning of spirituality progresses over time. Considering the aforementioned formations, spirituality can be defined as the common human capacity to experience self-transcendence and awareness of sacred immanence, with resulting increases in compassion and love for self and the other.[236]

The place of spirituality in relation to pastoral counseling as practiced within an intradisciplinary integrative approach is to develop spiritual transformation, spiritual growth in the counselee.[237] Spiritually integrated psychotherapy can provide new perspectives on psychological obstacles in addition to offering novel solutions to other issues that the counselee presents.[238] Of importance to the process of spiritual transformation of the counselee is the spiritual competence of the therapist: Spiritually integrated psychotherapy is supported by the spiritual literacy and competence forming the character of the counselor as authentic and

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[234] Stephen M. Saunders, Melissa L. Miller, and Melissa M. Bright, "Spiritually Conscious Psychological Care," *Professional Psychology: Research and Practice, Religion, Spirituality, and Professional Psychology* 41, no. 5 (October 2010): 356, https://web-b-ebscohost-com.ezproxy.liberty.edu/ehost/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?vid=1&sid=b9ddecc1-5119-468e-9d82-711c1b2fbac9%40sessionmgr103.

[235] Cashwell and Young, eds., *Integrating Spirituality and Religion into Counseling*, 12.

[236] Ibid.

[237] McMinn, *Psychology, Theology, and Spirituality in Christian Counseling*, 42-43.

[238] Pargament, *Spiritually Integrated Psychotherapy*, 177.

knowledgeable.[239] Spiritual literacy and competence refers to the counselor's level of personal

spiritual maturity. Spiritually oriented psychotherapy attends to the spiritual dimension in the

counseling alliance. As such, it is an integral part of the healing process for effecting

transcendent change in the therapeutic relationship for the counselor and the counselee.

<div align="center">Religion and Spirituality: Black Americans' Perspectives</div>

Cultural and Social Context

The significance of spirituality and religion in the lives of Black people drives the

assumptions that form the purpose and thesis for this writer's research. Spirituality is an

intensely rooted component of the lives of many Black Americans. Religion and spirituality

alignment present as a strength in the milieu of Black Americans and is often neglected in the

literature. Different from the Euro-Western psychology—in which the psychological and the

spiritual are isolated spheres wherein the spiritual component is often disregarded—the African

belief system accentuates that the psyche and the spirit are one.[240] In Black Americans this holds

true as studies have shown that individually and in families a strong religious nature is a very

crucial value for holistic well-being and life functioning. The magnitude of spirituality and

religion is an important legacy of the African heritage of Black Americans. Black Americans

have relied on incorporating spirituality and religion as essential survival processes for

generations. This tradition continues to impact Black Americans today who experience the

psychological and spiritual aspects of the self as deeply interconnected.[241] For Black Americans,

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[239] Pargament, *Spiritually Integrated Psychotherapy*, 190-192. See also, McMinn, *Psychology, Theology, and Spirituality in Christian Counseling*, 9, 14-16.

[240] Boyd-Franklin, "Incorporating Spirituality and Religion," 979. Cf. Boyd-Franklin, *Black Families in Therapy*, 22.

[241] Boyd-Franklin, *Black Families in Therapy*, 22.

religion and spirituality may be central to meaning-making for the repressive situations or other stressful life events they may face. Many Black Americans depend on religion and spirituality as a basis of hope, deliverance, and physical and emotional support.[242] The possibility exists for Black Americans to go beyond the limits of socialized meanings of everyday life that include dominance by majority groups, subjugation, and racism through the erection of personal practices and meanings related to the relevance of religion and spirituality in their lives.[243] Therefore, because of its fundamental cultural position, the psychological and social practice of religion and the intrinsic feeling of spirituality in the lives of Black Americans deserves appropriate attention in the literature.[244]

Empirical Research

Black Americans are inclined to use religious coping practices along with and, in some cases, in place of standard mental health care. Research has documented the impact of religion and spirituality in the lives of Black Americans at varying stages of their life experiences. For example, studies have explored the effect of religion and spirituality on career development in Black American college students; the bearing of spirituality and social support on health behaviors of Black American undergraduates; issues concerning adult Black American women;

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[242] Curry, "Addressing the Spiritual Needs of African American Students," 409.

[243] Ibid. Cf. S. J. Jang and B. R. Johnson, "Explaining Religious Effects on Distress Among African Americans," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 43, no. 2 (May 2004): 239-242, http://www.jstor.org/stable/1388125.

[244] Janeé R. Avent Harris et al., "Demographics, Stigma, and Religious Coping and Christian African Americans' Help Seeking," *Counseling and Values* 66, no. 1 (April 2021), https://onlinelibrary-wiley-com.ezproxy.liberty.edu/doi/epdf/10.1002/cvj.12145. The following is offered to support this researcher's position that the literature needs greater attention to the import of religion and spirituality when attending Black Americans. Harris et al. says, "Because of African Americans' strong allegiance to religion and their preference to seek out religious support over support from mental health professionals, as well as the potential compounding effect of mental illness, it is important that scholars look more closely at the impact religious coping has on help-seeking attitudes and behaviors" (77).

and the influence of religion and spirituality on the lives and psychological well-being of older Black Americans.[245] Exploration conducted in 2008 revealed statistical findings that largest percentage of African Americans (81.2%) considered themselves as both spiritual and religious, 7.8% specified that they were spiritual but not religious, and 8.1% indicated that they were neither spiritual nor religious.[246]

In continuation, religion remains very authoritative for Black Americans desiring help. Black Americans express a historical and established allegiance to religion, the praxis of Christianity, their communal faith centers, and the Black church. According to Harris et al., 67% of African Americans in the United States identify as Protestant, 53% describe themselves as Historically Black Protestant, and 14% as Evangelical Protestant; a larger number, 75%, of Black Americans describe religion as "very important" in their lives and attend religious services more often compared with other racial/ethnic groups.[247] Religion and spirituality have a vast influence within the Black American community. Moreover, findings disclose that spiritual and religious identities are congruent and conjoined aspects of the hallowed experience of many Black Americans. The established prominence of beliefs and worship methods that are concentrated on the Holy Spirit among Black Americans reveal ideas that define meaningful criteria for being identified as a spiritual person. Hence, the impact of spirituality regarding religiosity should be considered relative to the Black counselee's religious traditions.[248]

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[245] Boyd-Franklin, "Incorporating Spirituality and Religion," 977. See also, Harris et al., "Demographics, Stigma, and Religious Coping and Christian African Americans' Help Seeking," 76.

[246] Chatters et al., "Spirituality and Subjective Religiosity," 731.

[247] Harris et al., "Demographics, Stigma, and Religious Coping and Christian African Americans' Help Seeking," 76.

[248] Chatters et al., "Spirituality and Subjective Religiosity," 731.

The focus on religiosity and spirituality is of distinct meaning for Black Americans in regard to their comparatively high levels of participation in religious institutions, especially black-controlled churches, which continue to play a vital role in most Black American communities.[249] For example, earlier research records that Black Americans, in addition to reporting greater levels of religiosity than Whites in the terms of service attendance, membership in religious organizations, prayer, and Bible study, also are more likely than Whites to employ religious coping strategies, and to report considerable satisfaction with the outcomes of religious coping efforts.[250] As such, it is posited that religiosity and spirituality mediate the effects of social control stressors and psychological distress in Black Americans.

Of note, research has found that spirituality and religion are utilized by Black women as coping mechanisms. The social sciences have represented the lives of Black women to problem laden. This image is seriously problematic, and the result has been an inspired wealth of research directed towards exploring the coping behaviors and experiences of Black women.[251] Findings suggest that a myriad of coping strategies was utilized by Black women that included wit, retribution, and interaction with social networks of other Black women in seeking advice. However, the most consistent finding involving the coping practices of Black women places religion and spirituality as central in these women's coping behaviors.[252] Black women use conventional religious involvement such as church attendance and private devotional practices like prayer to cope with a range of hardships experienced from gender oppression, illness, and

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[249] Jang and Johnson, "Explaining Religious Effects on Distress Among African Americans," 242.

[250] Ibid.

[251] Mattis, "Religion and Spirituality in the Meaning-Making and Coping Experiences of African American Women," 309.

[252] Ibid.

psychological distress.[253] Examination of the unique role of religion and spirituality helps to carefully explain Black Americans' belief systems and practices utilized for coping with emotional and social challenges. As such, this research study of the membership of the MWBSS portends the importance of religion and spirituality as the connecting thread woven throughout the research findings.

<center>Psychological Approaches</center>

Intradisciplinary integration utilizes psychology, theology, and spirituality in its therapeutic approach. This writer will integrate cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT) and narrative therapy in the intradisciplinary process. The rationale lies in the biblical concepts that behavior and worldview are driven by thought processes and the stories one formulates to explain life experiences (Prov 23:7; Matt 13:1-58). This writer argues that utilizing a psychological approach of CBT and narrative therapeutic elements will effectively facilitate a spiritually transformative experience for the members of the MWBSS.

Cognitive Behavioral Therapy and Spirituality

Spirituality and religion are powerful forces in many people's lives, yet they are usually relegated to the periphery of CBT research and practice.[254] The notion is held that competently attending spiritual beliefs and practices as held by the individual may help bring about cognitive, behavioral, and transformative change. Counselor competence in CBT will allow the counselor to manage most intersections of spirituality, religion, and mental health in the counseling intervention. As such, in the 1990s clinicians began to adapt CBT methods to facilitate the

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[253]Mattis, "Religion and Spirituality in the Meaning-Making and Coping Experiences of African American Women," 309-310.

[254] David H. Rosmarin, *Spirituality, Religion, and Cognitive-Behavioral Therapy*: *A Guide for Clinicians*, (New York, NY: Guilford Publications, 2018), Description Page, ProQuest Ebook Central.

religious and spiritual beliefs of counselees in the practice of CBT. Over time the theoretical and empirical clinical data showed that on the whole CBT that integrates spirituality and religion appears to be as effective as standard CBT and more effective for some patients.[255] For example, treating alcoholism wherein CBT recognizes the patient's spirituality has proven to have positive outcomes for some patients. Integrating the client's spiritual beliefs and practices into treatment through CBT may speed recovery, enhance treatment conformity, prevent relapse, and decrease treatment discrepancies by providing more culturally congruent services.[256] Of note, the intervention should be done in an ethical manner and availed only under the confines of the counselee's receptive and directive responses.

Clinical CBT interventions suggest regular spiritual or religious behavior may enhance self-control. This occurs through a growing faithfulness and devotion to a respected set of guidelines or values, even in the absence or prospect of an immediate and tangible reward.[257] In the Christian tenets this is labeled as faith. Faith assists spirituality and religion to frequently display a connection that creates an inclination to defy negative influencing responses emanating from cognitive, behavioral, or emotional stimuli. It is then postulated that the primary mechanism by which spirituality and religion wields therapeutic effects on human mental and physical health and longevity is by influencing greater self-control.[258] This

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[255] Rosmarin, *Spirituality, Religion, and Cognitive-Behavioral Therapy*, 5-6. Cf. Pargament, *Spiritually Integrated Psychotherapy*, 199.

[256] David R. Hodge, "Alcohol Treatment and Cognitive-Behavioral Therapy: Enhancing Effectiveness by Incorporating Spirituality and Religion," *Social Work* 56, no. 1 (January 2011): 21, https://search-proquest-com.ezproxy.liberty.edu/docview/1008244074?pq-origsite=summon.

[257] Rosmarin, *Spirituality, Religion, and Cognitive-Behavioral Therapy*, 31.

[258] Ibid.

faith-driven self-controlling behavior aligns with a biblical exhibition of "the fruit of the Spirit" which is "love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness. . . gentleness, self-control" (Gal 5:22-23). CBT integrated with spirituality and religion appears to aid transforming the human mind toward intentional behaviors that have beneficial outcomes for the individual. Aligning with the review of CBT joined with spiritual concepts finds this researcher feeling strongly about employing this psychotherapeutic model within the MWBSS.[259]

Narrative Therapy: Culturally Sensitive Pastoral Care

Meaning in life is often associated with God. The language of meaning in a person's life is told in diverse ways. This writer poses that the narrative approach for assigning meaning to the stories individuals offer for relational experiences with God and the other are valuable to effective pastoral counseling. The linking of religion and spirituality, which are both directed towards wholeness, with personal meaning and the narrative approach of storytelling affords a great synopsis of one's present situation. Relative to this research's focus on the congregants in the MWBSS, it posited that pastoral care through narrative is a helpful therapeutic formation for

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[259] Heather Coats et. al., "Using Cognitive Interviews to Improve a Psychological-Social-Spiritual Healing Instrument: Voices of Aging African Americans with Serious Illness," *Applied Nursing Research* 39 (February 2018): 112-113, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.apnr.2017.11.019. Coats et al. findings are used to support this researcher's choice of CBT as a useful therapeutic approach in pastoral counseling provided to the MWBSS grouping. The following is offered from Coats et al. to buttress this researcher's argument for the validity of CBT methodology with Black Americans in this research: "Cognitive interviewing within diverse samples provides knowledge on the cultural applicability of individual items, contributing to culturally focused refinement of items within an instrument. This process contributes to content validity by providing input into the linguistic and pragmatic validities of the individual items of an instrument (110) . . . The overall purpose of cognitive interview methodology in instrument development is to evaluate participants' understanding and interpretation of items within an instrument. The use of cognitive interviewing approaches for instrument development has shown to be a valuable research tool (Knafl et al., 2007). Some literature even supports cognitive interviewing in instrument development as a fundamental part of the process (110) . . . For the seriously ill [Black American elders], the current findings suggest a strong link to their connection with a higher power, whether the item was in the spiritual, illness and/or religious domain, as evidenced in their qualitative comments. This connection to a higher power helped them deal with stress, was important and valuable, and gave meaning to their life. The current findings also support the implication that this connection to a higher power was present prior to their illness, but it became "more important" through their illness process" (113).

approaching pastoral care. Pastoral care from a narrative perspective assists persons and families in visualizing how and where God is at work in their lives and as a result, they may receive healing and wholeness.[260] The narrative approach is assumed useful in a culturally competent context because storytelling is indigenous to Black Americans.[261]

Explained further, Frederick Douglass poses this insight, "It is not well to forget the past. Memory . . . [uses the past as a] . . . mirror in which we may discern the dim outlines of the future and by which we may make them more symmetrical."[262] For Black Americans storytelling can be an effective means for the extracting details of the historical links to their inextricably intertwined institutional history connecting them to their African heritage while also acknowledging and commemorating their American experience as well.[263] Narrative forms for Black Americans as a critical component that builds and sustains cultural documentation of the past that helps explain the present and informs the future.

Oral tradition for Black Americans formalized in Africa. The oral tradition held many meanings that included religion, social organization, organization of the family, humankind's relation to his society and culture, and, most importantly, the survival of the group.[264] Stories have thematic content that revolve around concepts of freedom and conflict, dilemma, and suffering. Each of these themes postures as significant in the telling of the social and cultural

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[260] Wimberly, *African American Pastoral Care*, 1, 3-7.

[261] Jan Carter-Black, "Teaching Cultural Competence: An Innovative Strategy Grounded in the Universality of Storytelling as Depicted in African and African American Storytelling Traditions," *Journal of Social Work Education* 43, no. 1 (Winter 2007): 31-34, http://ezproxy.liberty.edu/login?url=https://www.jstor.org/stable/23044222.

[262] Rhondda Robinson Thomas, "Call My Name: Using Biographical Storytelling to Reconceptualize the History of African Americans at Clemson University," *Biography* 42, no. 3 (November 2019): 624, doi:10.1353/bio.2019.0063.

[263] Thomas, "Call My Name," 624-626.

[264] Carter-Black, "Teaching Cultural Competence," 39.

encounters of Black Americans and the impact those experiences hold for fashioning

understanding and perspective of the current living environment and religious and spiritual

practices. For Black Americans, storytelling (narrative account) is as essential to the human spirit

as breathing.[265] For example, slaves understood that that narrating their story was the lone means

for bearing witness to what they had been through. They understood that they could not risk

writing down their story, or read someone's story, but the only freedom they had was to speak

it.[266] Storytelling was the first chance slaves could express themselves as human beings and not

human chattel. Narrative serves the same purpose for Black Americans as wings function for a

bird: it gives flight for the spirit to surpass worldly conformity and elevate to a sphere of

transcendent encounter expressed in a voice of agency.

Stories influence people's lives in distinguishing ways. Stories can heal or bind up

wounds; they can give people sustaining power despite immense odds and lessen the impact of

distress; they can offer support when people are touched by the personal and interpersonal

obstacles that hinder personal growth.[267] Framed within a narrative perspective, the objective of

pastoral care and counseling is to draw on storytelling to reinforce the personal and interpersonal

growth of the membership of the MWBSS.[268] The assumption is this may be done in a way that

allows members to act in transformative response to God's salvation plan as it develops and as it

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[265] Andrea Collier, "Why Telling Our Own Story Is So Powerful for Black Americans," *Greater Good Magazine*, February 27, 2019,
https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/why_telling_our_own_story_is_so_powerful_for_black_americans.

[266] Ibid.

[267] Wimberly, *African American Pastoral Care*, 7.

[268] Ibid.

has an impact on their lives.[269]

Narrative as practiced in pastoral counseling frames the Word of God into the context of a caring alliance built on faith. As part of the technique, the pastoral counselor uses biblically liberating stories to bring hope into the lives of those who face personal and emotional strife. The pastoral counselor must narrate the gospel in a powerful hermeneutic such that the Word responds to the personal needs of individuals and families in their current situation. God's message of salvation, of "living water," of caring, of protection must speak to the individual right where they are as they encounter the vicissitudes of life (John 7:38; John 14: 1-5; Ps 91:1-2). The environment for pastoral care is within the private context of pastoral care rather than in the public context of preaching or worship.[270]

Given that the milieu and purpose of preaching, worship, and pastoral care are distinct, the use of storytelling in each ministry setting is also unique to provide a fit for each audience or individual. Narrative approach in pastoral counseling encourages the counselee to assume agency to build their personal story as they envision God actively mending, sustaining, steering, and reconciling them during their suffering and confusion. Narrative therapy in pastoral care operates best within a pastoral theology wherein "life meaning" is central to the conversation and study: God is positioned as essential to the meaningfulness of the narratives.[271]

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[269] Wimberly, *African American Pastoral Care*, 7. Cf. Wessels and Müller, "Spirituality in Narratives of Meaning," 1.

[270] Wimberly, *African American Pastoral Care*, 7, 17-22.

[271] Wessels and Müller, "Spirituality in Narratives of Meaning," 1-3.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

The primary objective of the methodological chapter in this thesis is to afford a detailed explanation to readers of how the research for this project will be undertaken. The methodology described will be justified and cited with footnotes to validate the submitted material. The methodology will include three primary areas which are the rationale, the intervention, and the evaluation.[272] The rationale is listed in the problem, purpose, and thesis statements for this research project. This section will deal with the intervention and implementation of the methodology. The intervention will discuss the action that will be taken to attend the stated problem and satisfy the purpose of this action research. Also, the intervention will include a description of the participants in terms of who, why, and how many and the milieu of the intervention: The evaluation section will consist of the issues of data collection, analysis, and interpretation which is inclusive of the implementation process.[273]

Intervention Design

Rationale

Problem Statement

The problem is that members of Lake Providence's MWBSS appear to lack intradisciplinary integrative teaching concerning spirituality's ability to effect holistic coping strategies.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this DMin action research thesis is to provide sufficient intradisciplinary

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[272] Sensing, *Qualitative Research*, 63.

[273] Ibid. Cf. Liberty University John W. Rawlings School of Divinity, *Doctor of Ministry Program and Candidacy Handbook*, Revised and Updated July 2020, 71-72.

integrative spiritual teaching to effect holistic coping strategies for Lake Providence's MWBSS members.

Thesis Statement

If the members of Lake Providence's MWBSS receive intradisciplinary integrative teaching, then holistic coping strategies could be created.

<div align="center">Intervention Plan</div>

This action research project is a type of action research where this researcher becomes a co-participant with the studied group. It is an engagement of collecting and translating data to help facilitate innovative and transformative methods of creating holistic coping strategies. This project is not designed simply to comprehend phenomena but to provide this pastoral counselor an opportunity to impart pastoral counseling leadership that creates a spiritual renewal for the membership.[274] This facilitator is engaging in the project thesis with the desire to effect change through specific plans of action utilizing an intradisciplinary integrative—psychology, theology, and spirituality—approach. The hope is to improve the facilitator's counseling, pedagogy, and hermeneutic skill sets while availing a new theological and theoretical system that assists congregants to enact personal agency to grow spiritually. The process begins by close scrutinization of the ministerial and cultural context informing the intervention.

The therapeutic counseling profession has gained an increased awareness of the value of the Black church in the lives of many Black Americans.[275] However, this awareness seems to lack an in-depth formation in developing a deeper expression of comprehending how Black Americans' views concerning secular counseling are fashioned by their church experiences. This

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[274] Sensing, *Qualitative Research*, 63.

[275] Boyd-Franklin, *Black Families in Therapy*, 3-4.

apparent deficient insight is the motivation for creating the action research project this writer is undertaking concerning the Black American churchgoers at LPMBC. The target group at LPMBC is the membership comprising the MWBSS ministry.

The literature does not adequately address these above-mentioned concerns in the scope that allows for understanding of the benefits availed in integrative psychotherapeutic approaches utilizing psychology, theology, and spirituality for Black Americans. This is problematic to this writer. Therefore, as mentioned, the pedagogical and psychotherapeutic approach for pastoral counseling by this writer will be informed by an intradisciplinary integrative methodology wherein psychology, theology, and spirituality frame the intervention. The desire is to achieve holistic and sustainable results for the congregants.

Detailed Intervention Plan

Introduction

The viable effectiveness of this action research project will depend greatly on devising actions to be taken that make sense, are purposeful, and productive. Thus, it is important to develop an orderly plan that attends the priorities of the major issue (the problem) and other emerging concerns. The plan is organized such that the major issue is identified for focused investigation; a review is done on emerging concerns and issues that analysis reveal; and issues are organized in order of importance.[276] The framework will consist of a six-question inquiry that will be addressed—why, what, how, who, where, and when—for providing the basis for planning.[277]

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[276] Stringer, *Action Research*, 168.

[277] Ibid., 169. See also, Tim Sensing, *Qualitative Research*: *A Multi-Methods Approach to Projects for Doctor of Ministry Theses* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2011), 28. Note: All third level headings—why, what, how, who, where, and when—under this section for Question 2 are a part of this footnote.

Goal (Why)

The motive for this DMin action research is to fill in the gap pertaining to the apparent lack of an intradisciplinary integrative teaching approach that utilizes psychology, theology, and spirituality for availing meaning-making and coping strategies to Black churchgoers.

Objective (What)

The purpose of this DMin action research thesis is to provide sufficient intradisciplinary integrative spiritual teaching to effect holistic coping strategies for Lake Providence's MWBSS members.

Tasks (How)

The ministry model activities for achieving the objective for this action research project will consist of the following:

a. Prayer and solicitation of the power of the Trinity will center the project's guidance.

b. There will be an evaluation of this writer's level of spiritual competence and commitment to the project to set an inward compass for spiritual humility and dedication toward the process's completion and desired success (1 Corinthians 10:31; Romans 12:3-16). In addition, this researcher will identify personal biases, values, emotions, and agendas that may hinder the process of objective data collection and data interpretation.[278]

c. This facilitator will perform an in-depth review and research on intradisciplinary integrative methods with particular focus on methodologies that integrate secular (psychology) and religious (theology and spirituality) approaches that attend the intervention.

d. This facilitator will prepare and utilize teaching series and outlines that address Christian tenets and spiritual disciplines that lend to spiritual formation for the individual.

e. This facilitator will seek stakeholder input by revealing the purpose of the study to gain primary perspectives on levels of current stakeholder spirituality, concerns, issues, and desires around personal stakeholder spirituality. This

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[278] Sensing, *Qualitative Research*, 41.

analysis invites the stakeholder's suggested areas for review and lends an alliance relationship to the process.[279] This objective also aids the facilitator in developing a pedagogic praxis. It will be communicated to the membership that active participation is pertinent to success of this project as their involvement is significant and desired. This facilitator will verbally communicate by phone about this project in addition to gauging and requesting participation though the use of email and questionnaires seeking interest in participation in the project.

f. The collection of data will be done through physical observation and interviews, when permitted, phone contact, surveys, and questionnaires.[280]

g. This facilitator will interpret the data through careful review that is focused on participant responses that are similar or different relative, in part, to age, when salvation was received/understood, perceived spiritual maturity, biblical knowledge, expressed desires for outcomes from the intervention, reflection on facilitator effectiveness, intentions and/or ability to incorporate learning into life application, and general thoughts about the process's usefulness.

h. The findings will be evaluated by this facilitator to attempt a qualitative conclusion for the researched group that develops recommendations and ascertains overall effectiveness of the intervention with consideration given to the limitations and delimitations of the research project.

i. Ethical considerations are important. As such, this facilitator will obtain explicit authorization both verbal and with and informed consent agreement for interviewee participation and levels of release of data. The researcher retains the right to report findings, methods, or any other elements of the research process with care for interviewee's right to confidentiality.[281]

Persons (Who)

The research will be conducted on the members of the MWBSS at Lake Providence

Missionary Baptist Church.

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[279] Tracy Prout and Melanie Wadkins, *Essential Interviewing and Counseling Skills*: *An Integrated Approach to Practice* (New York, NY: Springer Publishing Company, 2014), xix, ProQuest Ebook Central.

[280] Sensing, *Qualitative Research*, 29.

[281] Stephen Kemmis, Robin McTaggart, and Rhonda Nixon, *The Action Research Planner*: *Doing Critical Participatory Action Research* (Singapore, Southeast Asia: Springer, 2014), 173-174, https://doi-org.ezproxy.liberty.edu/10.1007/978-981-4560-67-2_5; Wessels and Müller, "Spirituality in Narratives of Meaning," 5.

Place (Where)

Due to COVID-19 restrictions, in-person interviews at LPMBC are not available at this writing. This poses as a limitation. The MWBSS is being conducted presently through conference calling. If this changes before completion of this research project, then the process will be conducted at the LPMBC relative to physical observation and personal interviews.

Timeline (When)

The MWBSS is conducted each week on Wednesdays at 12 p.m. Completion of this research project tasks are continuous in performance. Prayerfully, the project will begin at a reasonable time after the IRB gives approval. The estimated completion time to complete comprises the Fall of 2021 and, potentially, the Spring of 2022.

Resources

The resources needed for this project include the Bible, integrative therapeutic methodologies gained from review of literature that consist of books, journals, in addition to discussions with this writer's pastor who is a pastoral counselor. Also, a former professor of theology, who is a friend, will be consulted. As mentioned earlier, the main resource is a dependency on the empowerment of the Trinity (Acts 1:8, 2:2-4).

<div align="center">

Implementation of the Intervention Design

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The implementation phase of the action research project is where "the rubber hits the road."[282] This is the part of the research project where the researcher starts to put the intervention design into action. The efforts now turn to an execution of the intervention design to effect solutions to the problem that has been the motivating factor for the action research process. The implementation process has several areas that compose the activity.

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[282] Stringer, *Action Research*, 183.

Communication

This facilitator will communicate with each participant on a regular weekly basis and organize notes on the communications as part of the data collecting process.[283] Such interactions may take the form of planned visits, telephone calls, and casual social contacts: It is important that each person be linked with the facilitator so that participants are afforded an opportunity to reveal any issues, keep focus, and sustain their sense of identity with the research project.[284]

Triangulation[285]

Triangulation addresses the validity and reliability of the issues relevant to the action research as it is used to make sense of the participant's everyday life.[286] Single approach methodology is limited; as such, triangulation utilizes a multiple data-collection design that measures a single concept or construct to avail an intricate picture of the intervention which provides a broader and more in-depth analysis.[287] In definition, "triangulation is 'cross-checking the existence of certain phenomena and the veracity of individual accounts by gathering data from a number of informants and a number of sources and subsequently comparing and contrasting one account with another in order to produce as full and balanced a study as possible.'"[288] Triangulation broadens the scope of the researcher's analysis while also availing a reliability to the effort through polishing and bolstering the proffered notions and experiences.

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[283] Stringer, *Action Research*, 176. Cf. Liberty University John W. Rawlings School of Divinity, *Doctor of Ministry Program and Candidacy Handbook*, 52.

[284] Stringer, *Action Research*, 176.

[285] Liberty University John W. Rawlings School of Divinity, *Doctor of Ministry Program and Candidacy Handbook*, 53.

[286] Sensing, *Qualitative Research*, 72.

[287] Ibid. Cf. Michael Bloor and Fiona Wood, *Keywords in Qualitative Methods*: *A Vocabulary of Research Concepts* (London, UK: SAGE Publications, 2006), 154, ProQuest Ebook Central.

[288] Sensing, *Qualitative Research*, 72.

Tim Sensing, in *Qualitative Research*, mentions four kinds of triangulation that grants the researcher different viewpoints on the multifaceted challenges and experiences within the project—data triangulation, investigator triangulations, theory triangulation, and methodological triangulation.[289] This researcher will be using data triangulation. Data triangulation uses various data sources in the research study such as comparing data from observation, questionnaires, and interviews to enhance the participant's account that may provide a stronger interpretation of the collected information.

Specificity of the collection tools aids the unique viewpoint of data evaluation and measured outcomes. Data collection triangulation is elucidated as follows. Observation consists of physical as well as sensory data collected from phone calls. Questionnaires will inquire about the participant's spiritual location, years of salvation, ideas of current issues, view on spirituality and psychotherapy as helping strategies, and perceived usefulness of this research. The interview process is designed to be used after gaining the responses from questionnaires to match given answers to the present mindset of the participant. The emphasis of the data triangulation typology is to expand the research in a manner that substantiates the collected data.

Reflective Journal

Keeping a reflective journal is useful. So, yes, this researcher will keep a reflective journal. Maintaining a reflective journal or "learning journal" permits this writer to see "not only what (this researcher) might do in (the) practice, but also how (this researcher) might be in (the) practice. While the doing is important. . .the being is of greater importance as this is part of who (this researcher is) and how (this researcher presents)."[290] The reflective journal allows this

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[289] Sensing, *Qualitative Research*, 73-74.

[290] Jean McNiff, *Action Research*: *Principles and Practice* (London, UK: Taylor & Francis Group, 2013), 187, ProQuest Ebook Central.

researcher the space to assemble thoughts to ascertain their relevance for best practices.

In addition, reflective journals written by researchers in practical settings comprise a source of narrative. The reflective journal, in this action research project, allows the researcher to critically analyze observations, questionnaire results, and interview data. Literature review suggests that reflective journals encompass a key portion of evaluating data collection in fields that include psychotherapy and counseling.[291] The advantages of the use of reflective journals in an action research project that utilizes collected participant data includes strengthening the relationship between the researcher and the participant and improving the understanding of the researcher and the participant as well as enhancing the intervention processes.[292]

Another advantage a reflective journal allows the practitioner is the ability to self-check, to observe any behaviors, presuppositions, or diminished focus that may prejudice the intervention. Further elucidated, a reflective journal will assist this facilitator in quickly recognizing any presentation of self or activities that may appear as biased or menacing. Consequently, the journal provides a constant self-assessment that helps to avoid appearing as the "all-knowing expert," or taking on "the authoritative demeanor of the boss, or the swagger of the achiever."[293] At no point does this researcher wish to interject any negativity into the process in any manner (Eph 4:2; Col 3:12). The reflective journal will aid in avoiding an undesirable environment. Finally, the reflective journal benefits this researcher in presenting as "skilled, supportive resourceful, and approachable" with a "friendly, purposeful stance" that is suitable for

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[291] Bilha Bashan and Rachel Holsblat, "Reflective Journals as a Research Tool: The Case of student Teachers' Development of Teamwork," *Cogent Education* 4, no. 1 (September 2017): Article 1374234, 2, https://doi.org/10.1080/2331186X.2017.1374234.

[292] Ibid.

[293] Stringer, *Action Research*, 82.

this research project.[294]

Data Collection and Evaluation

Evaluation of the intervention is a key component in the project thesis.[295] Sensing

defines evaluation as

> the systematic collection, analysis, and interpretation of information about the activities, characteristics, and outcomes of actual programs in order to make judgments about specific aspects of the program, improve the program's effectiveness, and make decisions about the program's future.[296]

The intent of requiring focused attention to the evaluation aspect of the equation is to initiate a

pattern of transformative behavior and cognition that is useful to the participant long-term. The

choice of data collection tools and evaluation measures stems from the makeup of this

facilitator's research questions informed by theological and theoretical orientations.

Also, as this facilitator considers the type of data to be collected, the following questions

are considered: What do I want to know? Which data sources will best enable me to collect the

information I need? and Can I obtain the information that I am looking for?[297] Tools used to

collect data will consist of participant observation, interviews, questionnaires, surveys, and the

research literature review.[298] The data collection methods chosen will be ones that are the most

helpful in interpretation of the research problem and replying to the questions that arise.

Formal evaluation must take place to measure the worth and effectiveness of the

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[294] Stringer, *Action Research,* 82.

[295] Sensing, *Qualitative Research*, 72.

[296] Ibid., 70.

[297] Sara Efrat Efron and Ruth Ravid, *Action Research in Education*: *A Practical Guide* (New York, NY: Guilford Publications, 2013), 85, ProQuest Ebook Central.

[298] Efron and Ravid, *Action Research in Education* 86. Cf. Stringer, *Action Research*, 103-105.

overall project and the implemented set of activities.[299] Evaluation is best done with a focus

encapsulating the core elements of the project that are pertinent to addressing the problem,

supporting the purpose, and correlating to the thesis of the research. Steps for measuring the

effects of the intervention include:

- Purpose: Assessing the Worth and Effectiveness of Activities[300]

  - Purpose addresses the evaluation of the impact the methodology on the participants. In this writer's study, worth and effectiveness is measured by the appearance and expressions of participant's gained ability to recognize and implement improved spiritual awareness and behaviors that lend assist better life outcomes.

- Audience: Who Will Read the Evaluation Report[301]

  - Identifying the groups, the evaluation results will be presented to guides a suitable evaluation process and creates the appropriate form for the resulting report.

- Procedures: How is the Evaluation Carried Out?[302]

  - Intentional and consistent collaboration between facilitator and participants in each activity of the action research project is done to solicit primary judgments about the experiences of the participants relative to worth, effectiveness, success, or failure of the project.[303]

Careful attention to planning supports the evaluation process. Evaluation is ongoing to

ferret out potential shortfalls of the research project that compromise the objectives of the effort,

and it ends with a compilation assessment. This facilitator will also seek outside evaluation of the

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[299] Stringer, *Action Research*, 204.

[300] Ibid.

[301] Ibid., 205.

[302] Ibid.

[303] Ibid.

data collection for analysis from a local university professor and author who has earned a DMin

degree. Measuring the usefulness of the project is centered on views offered by the participants

as to usefulness.

CHAPTER 4: RESULTS

In the Black American community, religious beliefs and spirituality have presented as cathartic methods for coping. Hence, it is postulated that this research study of the MWBSS membership will uncover findings that support the premise that religion and spirituality form as significant constructs in the participants' meaning-making and coping strategies. The utilization of an interdisciplinary integrative approach will create positive cognitive, behavioral, and affective outcomes for members.[304] The basis for these anticipated findings rests in literature reviews reflecting upon the compelling therapeutic dynamic that religion and spirituality have in informing the Black American experience. For example, research regarding Black Americans and religion reveals that psychological and physical well-being are supportively associated with religiosity and spirituality.[305] Christianity has been a major element of the Black American culture in the provision of a sense of hope, support, increased self-esteem, and satisfaction through faith in God.[306]

Moreover, spirituality has been identified as source of guidance and strength during troubled times and a means to solving personal and relational issues.[307] When compared with other racial or ethnic groups, Black Americans applied spiritual coping or problem-solving

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[304] Delores A. Thompson and Mary B. McRae, "The Need to Belong: A Theory of the Therapeutic Function of the Black Church Tradition," *Counseling and Values* 46, no. 1 (October 2001): 40-42, http://ezproxy.liberty.edu/login?qurl=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.proquest.com%2Fscholarly-journals%2Fneed-belong-theory-therapeutic-function-black%2Fdocview%2F207594530%2Fse-2%3Faccountid%3D12085.

[305] Valinda M. Bowens, "The Role of the Black Church in Serving the Psychological Needs of its Congregants: A Crises Intervention Manual, Protocols and Resources for Clergy," (PhD. diss., Alliant International University, Los Angeles, CA, 2015), 33, 97, ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global, http://ezproxy.liberty.edu/login?qurl=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.proquest.com%2Fdissertations-theses%2Frole-black-church-serving-psychological-needs%2Fdocview%2F1658537655%2Fse-2%3Faccountid%3D12085.

[306] Ibid.

[307] Mattis, "Religion and Spirituality in the Meaning-Making and Coping Experiences of African American Women," 309-310.

methodology at a greater rate during times of hardship and serious interpersonal struggles.[308] This finding is congruent with the anticipated uncovering of the themes of faith as belief that God is present in their situations, faith as seen in God's individual and collective redemptive history, prayer, worship, and praise. It is put forth that the participants' understanding of their spiritual relationship with God will be enhanced through an intervention of intradisciplinary integration as theological pedagogy.

Further, investigations have concluded that Black Americans employed aspects of religious sources and practices that include worship service attendance, reading the Bible and other religious material, and prayer as context for coping with life's daily occurrences. It is suggested that the resultant experiences of the studied membership of the MWBSS will align with these same presented discoveries.

Documentary Analysis

Archetypical Reduction for Participants

Research documents in action research projects require unpacking and analyzation. This researcher utilized a Participant Interview Questionnaire for collecting data. The aim is to organize an analytical construct. As such, participant responses are formulated from a summarizing task wherein in the researcher acts as an interpreter. The overarching goal is to make sense of the experience of everyday life as expressed in the participant's narrative relative to the questions presented. The search is for contextual meaning that will grant a "thick

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[308] Ma'at E. Lyris Lewis-Coles and Madonna G. Constantine, "Racism-related Stress, Africultural Coping, and Religious Problem-solving Among African Americans, *Cultural Diversity and Ethnic Minority Psychology*, 12, no. 3 (July 2006): 433 436, https://web-b-ebscohost-com.ezproxy.liberty.edu/ehost/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?vid=1&sid=6eed4147-9798-4a9b-a79d-a30c43f89977%40pdc-v-sessmgr03.

description" of the collected data; a description that is a detailed interpretation that explores

hidden meanings behind the responses given and provides for the reader an explicit and

reflective fullness of understanding of implied value.[309] This design gives depth to the analysis

and increases the validity and trustworthiness of the research.

Analytical framing arranges the accumulated data for description and explanation. One

method of analytical framing is to uncover significant areas of overlap and present these

components as themes or patterns derived for the interpreted data.[310] The analysis of the

collected data in this research study will consider the analytical framing within theme

development. Theme development is a classification system of data where convergent elements

emerge that fit together formulating a thematic understanding of the data. Theme and pattern

formulation gives meaning-making to and provides a method for communicating the examined

phenomenon.[311]

Elucidated further, according to Max Van Manen, theme is associated with the following

elements and purposes:

(1) *Theme is the experience of focus, of meaning, of point*. As the researcher/interpreter reads
over a narrative the question is asked, "What is its meaning, its point?"

(2) *Theme formulation is at best a simplification*. The researcher/interpreter comes up with a
theme formulation but immediately feels it is an inadequate summary of the perception the
participant intends.

(3) *Themes are not objects one encounters at certain points or moments in a text.* A theme is not
a thing; themes are intransitive in that they have the objects of expressions of the participants.

(4) *Theme is the form of capturing the phenomenon one tries to understand.* Theme describes an
aspect of the structure of lived experience.

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[309] Sensing, *Qualitative Research*, 195.

[310] Ibid., 197.

[311] Ibid. See also, Max Van Manen, *Researching Lived Experience: Human Science for an Action Sensitive Pedagogy*, Second edition (New York, New York: Routledge, 2016), 79, https://doi-org.ezproxy.liberty.edu/10.4324/9781315421056.

(5) *Theme is the needfulness or desire to make sense.*

(6) *Theme is the sense we are able to make of something.*

(7) *Theme is the openness to something.*

(8) *Theme is the process of insightful invention, discovery, disclosure.[312]*

The aim of this researcher is to utilize Van Manen's theme construct to reflect phenomenologically on lived experiences of each participant based on the unique structure forming the narrative of everyone. In other words, an attempt is made to grasp the essential meaning of the expressed experiences to present the pedagogical essence of that experience. The desire centers upon affording meaning in a multi-dimensional manner through reflectively analyzing the structural thematic aspects of that experience.[313]

Moreover, it is posited that this approach will provide order and control to the research and subsequent written analytical findings exposing the structures that make up the lived experiences of the analyzed group.[314] What follows is a procedural address of each participant's response to the interview questions to seek meaning for thematic development which will then be placed in a linguistic form.

<div align="center">Search for Meaning</div>

As an examination of the participant's responses takes place from their lived experiences, the way to bring these examples to reflective understanding is to fix them in a way that affords a profound insight of the uncovered notion present in their narrative. In other words, this researcher will try to unearth something telling, something meaningful, something thematic in

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[312] Van Manen, *Researching Lived Experience*, 87-88.

[313] Ibid., 78.

[314] Ibid., 79.

the various experiential accounts.[315] The work is to create "meaning-making" from these

descriptions and explanations given by the participant relative to their conception of the impact

of spirituality in their lives through personal realities and the teaching they encounter.[316]

Participants responses are limited to essential text with a fuller description appearing in the

Participant Interview Responses document comprising Appendix A. As the various experiences

are engaged, it is submitted that different thematic meanings will emerge.

Participants in the Study

The gathering of data was done by video interviews. Individual sessions were held with

ten participants with each lasting fifty-five minutes to seventy-five minutes in length. The

sessions totaled over six-hundred fifty minutes of interview time done over a nine-day period.

The interviews were scheduled using Zoom due to the restrictions for in-person visits at LPMBC

mandated because of COVID-19 protocols. Each interview was a private session to ensure

confidentiality of the participant. The rate of participation was one hundred percent. The

participants responded to a set of fourteen predetermined interview questions in addition to

probing interactions by the researcher during the individual's interview. Forty-eight hours was

allocated to transcribing notes from the videoed interview sessions. The analysis of the data to

extract themes and perform coding of themes encompassed a period of nine days.

Data Analysis and Researcher Interpretation

Representative case study techniques were used employing cross-case modeling to

analyze and interpret data.[317] The terms of the cross-case model focused on members of the

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[315] Van Manen, *Researching Lived Experience*, 86. Cf. Sensing, *Qualitative Research*, 198.

[316] Van Manen, *Researching Lived Experience*, 86. See also, Mattis, "Religion and Spirituality in the Meaning-Making and Coping Experiences of African American Women," 309-310; Barnett and Johnson, "Integrating Spirituality and Religion into Psychotherapy," 148.

MWBSS at LPMBC relative to them being typical cases as Black American churchgoers. This researcher specifically wanted to use this identifiable group as their narratives represent the phenomenon of lived religious and spiritual experiences. This is to say the phenomena, spiritual narrative bracketing lived experiences, to be explored for causal mechanisms at work in general cross-case relationships was representative within this studied group.[318] The search was for a specific causal pathway contained within the different expressed narratives that will assist in the researcher's theme-matching investigation.[319]

This representative case study method was augmented using interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA).[320] IPA is a qualitative methodology that has been increasingly used to explore the experiences of people: IPA focuses on the meanings people ascribe to their experiences and how experiences are understood in relation to their lived experiences and interactions in the world as linked to social cognitive paradigms.[321]

The participant's data sets were each closely read at least three times with the intent of locating recurring words, sentences, and phrases for thematic development. When similar wording appeared in multiple participant responses they were considered as relevant themes.

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[317] Jason Seawright and John Gerring, "Case Selection Techniques in Case Study Research: A Menu of Qualitative and Quantitative Options," *Political Research Quarterly* 61, no. 2 (June 2008): 299, http://ezproxy.liberty.edu/login?qurl=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.proquest.com%2Fscholarly-journals%2Fcase-selection-techniques-study-research-menu%2Fdocview%2F215333544%2Fse-2%3Faccountid%3D12085.

[318] Seawright and John Gerring, "Case Selection Techniques in Case Study Research," 299.

[319] Ibid.

[320] Samantha Tomlinson and Olivia Hewitt, "Adults with Mild Intellectual Disabilities' Experiences of Mental Health Problems: A Qualitative Study Using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis, *Journal of Mental Health Research in Intellectual Disabilities* 11, no. 1 (September 2017): 17, https://doi.org/10.1080/19315864.2017.1370045. Cf. Sensing, *Qualitative Research*, 212-214; Van Manen, *Researching Lived Experience*, 78-80

[321] Tomlinson and Hewitt, "Adults with Mild Intellectual Disabilities' Experiences of Mental Health Problems," 17.

This researcher relied upon description-reduction-interpretation as a procedural means for interpreting the participant's' narratives.[322] Description reveals a structure of "verbalized inner speech "organized on the basis of visual description, logical reasoning, and dialogue; reduction recognizes dialogical relations as an essential feature underlying verbalized inner speech characterized by aspects of information and communication.[323] Interpretation indicates that an accurate account of the conscious expression of dialogical relations requires understanding the communicative process as a logical relationship with an emphasis on its pragmatic function.[324] Description-reduction-interpretation is relative to the individual's cognitive process of inner speech.[325] Inner speech formulates self-awareness and causes one to be aware of their own existence and conscious experiences as linked to self-reflection.[326]

The original method engaged descriptions gathered through the participant interview activity; passages were extracted from the responses to establish confirmation of this researcher's phenomenological interpretation.[327] Next, the reduction process involved positioning data in themes at the conclusion of the conducted interviews while data organization for locating themes

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[322] Mariane L. DeSouza, Amanda DaSilveira, and William B. Gomes, "Verbalized Inner Speech and the Expressiveness of Self-Consciousness," *Qualitative Research in Psychology* 5, no. 2 (June 2008): 154, https://doi.org/10.1080/14780880701734511(2008).

[323] Ibid.

[324] Ibid.

[325] Ibid.

[326] Ibid.

[327] Sylento R. Lewis, "Impact of African American Male Instructors on African American Male Students' College Persistence" (Ed.D. diss., Walden University, Minneapolis, MN, 2012), 75, ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global, http://ezproxy.liberty.edu/login?qurl=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.proquest.com%2Fdissertations-theses%2Fimpact-african-american-male-instructors-on%2Fdocview%2F1112842711%2Fse-2%3Faccountid%3D12085.

utilized coding.[328] Finally, a correlated linguistic description of the themes is provided.[329]

Synthesized Participant Interview Responses

The chosen participants are all members of the MWBSS at LPMBC. The examined group consists of five Black males from the ages of twenty-eight to seventy-two, and five Black females between the ages of sixty-two and eighty-three years old. The following is what everyone gave as a response to fourteen questions. The responses are examined individually and cumulatively to formulate themes:

(1.) Question: How do you define spirituality?

Participant 1: Spirituality means to me a close relationship with God.

Participant 2: It is meant to help us grow in grace; grow in spirit, helps to understand who Christ is.

Participant 3: Belief in Christ and relationship with Him even though I can't touch Him I can feel him.

Participant 4: Spirituality is my interconnected relationship with Christ.

Participant 5: I define spirituality as the connection with God and His Holy Spirit.

Participant 6: Having a personal relationship with God that leads me to becoming more like Christ.

Participant 7: Spirituality is having and demonstrating a wholesome and sincere relationship with God.

Participant 8: A state of being where there is a connection to a higher power that directs us.

Participant 9: Spirituality for me is my relationship with the Lord.

Participant #10: I feel it is an intrinsic feeling for God and my relationship with Him.

Themes: relationship with Christ/God, intimate connection/interconnection with God/Holy Spirit; transcendent experience.

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[328] Sensing, *Qualitative Research*, 182-183, 203. Cf. Lewis, "Impact of African American Male Instructors," 75.

[329] Sensing, *Qualitative Research* 194-202.

(2.) Question: To what level do you consider yourself spiritual? (Answer Options: Not Spiritual, Slightly Spiritual, Moderately Spiritual, Very Spiritual, Don't Know). Explain.

Participant 1: (Very Spiritual) I depend on the Holy spirt for all my needs. . . I can feel Him guiding me and moving me.

Participant #2: (Moderately Spiritual) I am still learning, room for growth, and maturity. I am not there yet.

Participant #3: (Very Spiritual) . . .my process in growing and maturing daily. . .

Participant #4: (Moderately Spiritual) Varies by situation.

Participant #5: (Very Spiritual) My scripture study and morning devotional keep me feeling in a very spiritual nature.

Participant #6: (Very Spiritual) Because I have a close and personal relationship with Him; I know Him and what He has done for me.

Participant #7: (Very spiritual) Very spiritual. . .because God allows me too not be perfect but to be righteous.

Participant #8: (Very Spiritual) I seek the guidance of my God. . .I feel His presence. . .I listen for His voice in my spirit.

Participant #9: (Very Spiritual) I depend on Him for my life. I am very spiritual because of my connection to Him.

Participant #10: (Very Spiritual) Spirituality is communing. I spend a great deal of time daily with the Lord communing with Him.

Themes: Very Spiritual; dependency, guidance, presence, relationship

(3.) Question: What power do you understand spirituality to have for giving meaning to your life experiences? (Answer Options: None, Slightly Powerful, Moderately Powerful, Very Powerful, Don't Know). Explain.

Participant #1: (Very Powerful) I see God having a hand in the things that I experience in my life. I am a cancer survivor and when I went through that He brought me out.

Participant #2: (Moderately Powerful) (I) tend to look more toward the Lord. The trials and temptations get our attention and lets us know we are not in control as much as we think.

Participant #3: (Very Powerful) Learning to depend on God; He is my all and all.

Participant #4: (Very Powerful) I know who God is and what He has done to change my

life. I thank Him every day for turning my life around. . .I was worth saving.

Participant #5: (Very Powerful) Spirituality gives meaning to all parts of my life.

Participant #6: (Very Powerful) Spirituality has given me an identity.

Participant #7: (Very Powerful) Situations in my life have fallen into line after I prayed, and I know it was Him leading me. My aunt was healed, my relationship with my husband was resolved; my son got a promotion for which I was praying.

Participant #8: (Very Powerful) God is constantly teaching me and directing me, even though some things I do not understand. As I look back over my life, I know God was at work.

Participant #9: (Very Powerful) . . .I see God in all aspects of my life. That interconnectedness gives me an assurance of His power to guide me. . .

Participant #10: (Very Powerful) My relationship with God is first and foremost in my life. . . I move, breathe. and have my being because of Him. He is the architect of my life. . .

Themes: Very Powerful; identity, all encompassing, assurance, guidance/instruction, healing

(4.) **Question:** *What is your opinion on this idea of connecting psychology with theology and spirituality to grant healing for the mind, body, and spirit of God's people? Answer options: Completely Agree, Somewhat Agree, Neutral, Somewhat Disagree, Completely Disagree). Explain your choice.*

Participant #1: (Completely Agree) If we take our mind and point it towards God then I can see combining these together can be helpful to people.

Participant #2: (Completely Agree) I think they all work together. I kind of relate it to Romans 8:28 and Philippians 2:5. Jesus was a Master Psychologist. The "renewing" of our mind.

Participant #3: (Somewhat Agree) I search everything through the Word, as long as it does not go against the Word I am okay with it. The Scriptures have provided the answer.

Participant #4: (Completely Agree) Once you use your mind to understand who God is then you understand what He will do. . .belief. . .will come to you allowing transformation. . .

Participant #5: (Completely Agree)

Participant #6: (Somewhat Agree) Basically I think this integration can be beneficial in the healing and counseling process. . .Christian counseling. . .must be rooted. . .in the Scriptures.

Participant #7: (Completely Agree) I feel since God physically created us in mind and spirit so they can and should play a part in our healing.

Participant #8: (Somewhat Agree) Psychology and theology without spirituality is void. If you have all three together it makes the process less complicated and adds more meaning.

Participant #9: (Completely Agree) There is no doubt in my mind that there is a great connectivity to these disciplines for therapeutic and spiritual healing.

Participant #10: (Completely Agree) You have to have a mindset and posture of spirituality. . .Psychology has a relative place inside of theology and spirituality.

Themes: Overall Agreement but mixed (7 Completely, 3 Somewhat Agree); mind, body, and spirit work together by God's design, Bible must drive approach, healing by renewing the mind

(5). Question: Do you feel you can gain helpful understanding for transformative behavior and coping strategies based on the Christian Education intradisciplinary integration principles gained from your experience in the MWBSS? (Answer options: Completely Agree, Somewhat Agree, Neutral, Somewhat Disagree, Completely Disagree.) Explain.

Participant #1: (Completely Agree) The (MWBSS) has been a great help to me. . .I understand the Word better. . .the teachings. . .change my way. . .for the better.

Participant #2: (Completely Agree) Yes, I have grown by listening to the (MWBSS). . . It makes me think, gives me a new look. . .growth, deeper understanding. . .

Participant #3: (Completely Agree). The Mid-Week has been beneficial for me. It has helped me transform my mind because I get better understanding from the teaching.

Participant #4: (Completely Agree) Your classes and message are not only helpful but very educational. . .I know it helps me and challenges me to go deeper. . .to apply to my life.

Participant #5: (Somewhat Agree) I agree in the sense that I can transform my behavior in certain areas by connecting to the teaching. . .it affects my behavior in a Christlike manner.

Participant #6: (Completely Agree) I think your teaching method has been enlightening, informative, and has impacted my life and is effective.

Participant #7: (Completely Agree) I feel like your Mid-Week Bible study moves us from the basic foundation of who Christ to developing thoughts about how He wants us to live.

Participant #8: (Completely Agree) The approach that has been taught in the MWBSS breaks the Word down. . .gives deeper and different insight. . .teacher guidance. . .gives ideas and strategies for me to use for helping me along in my situations.

Participant #9: (Completely Agree) We can gain knowledge through this transformative process. . .added coping skills. The MWBSS, as you teach it, gives us. . .a spiritual guide for changing my behavior for the betterment of my situation.

Participant #10: (Completely Agree) It is not just me, but it is also those. . . I am a witness to those being transformed. . .from the education that is being offered in the MWBSS.

Themes: Completely Agree is the consensus; transformative teaching, changed behavior, learned coping skills, desire for deeper engagement, Scripture lends to better understanding, educational

(6.) Question: Do you feel that your perception of spirituality allows you to personally understand the meaning and application of Mark 12:30-31 (NKJV) – "And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength.' This is the first commandment." (Answer options: Completely Agree, Somewhat Agree, Neutral, Somewhat Disagree, Completely Disagree). Explain.

Participant #1: (Completely Agree) This Scripture tells me also to love my brother like I love God. Yes, I try to apply this to my life as a Christian.

Participant #2: (Completely Agree)

Participant #3: (Completely Agree) My growing process gives me a transformed heart through my relationship with the Lord.

Participant #4: (Completely Agree) . . .moving toward God causes me to treat people differently. . .because of my understanding of Gods' Word. I can love my enemies better now.

Participant #5: (Completely Agree) The constant hunger for being nourished to gain spiritual discernment allows me to understand and apply this verse.

Participant #6: (Completely Agree) Yes. This is a verse with which I have struggled. I want to . . .I want to do right but find myself doing wrong at times.

Participant #7: (Completely Agree) If I love Christ, then I must honor Him with. . .I must love that of which I am a part of given. . .my brothers and sisters

Participant #8: (Completely Agree) I think verse thirty-one is the one that guides my spirit. Unless I can treat people the way I want to be treated I can't apply this. . .

 Participant #9: (Completely Agree) My spirituality has helped me to understand and apply this Scripture in my life. . .My growth. . .allows me . .in loving God and loving others. . .

Participant #10: (Completely Agree) Once you understand we are called to be fishers of men then I am able help others become transformative in their own lives.

Themes: Completely Agree; love God allows for loving others, spiritual growth assists application, discipleship

(7.) Question: Storytelling is a time-honored tradition for passing on information and creating understanding in the Black American worship experience. "Storytelling" within your cultural

environment has influenced your current understanding of who God is? (Answer options: Completely Agree, Somewhat Agree, Neutral, Somewhat Disagree, Completely Disagree). Explain.

Participant #1: (Somewhat Agree) I was baptized at an early age, and it was because of the stories I heard about Jesus from my parents, grandparents, others in my family, and at church.

Participant #2: (Completely Agree) Listening to stories told by my grandparents and Parents. . .and mothers and deacons, talking about Jesus . . .influenced me greatly. . .

Participant #3: (Completely Agree) That's how I came to learn who God is, through storytelling.

Participant #4: (Somewhat Agree) Different stories from my parents and grandparents that I was bought up on influenced the way I see Christ and how I came to know about religion.

Participant #5: (Completely Agree). Culturally, storytelling in the realm of faith represents discipleship. I have seen this work in my family. . .I was moved to Christ.

Participant #6: (Neutral). Storytelling has not been a major influencer for me in getting to know God. My parents passed when I was very young; I did not grow up in Christian home. . .

Participant #7: (Neutral) In my recall I cannot remember hearing stories about who God is. Growing up my mother and grandmother worked all the time, and we did not go to church.

Participant #8: (Completely Agree) I have heard your story of how God transformed your life (*i.e., this researcher*), and I can see how powerful God is in changing people's lives.

Participant #9: (Somewhat Agree) I did not have explicit stories told to me about God. . . .listening to the stories told in the church I gained an understanding of God's presence.

Participant #10: (Completely Agree) Yes. . .I have found in my experience in the Black Church that storytelling and testimonies are important. . .

Themes: Mixed Agreement (Completely 5, Neutral 2, somewhat Agree 3); cultural trait, dependent on home and church influence, Black church tradition, primary testimony provides influence

(8.) Question: Did/does storytelling help you convey your spiritual experiences to others (i.e., your children, grandchildren, church members, etc.)? Explain.

Participant #1: Yes. I often tell my children about how I have experienced God in my life in different ways. I do this to let them know that they can call on Him, too.

Participant #2: Yes. . .My personal experience is a testimony that I have passed on to my children. . .my stories . . .influenced . . . (them)to give their life to the Lord.

Participant #3: Yes. I speak to my sons daily about the Lord and share with each other about our spirituality, our spiritual experiences.

Participant #4: Yes. I go back to Proverbs where it speaks about how to train up your Children. . .I talk to my kids about Christ. . .Storytelling is like planting a seed.

Participant #5: Yes. Storytelling helps my evangelism. It is a leveling form of fishing for men. . .My testimony of my life has power to move others to change their lives like I did.

Participant #6: No. It is an area I wish to grow in to let my kids and others know about God through my witness and testimony about Him.

Participant #7: Yes. I use my life experience from years past to tell others about the grace of God. God led me in making different moves in my life. . .

Participant #8: Yes. I like to let them know I didn't get to this place by myself. It took faith, God, and others helping me along the way.

Participant #9: Yes. Telling stories about God to my children and grandchildren gives them a better foundation for learning about God.

Participant #10: Yes. It gives you the comprehension of the depth of living and living for Christ, and it also gives authenticity to your story. . .in a beneficial way. . .

Themes: Overwhelmingly yes; storytelling gives meaning to life experiences, pass on to children/grandchildren, reveals God to others, acts as evangelism

(9.) Question: Do you feel you tap into the power of your spirituality to live out your faith in a way that exemplifies God's love toward others and encourages others to seek God? Explain.

Participant #1: Yes, I do. . .the Holy spirit comes to me and gives me alternatives for doing my best; the Holy spirit has molded me to correct others in their poor behavior. . .

Participant #2: Yes. Scripture. . .makes me show God's love towards others and encourage them to seek God. My evangelism . . .helped me to give my testimony. . .

Participant #3: Yes. I know my God and I know He is all about love and about relationships. This is what I tell others.

Participant #4: Yes. I have had conversations with my old friends to share Christ. . . Matthew 28 comes to mind when I talk to others about Christ. I am not ashamed of the gospel.

Participant #5: No at present. I am in an infancy stage, and I don't know what that looks like now in spiritual experience. I am still maturing to understand what power. . .[spiritually].

Participant #6: Yes, I think I have. The power of the gospel, the Holy Spirit, and God has transformed me and allowed me to grow and mature in learning. . .and displaying. . .love.

Participant #7: Yes. I read the Daily Bread and send it out to fifteen people each day.

Participant #8: Yes. I believe you treat others the way you want to be treated. I let people know I am saved by grace; all things I have come from God.

Participant #9: Yes, I think I do.

Participant #10: Yes. My business was a ministry. My customers saw me favored; they trusted me with their hurt and pain and I dealt with it in a spiritual and delicate manner.

Themes: Overwhelming yes responses, discipleship, God's love, and the Holy Spirit are drivers, Spiritual growth and maturity facilitate recognition of spiritual power

(10.) ***Question:*** *You are at ease expressing your faith and spiritual view within your interactions with others in different settings. (Answer options: Completely Agree, Somewhat Agree, Neutral, Somewhat Disagree, Completely Disagree). Explain.*

Participant #1: (Somewhat Agree) I say somewhat because I don't want to be the know-it-all type of person. I am comfortable in doing it and I am guided by the situation I am in.

Participant #2: (Completely Agree) I don't mind testifying to what God has done for me. I am at ease doing this because I understand the Word and its meaning; the peace God gives me allows me to do this.

Participant #3: (Somewhat Agree) I am in constant discussion about God, particularly through my group of married couples. . .I [defend] God's Word. . .

Participant #4: (Completely Agree). Yes.

Participant #5: (Completely Agree) I completely agree and then some. . .I share my testimony; I evangelize without any issues.

Participant #6: (Neutral) It is an area I need to grow in; I have not arrived, but I have left the station. I want to be a disciple and not just a convert. . .

Participant #7: (Completely Agree) Being in corporate America, I speak about God in those work situations, if led by the Spirit to do. I try to express my spirituality.

Participant #8: (Completely Agree) I not ashamed of the gospel. I can do it no matter who is around; I'm at ease talking about God wherever I am.

Participant #9: (Somewhat Agree). I feel for the most part I have no problem sharing my views on faith and spirituality. I don't want to deny Christ in any setting. . .He did not deny me.

Participant #10: (Completely Agree) This why I study to show myself approved. The Word tells me that I am be the salt of the earth and light in a dark word.

Themes: Completely Agree is dominant response; discipleship, apologist attitude; evangelistic mindset, empowered by God's peace

(11.) Question: *Is your worship experience based more on religious knowledge or a sense of connection to the Holy Spirit? Explain.*

Participant #1: It is based on my connection to the Holy Spirit; not so much on religious knowledge.

Participant #2: Sense of connection to the Holy Spirit.

Participant #3: You cannot separate them. The knowledge of the Lord and the Holy Spirit becomes. . . they both play a part. . .. knowledge informs my spiritual connection.

Participant #4: It is a combination of both. Without the religious knowledge or the writing of the Word I would not know how to connect with the spirit.

Participant #5: Connection to the Holy Spirit. . .I connect the Holy Spirit with my knowledge of the scripture, and this allows the spirit to reign in me and I feel a stronger faith.

Participant #6: Connection to the Holy Spirit.

Participant #7: Sense of connection to the Holy Spirit. In knowing the Bible, it provides a sense of connection with the Holy Spirit.

Participant #8: Sense of connection to the Holy Spirit. . .religious knowledge can be superficial. . .if I don't have the meaning of those words in my heart . . .religion means nothing.

Participant #9: I think it's a combination of the two. I believe my knowledge allows me to acknowledge the presence of the Holy Spirit.

Participant #10: It is a combination of both, but more so because of my life experiences it is a connection to the Holy Spirit that drives my worship.

Themes: Mixed (Six – connection to Holy Spirit; Four- combination of knowledge and Holy Spirit); knowledge informs spirit leading to worship, Holy Spirit influences worship practices through relationship with God

(12.) Question: Romans 8:6 (ESV) says, "For to set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace." Based on your view of what spirituality means in your life, what do you think this passage is saying to you as a believer concerning your mind and your spirit as drivers for your behavior and self-awareness?

Participant #1: Believers should set their minds on the spirit because no good thing rest in the flesh. My spirituality drives me to operate in the spirit.

Participant #2: The mind in me has to be like that in Christ Jesus. I have to keep my mind on Jesus. Keeping my mind in the spirit of Christ influences all my behavior.

Participant #3: I want life. I want to be with Christ. My goal is heaven, not this earthly life. It has transformed my life and my thinking; operate as drivers for my behavior. . .

Participant #4: You can't serve two masters. You can't have a carnal mind because that is death. The spiritual mind says you have to do something different. I can't straddle the fence.

Participant #5: This says to me that I am in constant need of the Holy Spirit and without the Holy Spirit I cannot have peace.

Participant #6: It tells me not to be selfish and carnal, but to set my mind on peace and set my mind on others and on God. My spiritual maturity helps me to set my mind on the spirit of Christ.

Participant #7: If your behavior is to satisfy the flesh then you are eternally dead. But if your mind is on God and His spirit then you have life eternally and peace through Him.

Participant #8: For me to live is Christ, but if I don't live in Christ I am... spiritually dead: I am no good if my mind is set on the flesh. . .the spirit that lives in me gives me peace.

Participant #9: . . . I know how important it is to keep your mind on Christ to drive your behaviors and your actions. . .operating in a fleshly manner. . . creates issues. . . keep our mind stayed on Christ.

Participant #10: You have to place your mind on things above. . .I have to look at every situation from a spiritual connotation and not from my fleshly thoughts.

Themes: keep mindset on God/Christ/Holy Spirit, flesh is problematic, spirit gives peace, spiritual maturity drives behavior

*(13.) Question***:** *Have you ever felt that your faith and spirituality was weakened and not effective in your life? If so under what circumstances? How did you "transform your mind" and get back on solid spiritual footing?*

Participant #1: Yes. . .I have doubted. . .past cancer has caused me to be concerned. When trouble comes. . .go to the Rock. He has been my help in the past. . .trust Him now.
Participant #2: Yes. Was not active in the church early on. But the Lord spoke to me and said you have to get back in church. . .I went back to church.
Participant #3: Yes. I got down on my knees and asked God to remove it from me. I knew what I was doing was wrong. I asked God to forgive me. I had to repent of it first.

Participant #4: Yes, when my wife died suddenly, I became a doubter. . .I had to go back to reading, praying, and my good friends helped. . .Let the Word take. . .control.

Participant #5: Yes. I had problems when I was not connected to God's Word. I got back on solid footing through meditation on the Scripture with an intentionality to start my day.

Participant #6: Yes. When I have fallen short or missed the mark is when I am not renewing my mind. . .I get back on track by acknowledging the presence of the Lord. . .my faith.

Participant #7: Yes. During COVID-19 I was weak and scared. . .Prayer changed my thought process and helped me regain my strength and faith in God and His power. . .I pray.

Participant #8: Yes. Through prayer to God and humble petition to God I was strengthened. Lord help me. . .My spiritual relationship tells me to go to the Rock.

Participant #9: Yes. I . . .wonder sometimes if my faith ever was strong or effective. . . God got my attention. . . brought me back to dead center. . .committed to Christ.

Participant #10: Yes. Trials, tribulations. . .placed me in a strained faith position. . . It was prayer that brought me through and set my feet on firmer ground. . .worship. . .faith file. . .

Themes: Yes, faith has failed; turn to the Rock, prayer, faith file, mediation, Scripture, church

(14.) *Question:* Galatians 5:22-23 (NKJV) says, "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness. . .gentleness, self-control." Do you feel a better understanding of how psychology, theology and spirituality can impact one's life and can potentially cause you to develop better coping strategies that grant an improved quality of life? Explain

Participant #1: Yes, I feel it helps me in all these areas. I have experienced these to be utilized in my daily life (i.e., self-control when I was a bus driver); I prayed for patience. . .

Participant #2: Yes, I believe that the tie-ins from psychology, theology, and spirituality can help me cope better with life. It has given me a better mindset to formulate my behaviors.

Participant #3: Yes. The way you explained it as being a transformed life makes me see what impact this Scripture can mean for understanding how [the] impact people's lives.

Participant #4: Yes.

Participant #5: Yes. I understand they have a Triune meaning. That is the union of the psychology, theology, and spirituality, particularly when it comes to the fruit of self-control.
Participant #6: Absolutely!!! Got to use all the tools in the toolbox as long as it is founded and rooted on the Scripture. If so, then this method is good for helping people.

Participant #7: Yes. I am not sure I understand all the aspect connections between the three. . .since I have accepted Christ, I have a sense (mindset) of confidence. . . and worthiness.

Participant #8: Yes. I know that psychology speaks about what the Bible says in challenging people's thinking. Jesus was the Master Psychologist.

Participant #9: Yes, I absolutely do. . .all of these of intradisciplinary integration pieces interconnect (and) there is a value and an enrichment that produces the fruit of the spirit. . .

Participant #10: Yes. Understanding how psychology, theology, and spirituality connect gives meaning to operating in the fruit of the spirit for my life.

Themes: Agreement that intradisciplinary integration gives value and enrichment to life; impact a person's life; Jesus is Master Psychologist, formulates behaviors and mindsets

Phenomenological Interpretation

Thick Description of Participant Interviews

The interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) approach, emphasizing experiential, lived aspects of a particular idea, presents as central to outlining a deeper understanding of themes extracted from the lived experiences expressed through participant data.[330] The goal of this researcher is to utilize IPA to create a thick description which is the explanation of human behavior in terms of its context to make that behavior meaningful to an outsider.[331] Thick description allows this interpreter to contextually elucidate the themes (patterns) of meaning expressed in a particular set of symbols. For example, relative to the purposes of this research,

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[330] Sensing, *Qualitative Research*, 195. Cf. Abena Dadze-Arthur, *An Analysis of Clifford Geertz's The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays* 1st ed. (London: Taylor and Francis, 2017), 30, https://doi-org.ezproxy.liberty.edu/10.4324/9781912128310; Sharan B. Merriam and Elizabeth J. Tisdell, *Qualitative Research: A Guide to Design and Implementation* (Newark, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, Incorporated, 2015), 27, ProQuest Ebook Central. Merriam and Tisdell offer that to get to the essence, the "really real," that structures meaning for the participant's narrative of lived experiences within the collected data a unique interpretive strategy labeled phenomenological reduction is implemented: "Phenomenological reduction [interpretation] is the process of continually returning to the essence of the experience to derive the inner structure or meaning in and of itself. We isolate the phenomenon to comprehend its essence." The desired outcome is for the reader to have an engaging experience with the material wherein the reader comes away feeling they better understand what the participant is expressing through the expressed lived experience as revealed by the interpreter [researcher].

[331] Dadze-Arthur, *An Analysis of Clifford Geertz's The Interpretation of Cultures,* 30.

religion is viewed as a specific cultural system comprising a specific set of symbols such as

spirituality. Symbols like spirituality as located within the cultural contextual meaning of

religion for Black American churchgoers outlines a general order of existence for

conceptualizing the "really real."[332] The detailed review of spirituality brings the symbol into

focus by close examination of the behaviors and moods spirituality stimulates and the religious

perspective within which it has experiential meaning for the participants of this study.

Developed further, Abena Dadze-Arthur identifies "really real" as "a set of symbols that

creates compelling and enduring feelings in people by setting out a general order of existence:

the way things are, on both the cosmic and material level."[333] The symbolic nature of spirituality

within a religious context defines what is "really real" for people. These concepts frame a factual

construct by the individual in a way that presents the feelings created by the lived spiritual

experience as distinctively real and quantifiable. Thereby, this researcher suggests that

spirituality develops as a meaning-making mechanism to give explanation to the lived

experiences of the participants of this study.[334] Moreover, spirituality is understood to appeal to

the emotional desire to believe in larger-than-life-possibilities serving as an expression of both

the participant's hope and despair. [335] Attention is now given to developing a thick description

derived from categorized themes inductively derived from participant statements relating to their

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[332] Dadze-Arthur, *An Analysis of Clifford Geertz's The Interpretation of Cultures,* 30.

[333] Ibid., 41.

[334] Barnett and Johnson, "Integrating Spirituality and Religion into Psychotherapy," 148. See also, Boyd-Franklin, "Incorporating Spirituality and Religion," 977; Mattis, "Religion and Spirituality in the Meaning-Making and Coping Experiences of African American Women," 309.

[335] Dadze-Arthur, *An Analysis of Clifford Geertz's The Interpretation of Cultures,* 42. Cf. Jang and Johnson, "Explaining Religious Effects on Distress Among African Americans," 242.

spirituality as contextualized within their lived experiences.[336] Themes were developed based upon the participant responses to establish substantiation of my phenomenological discernment. Several major themes emerged with sub-areas providing further detail as represented below in Table 1, Appendix A, and the Synthesized Participant Interview Responses section of this essay.

Table 1.1

Categorized Themes and Sub-Areas[337]

Theme	Sub-Area	Sub-Area	Sub-Area	Sub-Area
Spiritual Relationship	Meaning -making	Dependency	Experiential	Presence
Transformation	Scripture	Discipleship	Evangelism	Coping
Faith	Peace	Prayer	Healing	Meaning
Holy Spirit	Spiritual Maturity	Guidance	Liberation	
Story-telling	Meaning-making	Cultural	Revelation	

Thick Description of Participant Themes

Data reduction was used to identify and formulate emerging themes from each of the participants. Data reduction "selects, focuses, and narrows the gaze of" expressed narratives given by participants "to those items pertinent to the project's focus"[338] The focus of this project is to collect data from the participant's narrative to support this researcher's purpose of providing sufficient intradisciplinary integrative spiritual teaching to effect holistic coping strategies for Lake Providence's MWBSS members. As such, themes were reviewed several times for Participants One through Ten: Words, phrases, and sentences that melded themes for each

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[336] J. Amos Hatch, *Doing Qualitative Research in Education Settings* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2002), 161-162, ProQuest Ebook Central.

[337] Lewis, "Impact of African American Male Instructors," 75.

[338] Sensing, *Qualitative Research*, 183. Cf. Hatch, *Doing Qualitative Research in Education Settings*, 168.

participant were formulated and placed in Tables 2 through 10 according to description of theme,

relevant positioning of the theme, and inclusive content supporting the theme.[339]

Table 1.2: Archetypical Reduction for Participant 1

Theme	Reduced to	Final Themes
Spiritual Relationship	1	close relationship with God; He knows me
Transformation	2	point your mind towards God; MWBSS teachings has been a great help to me; can change my way of doing things for the better; Holy Spirit gives me alternatives for best behavior, molded me
Faith	3	go to the Rock when trouble comes; God has helped in the past, so I trust Him now; He is the same God always; supports my being cancer-free
Holy Spirit	4	depend on the Holy Spirit; Holy Spirit is in me; feel Him guiding and moving me; produces the fruit of the Spirit in me; cause me to repent and seek God; connection to Holy Spirit drives my worship
Storytelling	5	baptized because of stories from parents about Jesus; tell my children about Jesus

Participant 1 is a Black male, seventy-three years old, a deacon in the church body, and

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[339] Lewis, "Impact of African American Male Instructors," 76, 77-84. See also, Merriam and Tisdell, *Qualitative Research: A Guide to Design and Implementation*, 209-226.

teaches New Members Class for those recently joining the church. He regularly attends the

MWBSS. Participant 1 voiced phrases that were then categorized into identifiable themes:

spiritual relationship, transformation, faith, Holy Spirit, and storytelling.

Spiritual Relationship

Spirituality is related to the concepts formulating meaning-making and purpose for life.

As such, it can be viewed as belief that guides behavior placing unobservable or nonmaterial

forces as governing powers over one's life.[340] Hence, there exists a relational construct that

formulates as spiritual relationship with the governing powers. In the Christian worldview that

power is God/Jesus Christ who presents as relational (Gen 1:26: John 15:4-5). When Participant

1 uses statements such as "close relationship with God "and "He knows me" to express his

personal view of spirituality and its meaning as an interpersonal and transcendent experience it is

postured that he is speaking about a spiritual relationship.

Of note is the statement Participant 1 makes about "He knows me." The interpretation

here is there is a deep, intimate sense felt by Participant 1 of mutual connection to the

personhood of God. This analytical assertion of profound connection to divine personhood is

clarified in the Scriptures. For example, in John 10:14 (KJV) Jesus says, "I am the good

shepherd, and know my sheep, and am known of mine." In development of the interpersonal and

relational nature of the concept of spiritual relationship a contextual exegesis is done on the word

"know" as it appears in John 10:14. Translated in Greek the word "know" (*ginóskó*) means to

come to know, recognize, perceive; properly, to know, especially through *personal experience*

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[340] J. Luke Wood and Adriel A. Hilton, "Spirituality and Academic Success: Perceptions of African American Males in the Community College," *Religion & Education* 39, no. 1 (February 2012): 30, https://www-tandfonline-com.ezproxy.liberty.edu/doi/pdf/10.1080/15507394.2012.648576?needAccess=true.

(*first-hand acquaintance*); ("experientially know," cf. Luke 10:34).[341] For Participant 1 to proclaim that "[Jesus] knows me" supposes a claim of inherent attachment to Jesus that is, arguably, explained as a transcendent linking; a connection fostered by a sense of mutual divine acquaintance with Christ in Participant 1's lived experiences. Therefore, it can be assumed that Christ knows Participant 1 and Participant 1 knows Christ (John 10:14). The dynamic is personal experience informed by experiential knowledge creating spiritual relationship.

Transformation

Transformation within this thesis infers "spiritual transformation." Spiritual transformation is a phenomenon involving some type of change in self that can occur in various situations, all of which afford specific meaning for those who experience it.[342] It can be explained in consideration of the process of metamorphosis.[343] Paul refers to this process in Romans 12:2 (NRSV) when he says, "Do not be conformed to this world but be transformed [*metamorphoō*] by the renewing of your mind."[344] Paul is imploring the individual to change the mindset from worldly placements to thoughts directed toward a Christlike mindset. Participant 1 is in touch with this metamorphosis of transformative thought when he mentions that one should "point your mind towards God." In a spiritual sense, he is alluding to a process of human pursuit and understanding that can be comprehended only through divine revelation and brought about

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[341] "Strong's Concordance, 1097 (ginóskó)," Bible Hub, last modified 2021, https://biblehub.com/greek/1097.htm.

[342] W. P. Williamson, and Ralph W. Hood, "Spiritual Transformation: A Phenomenological Study Among Recovering Substance Abusers," *Pastoral Psychology* 62, no. 6 (December 2013): 890, http://ezproxy.liberty.edu/login?qurl=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.proquest.com%2Fscholarly-journals%2Fspiritual-transformation-phenomenological-study%2Fdocview%2F1446862612%2Fse-2%3Faccountid%3D12085.

[343] Ruth Haley Barton, *Sacred Rhythms: Arranging Our Lives for Spiritual Transformation* (Westmont, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2006), 11, ProQuest Ebook Central.

[344] Ibid.

by divine activity: "*That* kind of change is something only God can do."[345] Participant 1's assist in the pursuit is in developing spiritual practices that keep his mind and heart open and accessible to God (Col 3:2; Phil 2:5).

Also, Participant 1 credits the teaching in the MWBSS as being transformative for him as he states that "the MWBSS has been a great help to me." Moreover, he adds that the teaching dynamics show him he "can change my way of doing things for the better," and "gives me alternatives for best behavior" and has "molded me." Interpretation from these statements assumes an indication that his transformative process is aiding his sanctification journey (2 Peter 1:2-4). Participant 1 further warrants the MWBSS's use of intradisciplinary integration as he allows that this pedagogic approach causes him to "see combining these (psychology, theology, spirituality) together can be helpful to people. God said everything He made was good, so, there must be something good in what these things can do together for people." Collectively, Participant 1's transformative narrative causes this researcher to assert that the purpose of this action research project is being validated in his cognition and behaviors. (Thesis purpose: *The purpose of this DMin action research thesis is to provide sufficient intradisciplinary integrative spiritual teaching to effect holistic coping strategies for Lake Providence's MWBSS members*.)

Faith

Faith as viewed in a religio-cultural setting for Black Americans is best contextualized as a growth of conviction-based experiences with God. These are God-centered experiences wherein God helped the individual to believe He could be trusted to fulfill His promises even

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[345] Williamson, and Ralph W. Hood, "Spiritual Transformation," 12.

if the promises were delayed or did not manifest as hoped for (Hab 2:1-4; Job 13;15-18).[346]

This type of faith is a transforming faith originating internally such that one visualizes

themselves as a survivor and not a victim (Phil 4:13). As is the case with Participant 1, this is

particularly prevalent in situations of devasting illness and disease occurrences where Black

people express a developing and living faith of trusting and thanking God for His presence in

their situation (Prov 3:5-6; Isa 41:10). Participant 1 spoke to this faith construct as he discussed

his recovery from cancer.

For Participant 1, faith supports coping and hope.[347] When looking back over his past

bouts with cancer he used meaning-making quotes such as "God has helped in the past, so I trust

Him now," "He is the same God always," "[faith] supports my being cancer-free." This faith

assertion is consistent with the literature regarding religious and spiritual belief practices

informing Black Americans control systems and perspectives for healing.[348] It is asserted here

that Participant 1 has the feeling that God cares for him because He has sustained his life through

and recovery from cancer. His "trust" in God has helped him to experience the care of God (1

Peter 5:7-10). Thus, the essence of the lived experience of Participant 1 is that faith is not about

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[346] Linda Darrell, "Faith that God Cares: The Experience of Spirituality with African American Hemodialysis Patients," *Social Work and Christianity* 43, no. 2 (Summer, 2016): 193, http://ezproxy.liberty.edu/login?qurl=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.proquest.com%2Fscholarly-journals%2Ffaith-that-god-cares-experience-spirituality-with%2Fdocview%2F1812278614%2Fse-2%3Faccountid%3D12085.

[347] Ibid.

[348] Darrell, "Faith that God Cares," 193-194. See also, Cheryl L. Holt, et al., "Development and Validation of Measures of Religious Involvement and the Cancer Experience among African Americans," *Journal of Health Psychology* 14, no. 4 (May 2009): 525–527. https://doi.org/10.1177/1359105309103572. Holt et al. formulate in their qualitative study that "Research indicates that African Americans diagnosed with cancer tend to use religion in coping. . . Based on previous qualitative work, five instruments were developed to assess the role of religious involvement in cancer coping: *God as helper, God as healer, Faith in healing, Control over cancer and New perspective*. The instruments were administered to 100 African Americans with cancer" (525). See also, Heather Coats, et al., "African American Elders' Serious Illness Experiences: Narratives of 'God Did,' 'God Will,' and 'Life Is Better,'" *Qualitative Health Research* 27, no. 5 (April 2017): 639-644, https://doi.org/10.1177/1049732315620153.

what he knows but about who God is based on His activity in Participant 1's life. He is a God who cares, worthy of his belief and faith (Heb 11:1, 6); his "Rock when trouble comes" (Ps 46:1; 18:2). Participant 1's convicting faith in God is fostered by his past experiences with God.

Holy Spirit

The Holy Spirit has power in the lives of believers. This power is manifested in diverse ways. As is the case with Participant 1, the Holy Spirit elevates the move of God in his lived experiences such that Participant 1 can "feel [the Holy Spirit] guiding and moving me."[349] Hence, it is interpreted here that the Holy Spirit becomes a conduit for a higher level of understanding relating to the actions of God in his life. This increased degree of divine experience causes Participant 1 to also imply that his "connection to the Holy Spirit drives my worship" and praise. Herein, his exaltation of praise and worship forms within a process of connecting his consciousness to God's consciousness.[350]

It is posited the Holy Spirit stimulates the growth of spiritual mindfulness which has the beneficial outcome of growing one's faith in a gravitational push towards a closer relationship with God (Phil 2:5; Ps 27:4-8, 91:1; Jas 4:8). Relationship that is nurtured through an intimate indwelling of the Holy Spirit causing Participant 1 to declare, the "Holy Spirit is in me" (Rom 8:9; 1 Cor 3:16; John 14:17). Therefore, it is suggested that Participant 1 has a spiritual relationship that aids his understanding that the Holy Spirit lives inside those who believe in Jesus to produce God's character in that individual (Gal 2:20; 5:22-23).[351]

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[349] Rosalynn Moten-Travis, "African American Women Acknowledging and Honoring the Holy Spirit's Voice "Sisters-in-the-Spirit"," (PhD, diss., Union Institute and University, 2009), 104, ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global, http://ezproxy.liberty.edu/login?qurl=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.proquest.com%2Fdissertations-theses%2Fafrican-american-women-acknowledging-honoring%2Fdocview%2F305174992%2Fse-2%3Faccountid%3D12085.

[350] Moten-Travis, "African American Women Acknowledging and Honoring," 103.

[351] Ibid., 104.

The Holy Spirit builds God's character into the life of the believer. This is evidenced in Participant 1's allowance that the influence and power of the Holy Spirit has produced "the fruit of the Spirit" in him. The fruit of the Spirit is the epitome of God's character personified as "love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness. . .gentleness, self-control" (Gal 5:22-23, NKJV). Participant 1 realizes he cannot function in the fruit of the Spirit on his own accord; therefore, he must "depend on the Holy Spirit" for "guidance" to empower his ability to operate in love, spiritual maturity, and humility. The spiritual outgrowth spreads to his family, friends, and community in an integrated relatedness of self and the other. It is postured that exhibiting the fruit of the Spirit suggests that Participant 1is living and walking in the Spirit (Gal 5:25). Hence, the experience of a convicting relationship with the Holy Spirit grants Participant 1 the sense of being present in the moment to allow for discerning interactions that activates the necessary fruit of the Spirit according to situational need. With the guidance of the Holy Spirit, one can exhibit the fruit of the Spirit as God desires (Phil 2:13).

Storytelling

Storytelling integrates an awareness, sensitivity, understanding, and appreciation for the experiential realities of disparate groups.[352] It is an oral tradition in Black culture that serves as a socializing activity for the communication and reproduction of culture. Storytelling in the religious context offers lessons on how to live a Christlike existence, or in an educational sense, personal stories of educational success can endow Black students with the belief that they could achieve anything they fully committed to.[353] Participant 1 recounts how he was influenced spiritually through this dynamic of narrative communication.

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[352] Jan Carter-Black, "Teaching Cultural Competence," 31.

[353] Ibid., 34.

Participant 1 speaks to recalling how his childhood cultural environment of storytelling influenced his understanding of who God is by saying that at an early age he was "baptized because of stories from my parents and grandparents about Jesus." He goes on to intimate these included stories about Christ from other family members and from Sunday school teachers and the pastor in the church. Stories that strengthened his ability to survive and flourish in a society where his Blackness was devalued.[354] Moreover, Participant 1 agrees there is importance in oral tradition for contextualizing Black culture. In this regard, he alluded that "I tell my children about Jesus," and "about how I have experienced God in my life." Thus, it is interpreted that these assertions provide further substantiation that storytelling has personal and spiritual significance for cultural meaning-making in Black lived experiences.

Table 1.3: Archetypical Reduction for Participant 2

Theme	Reduced to	Final Themes
Spiritual Relationship	1	grow in grace; grow in spirit; helps prayer life; opens mind
Transformation	2	growth in spirit and maturity, renewing my mind; MWBSS helps others and helps me; teaching connects Scriptures to give me growth and deeper understanding; able to devote love for God and my neighbor (Mark 12:30-31)
Faith	3	encourage others to seek God; strengthens my testimony; gives me peace (Phil 4:7)
Holy Spirit	4	influences my behavior;

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[354] Jan Carter-Black, "Teaching Cultural Competence," 34.

		brings joy; my teacher, guide, power source, comforter; connects to my worship experience; connects me to Christ
Storytelling	5	stories by parents and grandparents helped me learn traditions; stories about Jesus made me want to be saved

Participant 2 is a Black male, seventy-four years old, a deacon in the church body, serves on the Grief Ministry, and teaches Adult Sunday School. Participant 2 offered idioms that were then categorized into identifiable themes: spiritual relationship, transformation, faith, Holy Spirit, and storytelling.

Spiritual Relationship

Spiritual relationships assume a vital position in how one operates within their spirituality. Spiritual relationships are comforting to the individual as they create connections and meaning-making to self or soul, to others, and to God. In Participant 2's narrative he casts himself as "very spiritual." This is interpreted to mean that he has a framework that encompasses meaning, intent, and goals in his life through interpersonal awareness of a transcendent dimension. It is posited that from this characterization of his spiritual comprehension that relationship is fostered and established creating interactions that connect to a divine power. For example, Participant 2 suggests that his spiritual relationship has allowed him to "grow in grace," and "grow in Spirit." Grace and spirit are two relational qualities appearing in traits connecting Jesus to humankind. Consider these Scriptures for support of this assertion: "But he gives more

grace. Therefore, it says, "God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble" (Jas 4:6, ESV); "If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit" (Galatians 5:25, NKJV).

Participant 2's growth in grace portends a move toward increased humility fueled by his spiritual relationship with Christ. In addition, spiritual growth forms for Participant 4 as an existential interpersonal aspect that intentions a desire to be more like God in character given that "God is spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth" (John 4:24). Also, his growth in the spirit "helps [his] prayer life." The confidence he has gained through relationship with God allows him to boldly come before the throne of grace to petition heaven (Hebrews 4:16).

Participant 2 speaks of how his spiritual relationship "helps open [my] mind to a new realm not thought of before." While this is a transformative aspect that Paul speaks to in Romans 12:2, "be transformed by the renewing of your mind," the connection here is that before transformation can occur, divine relationship must happen in the lived experience of the believer. Hence, the connection is made by this researcher that Participant 2's spiritual relationship lends to his spiritual discernment which allows his mind to open to new realm of understanding.[355] This enables him to discern God's wisdom (things) and to comprehend it when the Spirit reveals it.[356] Therefore, the mind of Participant 2 exemplifies a spiritual mind (1 Cor 2:16). He formulates in his spirituality the 'mind of Christ' which in turn functions as a framework for understanding life and knowing how to live according to God's wisdom.[357] Participant 2 has a

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[355] Dirk van der Merwe, "The Characterisation of the Spiritual Christian: In Conversation with God According to 1 Corinthians 2," *Hervormde Teologiese Studies* 74, no. 3 (October 2018): 7-9, http://ezproxy.liberty.edu/login?qurl=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.proquest.com%2Fscholarly-journals%2Fcharacterisation-spiritual-christian-conversation%2Fdocview%2F2134692065%2Fse-2.

[356] Ibid., 9.

[357] Ibid.

discerning spiritual relationship with God borne from hearing His divine, small voice; intently

listening is what lies at the heart of his relationship with God.[358]

Transformation

The telos or goal of spiritual transformation is living out Christian spirituality to become

more Christlike (Eph 5:1). The intentional focus of the individual is fostering Christian practices

and goals to develop a character that is more like Christ's character.[359] Of importance, spiritual

transformation has a relational resource located within the level of spirituality present within the

individual such that spiritual growth or change manifests through one's self-aware consciousness

of personal spirituality (Gal 2:20). Along this construct of transformation, Participant 42states

that he is moderately spiritual which is interpreted to indicate a strong propensity for a spiritual

consciousness that attaches a transcendent aspect that lends to transformative behavior.

Participant 2 bolsters this assertion by his mention that he feels his level of spirituality aids his

"process in growing and maturing daily" through a "renewing of [his] mind" (Rom 12:2). These

perspectives offered by Participant 2 identify the telos of Christian spirituality as increasing

one's resemblance of Christ in thought, word, and deed (Phil 2:5; 1 Pt 4:11; James 1:22).[360]

Moreover, Participant 2 feels that the teaching pedagogy of MWBSS utilizing

intradisciplinary integration has offered a personal and collective transformative experience. He

says the "MWBSS have helped [others], it helps me as well," through "teachings and

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[358] Dallas Willard, *Hearing God: Developing a Conversational Relationship with God* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2012), 155, ProQuest Ebook Central.

[359] Thomas V. Frederick, "Spiritual Transformation: Honoring Spiritual Traditions in Psychotherapy," *Spirituality in Clinical Practice* 1, no. 2 (June 2014): 1111, https://web-p-ebscohost com.ezproxy.liberty.edu/ehost/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?vid=0&sid=730fe8a1-c36d-4842-8543-6969c260f99c%40redis.

[360] Frederick, "Spiritual Transformation," 111.

connections to Scriptures…gives me growth, deeper understanding the way you [this researcher] use Scriptures to make points." The paradigm of the teaching within the intradisciplinary integrative approach used in MWBSS is designed to target the spiritual emotions in the believers who comprise the group. The spiritual emotions are the locus of transformation.[361]

Further explained, spiritual emotions are formed within the inner person of Participant 2 and reveals his deepest longings and motivations for personal transformation in creating Christlikeness.[362] For example, he offers that he can "devote love for God and my neighbor" as correlated to Jesus' directives found in Mark 12:30-31. This behavioral trait by Participant 2 aligns with the growth and maturity toward Christlikeness wherein transcendent relationship with God drives a facilitating love for God, self, and love for the other (1 John 4:7-11).[363] Operating in love is the quintessence of spiritually emotive transformation as displayed in one's behavior as assisted by the narratives of the gospel of Christ.

Faith

Within an intrapersonal construct, Participant 2's faith beliefs are working opinions about his trust in God and God's relationship with the believer through Jesus Christ and the Holy spirit; faith is acquired though his lived experiences, worship, and cultural exposure, and it can be altered likewise.[364] In context, faith in Black worship becomes an action emanating from one's consciousness that God hears our vows. The onus is then on the individual to accredit those vows with a nurturing head and heart that endures waiting without losing faith, believing one will

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[361] Frederick, "Spiritual Transformation," 114.

[362] Ibid.

[363] Mark L. Strauss, *Mark* (Commentary) (Grand Rapids, MI: HarperCollins Christian Publishing, 2017), 292-293, ProQuest Ebook Central.

[364] Anne E. Streaty Wimberly, *Nurturing Faith & Hope: Black Worship as a Model for Christian Education* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2010), xviii, 1, Amazon Books.

embrace that which is hoped for.[365] This concept is elucidated in the Scripture found in Hebrews

11:1, 6 (NKJV) – "Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not

seen. . . But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe

that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him."

For Participant 2, because he believes that God hears his vows, his faith and trust in God

"strengthens my testimony" such that he can witness to others with an enduring faith. He

qualifies this notion further by saying, "I don't mind testifying to what God has done for me

(Luke 8:39)." In context, he is avowing that his lived experiences are influenced by his faith.

Moreover, his is a faith that employs a file of God's past actions as a spiritual indicator of His

future activity. In other words, God is the same God "yesterday, and today, and forever "(Heb

13:8). Also, his faith "gives me peace" (Phil 4:7). He spoke about the ability of his faith to afford

him peace during the period of his wife's death wherein "there was so much peace in my spirit

that I was able to calm our children in their time of need." It is postured here that his faith, in this

instance of loss, forms as a nurturing faith that evokes new or renewed life meaning for him and

his children. Nurturing faith is a deeper knowing (*yāḏaʿtî*) of God in the heart wherein

Participant 2 can provide cathartic care for himself and others in a comforting way. Faith

stimulates belief that God is an able, faithful, and omnipresent agent in our lived experiences, no

matter the circumstances (Ps 139:7-12).

Holy Spirit

The Holy Spirit is a gift that gives one the ability to witness in word and deed, in belief

and practice as an expression of the indwelled spiritual influence of God's power in their lives

(Acts 2:38-39; 10:44-45). Within this paradigm, the Holy Spirit is actively transforming the

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[365] Wimberly, *Nurturing Faith & Hope,* xix.

totality of one's existence and lived experiences by empowering them to conform into the image

of Jesus Christ.[366] The narrative of Participant 2 reflects the before stated dynamics of the Holy

Spirit in his lived experiences. For example, he says that "(the Holy Spirit is) my teacher, guide,

power source, comforter" (John 14:16-17, 26; Acts 1:8); "connects to my worship experience,"

and "connects me to Christ." This researcher construes his offerings to indicate pneumatic

fellowship with the Holy Spirit. Argument goes to the creation of pneumatological union that

connects with the divine life of God.[367] This relationship cultivates, energizes, and undergirds his

meaning-making perspectives of the activity of Christ in his life and manifests as a

Christological intimacy within his sanctification process of becoming, of maturing into

Christlikeness (Eph 5:1; 1:13).

Elucidated further, sanctification has a tie in with the transforming effect the Holy Spirit

has in the life of the believer.[368] This activity holds true for Participant 2 as he offers that the

Holy Spirit "influences my behavior." Interpretation here is rendered to mean his spiritual

growth and actions as impacted by the Holy Spirit affects his sanctification process. Participant 2

verifies his becoming and maturing in Christlikeness when he says that the Holy Spirit provides

an "understanding about who the Holy Spirit is and how [the Spirit] works in my life to lead me,

empower me, and transform me. . .has changed my approach to life."[369] He expresses exactly

what the Holy Spirit is given to do in the life of the believer which is to afford power, insight,

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[366] Benjamin Dwayne Cowan, "The Spirit Unchained: Towards the Construction of a Pneumatology Rooted in the Pentecostal-Black Theology and Life of William Seymour" (PhD. diss., The Claremont Graduate University, Claremont, CA, 2017), 15, ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global, http://ezproxy.liberty.edu/login?qurl=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.proquest.com%2Fdissertations-theses%2Fspirit-unchained-towards-construction%2Fdocview%2F1954047657%2Fse-2%3Faccountid%3D12085.

[367] Ibid., 17.

[368] Cowan, "The Spirit Unchained," 140.

[369] Jeff Leake, *Power for Life: Why Every Believer Needs to Be Baptized in the Holy Spirit* (Springfield, MO: Gospel Publishing House, 2017), 120, ProQuest Ebook Central.

and illumination as written in the following Bible texts: Acts 1:8a (ESV) – "But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you." Isaiah 11:2 (ESV) – "And the Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him, the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord." The notion is offered that the Holy Spirit facilitates a Christlike holiness that aids the believer in fulfilling their calling (Lev 11:44; Eph 4:1-6; 2 Pet 1:10).[370]

Storytelling

Storytelling can be postured as the catalyst in Black religious culture for nurturing faith and hope in God's relational activity through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit.[371] In this sense, Anne E. Streat Wimberly posits that storytelling is what she labels as "imaginative reflection."[372] Imaginative reflection is an individual's ability to think about the nature and meanings of God's story considering their own story.[373] Storytelling in this construct arouses remembrance of personal and collective events wherein there is a recollection of God's participation facilitated by imaginative reflection that calls into view faith and hope in God's ableness (Ps 31; Eph 3:20).; it is the human story. Participant 2's narrative has semblances of this paradigm of imaginative reflection.

Storytelling occupied a significant role in the spiritual experiences of Participant 2 as elucidated in statements like "stories by parents and grandparents helped me learn traditions," and "stories about Jesus made me want to be saved." What Participant 2 is alluding to here is evocative storytelling wherein the recalled events are bringing strong images, memories, or

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[370] Cowan, "The Spirit Unchained," 140.

[371] Wimberly, *Nurturing Faith & Hope*, 47.

[372] Ibid.

[373] Ibid.

feelings to mind.[374] He is enjoined in a self-reflection wherein he aligns his understanding and

imagery of God as a guide to his thinking, subsequent views, and responsive behaviors. Now, he

considers the presence and activity of God's Spirit in the influence of his life's story and its

transformative events (Ps 40, 139).[375]

Within cultural contextualization, Participant 2's imaginative reflections have added

depth. His testimony of how storytelling influenced his Christan worldview culturally aligns with

the fact that American Black religious experience has foundational traits located in forms of oral

traditions that emanated from African Traditional Religion (ATR); these traditions assimilated

into the Christian praxis of Black Americans.[376] Storytelling in a spiritual context informs the

Black religious experience at an interpersonal level in terms of crafting meaning-making and

identity.[377] Reflecting upon storytelling with sensitivity to its cultural contextualization adds

depth to understanding the Black American religious and spiritual encounter and practice.

Table 1.4: Archetypical Reduction for Participant 3

Theme	Reduced to	Final Themes
Spiritual Relationship	1	God is Spirit; relationship with the Lord; I know Him; He knows me; protection
Transformation	2	MWBSS gives deeper insight

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[374] Wimberly, *Nurturing Faith & Hope*, 52.

[375] Ibid.

[376] Susan VanZanten, "Introduction: African Narrative and The Christian Tradition: Storytelling and Identity," *Christianity & Literature* 61, no. 3 (Spring 2012): 369-370, https://muse-jhu-edu.ezproxy.liberty.edu/article/739197. VanZanten attests to the dominant influence of narrative in African culture saying that . . . "African orature contained a strong tradition of narrative. The representation of events with a beginning, a middle, and an end-narrative-is one of the most basic elements of human expression, and oral storytelling played a central role in African culture from earliest human life to the present day" (370). Cf. Julius H. Bailey, ed., "West African Traditional Religions," in *Down in the Valley: An Introduction to African American Religious History*,1–24 (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2016), 5-6, https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctt17mcs0d.4.

[377] VanZanten, "Introduction: African Narrative and The Christian Tradition," 375.

		on the Scriptures; MWBSS helped transform my mind; daily process; transformed heart to love; operate in the fruit of the spirit
Faith	3	walk by faith not by sight; freely express beliefs to others; centers repentance; gets me back on track
Holy Spirit	4	dependence; guiding and moving me; aids my witness; gives discernment; connects with religious beliefs form my worship experience; drives my behavior to be like Christ
Storytelling	5	learned who God is; share stories of spiritual experiences daily; my stories bless others; influenced others to accept Christ

Participant 3 is a Black female, eighty-three years old, a member of LPMBC for over thirty years, faithfully attends church, and is active in Sunday School and Bible Study. Participant 3 was the most dynamic and "seasoned saint" of the studied group. Participant 3 offered vernacular that was then categorized into identifiable themes: spiritual relationship, transformation, faith, Holy Spirit, and storytelling.

Spiritual Relationship

Spiritual experiences have been described and understood within a relational attachment paradigm. Attachment behavior is identified as "any form of behavior that results in a person attaining or maintaining proximity to some other clearly identified individual who is conceived

as better able to cope with the world; for a person to know that an attachment figure is available and responsive gives him a strong and pervasive feeling of security, and so encourages him to value and continue the relationship."[378] Attachment to God is a spiritual concept wherein there is an implicit relational knowing.[379] Participant 3 models this attachment dynamic in her appraisals that "I have a relationship with the Lord. . .even though I can't touch Him I can feel Him," "I know Him; He knows me," and He is my "protection." These observations by Participant 3 are aligned with the definition of relational attachment in a pervasive, responsive, valued, and secure interpersonal sense.

This expressed relational knowledge becomes structured into an internalized working model within Participant 3's cognitive and spiritual realm, acquired only through her interpersonal experiences. She models her spiritual relationship with God through an internal sense of viewing God as being in proximity, a haven of safety and security, and perceiving God as being wiser and stronger thus making Him able to assist her in coping with the world.[380] Hence, spiritual relationships are a type of implicit relational knowing which cultivates and sustains emotional appraisals of meaning and values. The context of spiritual relationships as presented hereon is posited to coincide with Jesus' message located in John 15:4-5 (ESV) as Jesus says, "Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me. I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit." Abiding relationship is

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[378] Cynthia Neal Kimball, et al., "Attachment to God: A Qualitative Exploration of Emerging Adults' Spiritual Relationship with God," *Journal of Psychology & Theology* 41, no. 3 (Fall 2013): 176, https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=lsdar&AN=ATLA0001964629&site=ehost-live&scope=site.

[379] Ibid., 177.

[380] Ibid., 180.

spiritual relationship for Participant 3. A relationship created as attachment to God in a reciprocal and confirming expression of relational knowing (cf. John 10:14).

Transformation

The process of spiritual transformation forms Christlike behaviors to glorify God, to afford an abundant life, and for the greater good of the community (Gal 4:19; Rom 8:29, 12:3-13). It is a movement toward Christlikeness and union with God as aided by the Holy Spirit (2 Cor 3:18); it is a journey where one desires to "put on the Lord Jesus Christ" (Rom 13:14).[381] Participant 3's statements reveal a behavior that exemplifies Christlike traits as she says she has a "transformed heart to love" (Rom 12:2; John 13:34). She is describing an affective transformation that places growth in love as a vital component of spiritual transformation (1 John 4:7, 1). Affective transformation presents as change that has occurred in the cognitive and the behavioral aspects of her spiritual development thus allowing her to operate in a Christian worldview and praxis. One of the markers of affective transformation, in a spiritual sense, is the biblical marker of the prominence of demonstrating the fruit of the Spirit (Gal 5:22-23) in one's lifestyle. This type of lifestyle fosters connection, regard, and peaceful understanding with others and is concerned with beneficial interactions with the community. Participant 3's offering that she has grown to more intentionally "operate in the fruit of the Spirit" lends to the interpretation that her worldview and life practices are indeed illustrative of affective transformation. [*Note*: See Participant 1's offering about "fruit of the Spirit" under the heading "Holy Spirit" for comparison].

Spiritual transformation requires support of the individual's journey by others. In

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[381] David G. Benner, "Nurturing Spiritual Growth," *Journal of Psychology and Theology* 30, no. 4 (Winter, 2002): 358, http://ezproxy.liberty.edu/login?qurl=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.proquest.com%2Fscholarly-journals%2Fnurturing-spiritual-growth%2Fdocview%2F223673349%2Fse-2%3Faccountid%3D12085.

this regard, an educative approach utilizing teaching has a significant role in the practice of spiritual direction.[382] Teaching enhances the individual's relationship with God by exposure to proclaimed emphasis on understanding of the Scriptures in the formation of godly attitudes and behavior directed toward conforming to God's expectations. [383] It is argued that it is this mentioned construct that causes Participant 3 to make the statements that "MWBSS is beneficial for me. . . [gives me] better understanding. . .gives deeper insight on the Scriptures," and "MWBSS helped transform my mind." These decrees by Participant 3 directly aligns with the aims of the pedagogical approach of intradisciplinary integration within the MWBSS paradigm.

In addition, these assertions by Participant 3 supports the purpose of the facilitator's desire for the membership which is to theologically educate the person to recognize what spiritual maturity is and to begin and develop the regimented process of spiritual growth. Now, Paul's text in Rom 10:14 (NRSV) is offered to heighten relevance: "But how are they to call on one in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in one of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone to proclaim him?" Spiritual transformation, affective transformation emanates, in significant measure, from centralized teaching of God's truth. Pedagogic engagement designed to inspire and equip the individual to live out a spiritual life of Christlikeness that expresses love, passion, and concern.

Faith

Faith is often expressed in Black culture relative to struggle within life experiences.[384] Faith has a deep religious connotation guiding practices and beliefs for Black Americans. In the

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[382] Benner, "Nurturing Spiritual Growth," 356.

[383] Ibid., 357.

[384] Buffel, "Black Theology Versus Black Spirituality and Black Faith," 5.

context of Black culture, Black theological reflections of faith are expressed in belief in God and Jesus Christ to guide them in a spiritually liberating manner. This faith practice transforms those who encounter the Lord into agents of transformation who take agency for outcomes based on beliefs that God speaks into and becomes active within their situations when called upon (Ps 40:1).[385] For example, when Participant 3 says that she "walk[s] by faith and not by sight" it is interpreted that she is taking agency for a positive outcome based on her belief that God is present in her situation (Hab 2:4; cf. Heb 11:1). Her faith leads her to reflect upon her circumstances trusting that God will guide her by His sight even when she cannot see the outcome. Thus, faith becomes a commitment to belief in God's involvement in humankind's history; His continuing to speak into the life situation of His believers in a caring and loving manner (1 Pet 5:7-10; Deut 7:7-11).

Also, faith acts as a change agent when behaviors get off track. Participant 3 shares that when she strays away her faith reminds her that that Jesus' guiding hand is available and "gets me back on track." Moreover, she exhibits transformative faith in her ability to "freely express [her] beliefs to others" because she is faithful to her call to proclaim, "the message of reconciliation" (2 Cor 5:17-21, ESV). In addition, her faith "centers [her] repentance" by a renewing of her mind away from fleshly behaviors "when "I was doing wrong" to deeds exemplary of her walking in the Spirit in a desire to please God (Gal 5:16-26; Rom 12:2; 1 Cor 10:31; cf. Heb 11:6). Faith for Participant 6 manifests itself as trusting in, walking in, and speaking God's Word.

Holy Spirit

Literature supports that inside Black worship experiences the Holy Spirit precipitates

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[385] Buffel, "Black Theology Versus Black Spirituality and Black Faith," 6.

a communion with the Divine.[386] The result of connecting spirit with Spirit echoes an

experiential resonance derived from the spoken Word that provides messages for application to

the hearer's life and speaks to their own souls.[387] The significance the Holy Spirit plays is

apparent in Participant 3's congruent offerings of her behavioral dependence upon the Holy

Spirit for "guiding and moving me"; it "aids my witness, gives discernment, connects with

religious beliefs from my worship experience," and "drives my behavior to be like Christ." In a

pneumatic sense, Participant 3 is revealing her story as spiritual encounter. She is speaking to an

experience that manifest actions that tacitly testify to the lived centrality of the Holy Spirit in her

life experiences.[388] Articulating their faith in the language of experience is something Black

American saints have historically done.[389] The transcendent nature of the narratives offers proof

of the believer's spiritual transformation and witness to intimate shared experience with God as

aided by the Holy Spirit.

The experiential sense of the Holy Spirit gives meaning-making and grounds reality for

the sanctified believer. Expressing the experience rationalizes the hallowed conversation

generated from the believer's soul. In the case of Participant 3, the experience is revealed in her

saying that she is "feeling the fire, being filled with the [Holy] Spirit" (Jer 20:9).[390] Similar

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[386] Glenn Hinson, *Fire in My Bones*: *Transcendence and the Holy Spirit in African American Gospel* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2000), 16, JSTOR, https://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt3fhmcg.6.

[387] Ibid.

[388] Hinson, *Fire in My Bones,* 16.

[389] Ibid., 15.

[390] Hinson, *Fire in My Bones*, 16.Cf. Jeremiah 20:8-9 (NKJV) – "For when I spoke, I cried out; I shouted, "Violence and plunder!" Because the word of the Lord was made to me A reproach and a derision daily. Then I said, "I will not make mention of Him, Nor speak anymore in His name." But His word was in my heart like a burning fire Shut up in my bones; I was weary of holding it back, And I could not." As was Jeremiah's fervent experience with the Spirit of the Lord via God's Word, so is it with Black worshippers whose transcendent encounter forms their spiritual experience with the Holy Spirit during praise and worship of the Almighty, in or out of church. See

allowances such as "getting happy," "feeling the holy touch," or "anointing" gives metaphorical testimony to the experiential realm of the Holy Spirit in communicative reference stated by the believer. Hence, the believer's lived experience becomes a breathing image attesting to the power of the Spirit of the Lord. This spiritual process unfolds as the believer submits to the ministrations of the Holy Spirit—as expressed in tongues, in tears, in shouting, in dancing, in prayer, in praise (Psalm 150)— to effect communion with the Divine.[391]

Storytelling

Storytelling in Black culture is a theoretical and pedological tool that situates within varying constructs that unearth the past, present, and future[392]. Stories arising from Black cultural experiences illustrate the intimate relationship between religion, spirituality, language, literacy, Blackness, education, Black liberation, the Christian faith, and political struggle.[393] Narratives about religion and spirituality provide snapshots of Black lived experiences that formulate Christian praxis and shape identity from the intersection of Blackness, religion, Christianity, and spirituality.[394] Participant 3 supports this contextualization of storytelling in Black culture through comments like she "learned who God is through storytelling," she "share(s) stories of spiritual experiences daily," and "my stories bless others, influenced others to accept Christ."

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also, Timothy Nelson, *Every Time I Feel the Spirit: Religious Experience and Ritual in an African American Church* (New York, NY: New York University Press, 2004), 90, ProQuest Ebook Central.

[391] Hinson, *Fire in My Bones*, 24.

[392] Lamar L. Johnson, "I Had to Die to Live Again: A Racial Storytelling of a Black Male English Educator's Spiritual Literacies and Practices," in *Legacies of Christian Languaging and Literacies in American Education*: *Perspectives on English Language Arts Curriculum, Teaching, and Learning*, ed. Mary M. Juzwik et al. (New York, New York: Routledge, 2019), 210, https://doi-org.ezproxy.liberty.edu/10.4324/9780429027604.

[393] Ibid.

[394] Ibid.

Elucidated further, Participant 3's experiences and subsequent use of storytelling in a religious/spiritual context speaks to the meaning-making of lived experiences as an indwelled understanding that is shared through narrative. Its significance contextualizes as a cognitive exercise for grasping spiritual agency and utilized for building awareness.[395] In other words, not only was she empowered by the stories she heard of who God is but is also empowered to share with her children and others a similar experience; she is a "living text."[396] Her testimony concerning life experiences through the hearing and exegeting of spiritual messages concerning God's power of abiding presence demonstrates the intensity of stories, both individual and collective (Deut 6:6-7, 11:18-19). *Tell the story, just tell it because we are all witnesses.*[397]

Table 1.5: Archetypical Reduction for Participant 4

Theme	Reduced to	Final Themes
Spiritual Relationship	1	interconnected relationship with Christ; best buddy; best friend; I know Him; He knows me
Transformation	2	belief enters mind; God's spirit comes allowing transformation; MWBSS teaching is helpful and plain to apply to my life; God turned my life around; God felt I was worth saving
Faith	3	causes belief in God's Spirit; share with others; living out Matthew 28; not ashamed of the gospel

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[395] Karen D. Crozier, *Fannie Lou Hamer's Revolutionary Practical Theology* (Leiden, The Netherlands: Brill, 2020), 149, https://doi-org.ezproxy.liberty.edu/10.1163/9789004438071. Cf. Collier, "Why Telling Our Own Story Is So Powerful for Black Americans."

[396] Jacqueline J. Lewis, *Power of Stories*: *A Guide for Leading Multiracial and Multicultural Congregations* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2008), 5-6, Amazon Books.

[397] Collier, "Why Telling Our Own Story Is So Powerful for Black Americans."

Holy Spirit	4	allows transformation; feel it in my worship experience
Storytelling	5	stories influenced how I see Christ; passed down from parents and grandparents; Proverbs 22:6; tell my children about Christ and what He has done for me; like planting a seed

Participant 4 is a Black male, sixty-three years old, a member of LPMBC for twenty-one years, faithfully attends church, and is active in Sunday School and Bible Study. Participant 4 is unique in that he has the qualifications to be a deacon or church leader but keeps a low profile and is satisfied just to serve in the Greeter's Ministry as a parking valet; he is quite knowledgeable in the Word and has a strong spiritual nature. Participant 4's narrative addressed content that correlated with themes attached to spiritual relationship, transformation, faith, Holy Spirit, and storytelling.

Spiritual Relationship

Spiritual relationship forms as close communication with God in the dynamic of an intimately personal partnership. It is a relational alliance wherein the Spirit of God speaks to the heart and soul of the individual in response to one's assured petitions based on spiritual insight as to who God is. Spiritual relationships are, as is the case with Participant 4, interactive whereas the individual is not a spectator but a participant; as such, the intent is to interact with God in a relationship of listening and speaking.[398] This relationship is visible in 2 Chronicles 7:14 (NKJV, emphasis my own) – "if My people who are called by My name will humble themselves, and

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[398] Willard, *Hearing God*, 26.

pray and *seek My face*, and turn from their wicked ways, then *I will hear* from heaven, and will

forgive their sin and heal their land." In addition, interactive spiritual relationship becomes a

spiritual connection as part of friendship with God (John 15:15).[399] It is theorized that this

relationship is descriptive of Participant 4's abiding connection to Christ.

Participant 4 senses an interactive and friendly spiritual relationship with Christ as

interpreted from his storyline. When he says, "Spirituality is my interconnected relationship with

Christ. [Christ is] my best buddy, my best friend," "I know who God is. . .He knows me," and

"God's love . . .moves a deep feeling in my spiritual nature" it becomes apparent that Participant

4 has an interpersonal attachment with Christ that he views as reciprocal and collaborative in

composition. An "interconnection" that in a transcendent manner reflects Paul's empowering

avowal in Galatians 2:20, ". . . it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me. . ."

Hence, it is posited Participant 4 senses a *pneumatic* ("spiritual") lived experience wherein he

reveres Christ within a relational attachment with the "spirit" of Christ. Notice the interaction:

"God is spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth" (John 2:24). This

experiential allowance fits within the structure of the IPA approach this researcher is using to

give deeper understanding to the interpreted data from the studied participants weighted upon

experiential narratives. Moreover, the experiential piece illuminates Participant 4's inferred

expressions of a desire for pursuing and engaging in, what this author labels as, a *pneumatic*

relationship with Christ.[400] The concept of *pneumatic relationship* will be further examined later

in the discussion of the thematic content addressing the Holy Spirit.

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[399] Willard, *Hearing God*, 26.

[400] Pneumatic relationship is based on the idea centered inside of *pneumatic Christianity*. The concept identifies as this: "pneumatic Christianity. . . see[s] the world in non-dualistic terms: the 'supernatural' realm of the spirits is not other-worldly; it does not stand separate from or above the natural world. Rather, spirit and flesh are constitutively intertwined, as are transcendence and immanence. For these non-dualistic vernacular Christianities,

Transformation

Transformation offers a significant indicator of the spirituality attached to Participant 4's lived experiences. Statements such as "I know who God is and what He has done to change my life. I thank Him every day for turning my life around from where I was because only He could have done that. He stepped in and made a way for me for a better life. I was worth saving;" "the spirit of God [came to me] allowing transformation in my life" are collectively interpreted as demonstrating an immanent feeling of providential activity formed by Participant 4's relational spirituality. The relationality is a "relational unity, a oneness of mind, desire, and will" in seeking an "unbroken fellowship with God" in response to a God who also desires relationship with His creation (James 4:8).[401] This relational dynamic is a crucial part of this researcher's pedagogy within the MWBSS.

Explained further, teaching centers biblical and spiritual concepts that highlight God's capacity to transform the conduct of the believer through the power of the Holy Spirit which is imparted in each believer's heart (Acts 1:8, 2:1-4, 38). Confirmation of the efficacy of this approach is seen in Participant 4 as he mentions that the MWBSS's "detailed teaching makes it clear and plain to apply to my life. . . I have a different mindset process, a different heart process because of my understanding of God's Word."[402] The "detailed teaching" mentioned is this facilitator operating as "spiritual director" in spiritual friendship and guidance to help his

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individual salvation operates through a personal relation with God and manifested in this-worldly health and wealth. Conversion entails a new highly malleable 'spirit-matter' nexus, a holistic re-articulation of the self and its surroundings. This new pneumatic materialism is able to bridge in multiple contexts the tension between the seen and the unseen. . ." Pneumatic Christianity as explained by Manuel A. Vásquez, "The Global Portability of Pneumatic Christianity: Comparing African and Latin American Pentecostalisms," *African Studies (Johannesburg)* 68, no. 2 (July 2009): 276, https://doi-org.ezproxy.liberty.edu/10.1080/00020180903109664.

[401] G.R. Lewis, "God, Attributes of," in *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, ed. Walter A. Elwell (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2001), 499. See also, Wilt et al., "Partnering with God," 278-280.

[402] Benner, "Nurturing Spiritual Growth," 356-357.

understanding of what spirituality is and to begin the disciplined process of spiritual growth in forming a deepening relationship with God. [403]

Finally, given the fact that Participant 4 was delivered from substance abuse and alcoholism through his relational partnering with Christ, one must take close notice of and thusly grant value to the salvific inflection of his narrative.[404] Herein, it is argued that spiritual transformation for Participant 4 manifests as a religious conversion experience wherein such changes are attached to an overt spiritual context; an encounter that led to transcendence and redirection in life (Rom 12:2).[405] There is a meaning-making system formed that Participant 4 "holds as a basis for self-definition, the interpretation of life, and overarching purposes and ultimate concerns.''[406] The idea is captured that Participant 4 and God are in a collaborative relationship with each playing active roles that leads Participant 4 to better physical, mental, and spiritual health.[407]

Faith

Faith provides hope and moral strength in the face of hardship.[408] In particular, older Black Americans may experience and attribute a unique meaning to religious faith which gives

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[403] Benner, "Nurturing Spiritual Growth," 356-357.

[404] Wilt et al., "Partnering with God," 278. Wilt et al. state, ". . . when people who believe in a relational God experience R-S [religious-spiritual] struggles, they may benefit from fostering a sense of partnership with God— one in which they strive to engage with God, work together with God as collaborators, and consider ways in which God may be actively intervening to help solve the problem" (278).

[405] W. Paul Williamson and Ralph W. Hood, "The Lazarus Project: A Longitudinal Study of Spiritual Transformation Among Substance Abusers," *Mental Health, Religion & Culture* 15, no. 6 (July 2012): 612-615, 631-632, https://www-tandfonline-com.ezproxy.liberty.edu/doi/full/10.1080/13674676.2011.608527. Cf. Mattis, "Religion and Spirituality in the Meaning-Making and Coping Experiences of African American Women," 309-310.

[406] Williamson and Ralph W. Hood, "The Lazarus Project," 612.

[407] Wilt et al., "Partnering with God," 279.

[408] Marsha N. Wittink, et al., "Losing Faith and Using Faith: Older African Americans Discuss Spirituality, Religious Activities, and Depression, *Journal of General Internal Medicine* 24, no.3 (March 2009): 404, https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2642557/pdf/11606_2008_Article_897.pdf.

them the strength to confront problems that may have an adverse effect on their quality of life.[409]

Hence, this unique religious and spiritual exercise of faith among older Black Americans may

promote general life satisfaction. Moreover, faith beliefs as centered in religious and spiritual

viewpoints of Black Americans may have an impact on their behaviors relative to

conceptualizing and explaining lived experiences. Participant 4's faith journey is consistent with

the faith aspects previously mentioned.

Participant 4 locates his faith beliefs in a transcendent understanding of and connection

with God. His behavior in addressing the occurrence in his life find him "walking by faith and

not by sight" (2 Cor 5:7). This perspective is further solidified in his narrative as he indicates that

"the Spirit of God is a fact that should be believed though faith." Interpretation here posits that it

is apparent that the Spirit of God, though unseen to the visible eye, is the basis for his belief in

God through his faith stance (John 1:18; 1 John 4;12; Heb 11:3, 6; cf. 2 Cor 5:7). His

conceptualization of his faith reflects in his lived experiences wherein he "shares my faith with

others" (Mark 16:15-16). His faith moves him to "live out Matthew 28, the Great Commission"

because he is "not ashamed of the gospel" (Rom 1:16; 2 Tim 1:8).

Participant 4's expressive faith-driven behavior portends a communal desire to utilize his

faith in a manner that proclaims Christ's message of salvation to the world (Luke 24:47). Herein,

it is interpreted that Participant 4's faith facilitates him operating in "the ministry of

reconciliation" as an "ambassador for Christ" (2 Cor 5:18, 20). Participant 4's active faith

constructs ethereal meaning-making to his life as formed in his willingness to hope in those

things which he cannot see yet believing they will become evident in time. This behavior

personifies a believing faith, internalized and shared, that pleases God (Heb 11:6).

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[409] Wittink, et al., "Losing Faith and Using Faith," 402.

Holy Spirit

The thematic element around the Holy Spirit ties back into Participant 4's musings around the transformation piece. He states that the Holy Spirit "allows transformation" in his life. The "spirit of God" motivates behaviors that are attached to a change in his mindset. As interpreted from this mention, Participant 4 is linking to the apostle Paul's exhortation for the cognitive spiritual awareness located in Philippians 2:5 where he says, "Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus." The essence of the Holy Spirit relative to transformation alliance uncovers the spiritual discipline of humility as a driver for Participant 4's life changing experiences.

The Holy Spirit affects worship. Participant 4 echoes that he can also "feel the [Holy Spirit] in my worship experience." Here discussion takes place in a theological address of *pneumatic relationship* as first proffered in the earlier development of the spiritual relationship theme for Participant 4. There is a presupposition on this interpreter's part there exists a receptive spiritual soul that gives close attentiveness to the Spirit as motivated by an aspiring intentional mindset directed towards God's active being.[410] There is a centrality of the assumed interrelationship of pneumatology and Christology, Spirit and Word argued to be present within the "worship experience" of Participant 4.[411]

Explicated further, the dynamic offered for understanding is that the Spirit is not simply a communicating third person in the Trinity who flows from a mediating second person.[412] Rather,

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[410] Paul D. Murray, "Afterword: Receiving of Christ in the Spirit: The Pneumatic-Christic Depths of Receptive Ecumenism," in *Receptive Ecumenism: Listening, Learning and Loving in the Way of Christ,* eds. Vicky Balabanski and Geraldine Hawkes (Hindmarsh, SA: ATF Press, 2018), xvii, Google Books.

[411] Ibid., 165.

[412] Ibid.

the spirit in this context should be understood as the personal acting of God; God's life in action that presents as loving energy.[413] This is the initiating-transforming agency of God searching out the inexhaustible hidden depths of His personhood and displaying His discoveries as a fresh expression in the Word/Son (cf. 2 Cor 2:10).[414] As such, the pneumatic and Christic are constantly intertwined and co-existent whereas the Spirit is arguably realized as "the initiating-transforming acting and disclosing of God, the Word is the expressed form of His acting and disclosing, the performed act shown forth, the spoken Word expressed." [415] The Spirit brings the Word to voice and action, the Word gives form and expression to the Spirit's movement.[416] Participant 4's "feeling the [Holy Spirit] in my worship experience" is explained within the explained construct of pneumatology and Christology, Spirit and Word, while also further elucidating and corroborating his *pneumatic relationship* with Christ as relational lived experience (John 14:17; Acts 1:8, 2:2-4).[417]

Storytelling

Storytelling is a critical component of Participant 4's spiritual journey and religious experience. It holds sway over his initial understanding of God and attaches to his gained knowledge as passed on by his parents and grandparents.[418] For example, statements like "stories

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[413] Murray, "Afterword: Receiving of Christ in the Spirit" 165.

[414] Ibid.

[415] Ibid.

[416] Ibid.

[417] Moten-Travis, "African American Women Acknowledging and Honoring," 104.

[418] Chanee D. Fabius, "Toward an Integration of Narrative Identity, Generativity, and Storytelling in African American Elders," *Journal of Black Studies* 47, no. 5 (July 2016): 427, http://www.jstor.org/stable/43926966. The importance of intergenerational shared narrative by elders in Black culture is elucidated by Fabius in the following excerpt: "The narrative identity of older African Americans is

influenced how I see Christ," and "passed down from parents and grandparents" support this interpretation. In addition, he alludes to Proverbs 22:6 which says, "Train up a child in the way he should go, even when he grows older, he will not abandon it" forms his religious and spiritual interactions with his children and grandchildren. This offering is supported by his expressions of "I tell my children about Christ and what He has done for me," and storytelling is" like planting a seed." Hence, it is interpreted that storytelling presents as an intergenerational communicative and connective communal model in Black American life.[419]

Storytelling for Participant 4 fits into the faith paradigm of the oral traditions of Black Americans within his relating to his children "about how we got to where we are and how God has gotten us over." For example, storytelling resides inside Black American spiritual contextualization wherein stories center the lived experience of faith, "faith that God will guide and protect."[420] Storytelling thus becomes an attestation of the power of God in the Black American tradition of perseverance; the gospel song "We've Come this Far by Faith" centers this notion with its lines, in part, "*We've come this far by faith, Leaning on the Lord. . .But I can truly Say that God has made a way. . .*"[421] Storytelling connects divinely with Black American's religious and spiritual formation; therefore, it poses as significant in demonstrating cultural

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constructed of strong familial ties, informal "village-like" relationships, and faith. . . [Writers] investigated the perceived benefits and functions of reminiscence in a sample of community-dwelling African American elders. Reminiscence techniques allow individuals to draw from life histories and participate in reflective processes such as storytelling to improve wellness in later life. One theme that emerged in the small focus groups was fellowship, family, and faith. Focus group participants reflected on their relationships with family, other loved ones, and God. In [one] study exploring the life stories of older African Americans, research participants described ways they were able to cope with discrimination. One theme that emerged was family caring for family. Individuals spoke of memories of family sticking together through adversity. The elders spoke of how families cared for one another by working, playing, and praying together" (427).

[419] Fabius, "Toward an Integration of Narrative Identity," 423.

[420] Juan Williams and Quinton Dixie, Ph.D., *This Far by Faith*: *Stories from the African American Religious Experience* (New York, NY: HarperCollins Publishers, 2003), 9, Google Books.

[421] Ibid.

competence regarding Black American lived experiences. Narrative in Black American culture

has significant intergenerational constructs that lend heavily to meaning-making of lived

experiences.

Table 1.6: Archetypical Reduction for Participant 5

Theme	Reduced to	Final Themes
Spiritual Relationship	1	connection to Him and His Holy Spirit; Scripture and morning devotional aid spiritual nature; Scripture is key; give meaning to my life
Transformation	2	connecting with intradisciplinary teaching in the MWBSS; behavior toward being Christlike; growth in coping; Scripture redirects behavior; Phil 4:8
Faith	3	infancy stage; still maturing; does help in sharing of gospel
Holy Spirit	4	strengthens faith; Holy Spirit connection drives worship; constant need of; provides peace
Storytelling	5	represents discipleship; makes disciples; mother's testimony moved me; aids my evangelism; has power to transform others based on my testimony

Participant 5 is a twenty-eight-year-old Black male. He is a recent member of LPMBC

and part of Generation X. He is minimally committed to attending church and other Bible

studies. He was part of the LPMBC Daily Devotional ministry team but quit citing more

important commitment to work related duties competing with his time to serve God with his talents and time. Participant 5's narrative spoke to the thematic areas of spiritual relationship, transformation, faith, Holy Spirit, and storytelling.

Spiritual Relationship

Spiritual relationship can be defined as a relationship to self, others, a higher power, or nature in which one behaves humanistically, has a sense of responsibility and personal identity and describes the relationship as producing intimacy, wholeness, and wellness.[422] For the purposes of this study spiritual relationship postured as spiritual relational experiences with God. The basis for this construct rests in the biblical fact that God is a relational spiritual being (Gen 1:26-27; John 15:1-11; Deut 31:6; John 4:24). Humankind was created to participate in the divine relational attribute of God (Gen 1:26).

Hence, it follows that Participant 5 states that because he is "very spiritual" he feels a "connection to Him and His Holy Spirit." The inference here goes to John 4:24 which says, "God is spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth." Interpretation formulates that the essence of spiritual relationship for Participant 5 begins with his awareness of his heightened spiritual nature which allows him to link to God in a manner relating to the Spirit of God. He draws closer to God as God draws closer to him (James 4:8).

Intentional interaction with God's Word is elemental to the spiritual relationship Participant 5 shares with God. For example, he indicates that "Scripture and morning devotional aid [his] spiritual nature" while positing that "Scripture is key" as it "give[s] meaning to my life." The inference drawn for the Scripture piece speaks to the importance of the Bible for

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[422] Azita Jaberi, et al., "Spiritual Health: A Concept Analysis," *Journal of Religion and Health* 58, no. 5 (October 2019): 1543, http://ezproxy.liberty.edu/login?qurl=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.proquest.com%2Fscholarly-journals%2Fspiritual-health-concept-analysis%2Fdocview%2F2296520057%2Fse-2%3Faccountid%3D12085.

creating meaning-making for lived experiences in the construct of spiritual direction and relationship for Participant 5. Consider Psalm 1:2 (CSB) for buttressing this ideal: ". . . his delight is in the Lord's instruction, and he meditates on it day and night." His devout Scriptural engagement is consistent with the belief that Scripture facilitates spiritual growth as God's Word forms his desire to know, understand, and follow Him. In other words, "Reading sacred texts represents an important spiritual practice . . ."[423] One procures a personal engagement with God wherein He reveals His greatness and goodness. Hence, one's spiritual disposition is enhanced, and the Word becomes beneficial for direction toward spiritual development (2 Tim 3:16). Bible reading deepens Participant 5's individual's faith through devotional practices harmonizing the sacred text with Christian principles that lend to a personal and relational spirituality.[424]

Transformation

Transformation for Participant 5 has been aided by "connecting with intradisciplinary teaching in the MWBSS" which has produced "behavior toward being Christlike" while also promoting "growth in coping" strategies. These narrations of interpersonal transformation lend support to this researcher's pedagogical style utilizing intradisciplinary integrative techniques with the intended desire to create a spiritual experience that lends to a transformative life.[425] Spiritual experiences that move the individual from brokenness to an indwelled spirituality that affords a healing relationship with God.[426] The redemptive, grace-filled God of transformation

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[423] Pamela Caudill Ovwigho, Arnold R. Cole, and Alan Myatt, "Private Spiritual Practices: Bible Engagement and Moral Behavior," *Journal of Psychology and Christianity* 35, no. 3 (Fall 2016): 233, http://ezproxy.liberty.edu/login?qurl=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.proquest.com%2Fscholarly-journals%2Fprivate-spiritual-practices-bible-engagement%2Fdocview%2F1869927865%2Fse-2%3Faccountid%3D12085.

[424] Ovwigho, Cole, and Myatt, "Private Spiritual Practices," 233-234.

[425] See Appendix A, Participant Interview Responses, Questions 4 and 5 for a more detailed understanding of this researcher's intended outcomes from using an intradisciplinary integrative approach in teaching methodology for the MWBSS members.

"who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were

dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved)" (Eph 2:4-

5, NKJV). Salvation is the greatest gift that transformation avails to the individual.

The Spirit of God influences transformation for Participant 5. God's transforming

Spirit creates and empowers life for Participant 5 while fermenting his life into partnership

with God's mission through adherence to God's Word.[427] Thus, Participant 5 is led to say that

"Scripture redirects his behavior" as he declares the significance of Philippians 4:8-9 in shaping

his worldview

> Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence and if anything worthy of praise, think about these things. As for the things you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, practice these things, and the God of peace will be with you.

Spirit-directed transformation is hearing and applying God's Word to one's life (James 1:22-25).

Therefore, Participant 5 increases in "spiritual discernment" which then facilitates application to

his lived experiences resulting in increased agency over his outcomes.

Faith

Just like other components of our lives, faith has a generally identifiable pattern of

development.[428] According to James W. Fowler, "This progressing pattern can be characterized

in terms of developing emotional, cognitive, and moral interpretations and responses. Our ways

of imagining and committing in faith correlate significantly with our ways of knowing and

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[426] McMinn, *Psychology, Theology, and Spirituality in Christian Counseling*, 19.

[427] "God's Transforming Spirit," *International Review of Mission* 101, no. 1 (April 2012): 61, https://web-p-ebscohost-com.ezproxy.liberty.edu/ehost/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?vid=0&sid=d1b3218f-c5e7-4a92-9092-79760723775e%40redis.

[428] James W. Fowler, "Faith Development at 30: Naming the Challenges of Faith in a New Millennium," *Religious Education* 99, no. 4 (2004): 405, https://www-tandfonline-com.ezproxy.liberty.edu/doi/pdf/10.1080/00344080490513036?needAccess=true.

valuing more generally."[429] This viewpoint aligns with the faith development process offered by Participant 5. Faith for Participant 5 is a maturation process. His statements that he is still in the "infancy stage," and "still maturing" in his faith causes this researcher to draw the interpretation that faith for him is a part of his spiritual growth process that is in a perpetual state of becoming. Therefore, it is argued that his faith development is phenomenologically related to the human need to locate and create meaning of lived experiences.[430] Faith seeks a trusting relation to the divine Being and Spirit from whom creation springs.[431]

Interestingly, Participant 5 mentions that his faith "does help in sharing of the gospel" to others. Given his inclusion in Generation X, as indicated earlier, this importance placed on sharing his spirituality and faith runs contrarian to the observed religious behaviors of his generation, thus placing him as an outlier in this religious category. For example, studies have shown that Xers place a lower level of significance to their individual spirituality than did their Baby Boomer parents, and they varied on the value of sharing their individual spirituality with others.[432] This attitude can be explained in a theological framework as posited by Mark A. Mitchell et al. wherein Generation X "embraces doubt, and, arguably, faith is about a lack of doubt in teachings. As such, an inherent conflict is created between many Xers and organized religions and faiths."[433] Although Participant 5 has expressed concerns about his level of faith

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[429] Fowler, "Faith Development at 30," 405.

[430] Ibid., 412.

[431] Ibid.

[432] Mark A. Mitchell DBA, Robert D. Montgomery DBA, and Gregory B. Turner DBA, "Generation X and Religion: Evaluating and Improving Existing Distribution Strategies," *Journal of Nonprofit & Public Sector Marketing* 8, no. 2 (2001): 8, https://doi-org.ezproxy.liberty.edu/10.1300/J054v08n02_02.

[433] Ibid., 7.

understanding, it is postured that his witnessing to others based on his present faith level is a demonstration of discipleship that exhibits a higher level of faith than he may realize he possesses (Matt 28:19-20). His faith positions his life's purposes and creation's ordering.[434]

Holy Spirit

The Holy Spirit illuminates the Word for Black believers. In the case of Participant 5, the Holy Spirit "strengthens [his] faith" (Acts 1:8) while providing a "connection that drives worship." Explained further, the Holy Spirit activates spiritual engagement through an interconnected dialogue with God by hearing the Word of God. As it relates to worship, through the Holy Spirit's empowerment, the worshipper enters a distinctive worship style that provides an experiential encounter forming phenomenological and symbolic meaning. [435]

Also, Participant 5 says he is in "constant need of" the Holy Spirit's presence to "provide peace," guidance, and "spiritual discernment." Here it is posed that the Holy Spirit forms a religious identity and affirms dependent relationship with God (Deut 33:27) in a manner that is consistent with Black Americans lived religious/spiritual experience. In Black religious culture there is an interpersonal and experiential immanence attached to God such that He is ever present wherein one can simply "lean on His everlasting arms." The hymn verses, in part, of the song *Leaning on the Everlasting Arms* gives metaphoric meaning to this providential experience:

> What a fellowship, what a joy divine, leaning on the everlasting arms; What a blessedness, what a peace is mine. . . Leaning on the everlasting arms. What have I to dread, what have I to fear, Leaning on the everlasting arms? I have blessed peace with my Lord so near, Leaning on the everlasting arms.

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[434] Fowler, "Faith Development at 30," 412.

[435] Douglas A. Jones, Jr., "Slave Evangelicalism, Shouting, and the Beginning of African American Writing," *Early American Literature* 53, no. 1 (January 2018): 70-71, https://web-a-ebscohost-com.ezproxy.liberty.edu/ehost/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?vid=2&sid=224efb47-847e-4d3b-a565-a7a6ff212595%40sdc-v-sessmgr03.

As is the case for Participant 5, the indwelling of the Holy Spirt drives his spiritual attachments and serves as a meaning-making element. This pneumological occurrence is common to Black cultural tradition as it relates to spiritual practice. This form of spirituality is

more holistic, life giving and affirms the materiality of the Black body while allowing room for meaningful and pragmatic practices.[436]

Storytelling

The theme of storytelling gains traction from interpretations of various statements made by Participant 5. For example, when he speaks of storytelling as representing "discipleship," that it "makes disciples," and the fact that his "mother's testimony moved me" all encompass a narrative that correlates to the goal of Jesus in the Great Commandment (Matt 28:19-20). The goal Jesus had in mind was making disciples by "teaching them to follow all that I commanded you" (Matt 28:20; cf. Acts 1:8). Further credence to the discipleship effect of storytelling for Participant 5 is found in his reflections that storytelling "aids my evangelism "and it "has power to transform others based on my testimony." This discipleship piece Participant 5 presents is powerful in the sense of its strong alignment with Paul's observation that the Word of faith brings salvation (Rom10:1-21). Paul says, "How then are they to call on Him in whom they have not believed? How are they to believe in Him whom they have not heard? And how are they to hear without a preacher?" (Rom 10:14).

When applying a theological lens to storytelling and its salvific element, one must consider the frequent use of parables by Jesus to illuminate His teachings to His hearers. The Master Storyteller utilized this methodology because He understood the significance of narrative

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[436] Justin G. West, "Mysticism and Liberation: An exploration into the Relationship Between Howard Thurman's Spirituality and Black Theology, *Black Theology* 11, no. 1 (2013), 39, https://www-tandfonline-com.ezproxy.liberty.edu/doi/pdf/10.1179/17431670X13A.0000000003?needAccess=true.

in developing the relationship with the hearer and God. Storytelling, in a religious/spiritual paradigm, has the effect of promoting discipleship of humankind and relationship with the Almighty (2 Peter 3:9). This assumption holds true in the worldview of Participant 5 as shown by his previously offered comments concerning "evangelism" and personal "testimony." Storytelling provides an interpersonal communicative element to the Participant 5's narrative thus allowing the listener to better understand his lived experiences.[437]

Table 1.7: Archetypical Reduction for Participant 6

Theme	Reduced to	Final Themes
Spiritual Relationship	1	close personal relationship
Transformation	2	relationship forms Christlike behaviors; Child of God; Christ is in me; given me a loving heart and wisdom; your teaching method has been enlightening, informative, and has impacted my life and is effective; don't want to cheat God with my behavior; become more loving
Faith	3	driven by my spirituality; transforms, grows, and matures me; is helping me to testify and evangelize better; allows me to feel His presence; gets me back in line; believe in eternal life
Holy Spirit	4	sets my mind on Christ; aligns my life; connection to the Holy Spirit; talks to me; helps me pray; transformed me toward love for others;

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[437] Fabius, "Toward an Integration of Narrative Identity," 431.

		indwells within me; drives my worship experience
Storytelling	5	has not been a major influencer; did not grow up in Christian home; lack of early childhood narratives about Christ; no foundation from stories about Christ; see value in my older years; desire to grow in this area to aid my witness

Participant 6 is a Black male who is fifty-seven years old. He has been a member of LPMBC for over fifteen years. He attends Sunday School, Brotherhood Ministry, and MWBSS on a regular weekly basis. He does not hold any service positions in the church but does attend with consistency. Participant 6's offerings aided in the development of the themes attached to spiritual relationship, transformation, faith, Holy Spirit, and storytelling.

Spiritual Relationship

In announcing that he considers himself "very spiritual," Participant 6 supports his position with references to having "a close and personal relationship with Him; I know Him and what He has done for me." He also reasserts that relationship is paramount in identifying his spirituality as he reaffirms that he has a "personal relationship with God," and it is such that the connection "leads me to becoming more like Christ" (1 John 2:6). What is interpreted here is an abiding relationship, an intimacy of connected personhood that is both relational and transformative. This is akin to the relational experience expressed by Participant 3 in defining her spiritual relationship with Christ ("I have a relationship with the Lord. . .even though I can't touch Him I can feel Him" (John 15:4-5; cf. James 4:8). Participant 6's identification of spirituality as relational and connective is in line with research studies engaging how Black

Americans define spirituality in congruence to lived experiences.

Lisa M. Lewis et al. revealed that African American focus group participants listed relationships and connections as meaningful elements in shaping their spirituality.[438] The research study uncovered those participants identified relationships and connections to an entity or entities higher than human beings as a significant component for defining their spirituality.[439] For example, one participant describes the category of relationship and connection by saying "[spirituality is] within a relationship and it is a dialogue with a higher power," while another participant intimated that "when we speak about spirituality, talking about connections, there is a connection to God, right."[440] In summary, participants designated the connection to God as an essential element of spirituality thereby posturing relationship as a vital codification of spirituality. Hence, relationships and connection disclose a relational nature within the experienced and expressed spirituality of Black Americans like the narrative forming Participant 6's spiritual relationship.[441]

Transformation

In a demonstration of relational consistency, Participant 6 ties transformation back into his relationship with Christ for creating "Christlike behaviors." Statements wherein he voices that he is a "child of God," and "Christ is in me," and does not "want to cheat God with my behavior" are all seen as spirituality transformative occurrences in his life experiences. It is relational change that has "given me a loving heart and wisdom" with the desire and ability to

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[438] Lisa M. Lewis, Sheila Hankin, Diane Reynolds, and Gbenga Ogedegbe, "African American Spirituality: A Process of Honoring God, Others, and Self," *Journal of Holistic Nursing* 25, no. 1 (March 2007): 18, https://doi-org.ezproxy.liberty.edu/10.1177/0898010106289857.

[439] Ibid.

[440] Ibid.

[441] Ibid., 19.

"become more loving." Therefore, this interpreter posits these declarations are a primary reflection by Participant 6 of the sacrificial offering of self in response to God's mercy, forgiveness of sins, and inclusion in His family. When one considers Paul's writing in Romans 12:2 when he implores believers to "not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is" then this contention becomes clearer. God's will for our lives is to recognize and appreciate that believers are His children (John 1:12) whom He desires to receive Christ into their being (Gal 2:20) and to operate with a heart and mind that feels and offers love (Mark 12:30-31).

Further elucidated, Participant 6 credits the intradisciplinary integrative pedagogy of this researcher within the MWBSS as a valuable aid to his spiritual transformation. This decree is construed from his statements declaring that "I think your teaching method has been enlightening, informative, and has impacted my life and is effective. Now that I understand the method, I wish for you to go deeper and use more of it for our benefit." For this researcher this is affirming to hear from Participant 6 as his comments support the motive of this study which is to bring healing to others through an intradisciplinary integrative teaching approach utilizing psychology, theology, and spirituality presented within an intentional strategic pastoral construct.[442] In addition, it gives credence to the purpose of this DMin action research thesis

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[442] Benner, *Strategic Pastoral Counseling*, 63. This researcher's motivation for pedagogical and spiritual engagement with the members of the MWBSS is located within the spiritually focused paradigm presented by Benner wherein intentional, compassionate, and competent attentiveness to God's activity in a person's life is paramount to achieving transformative outcomes. Further explained, "The [intentional design of this thesis concerning] pastoral counseling is that it is spiritually focused. Without [intentional focus], [pastoral] counseling drifts aimlessly and accomplishes little. The focus provides the central organizing purpose and direction"(62). To describe the focus of strategic pastoral counseling as spiritual is to note that the focus is on the person in relation to God. This requires that the pastoral counselor be attentive to the way in which God is already active in the person's life and the way in which the person is responding to this activity" (63). Hence, the statement by Participant 6 that this researcher's teaching in the MWBSS "has been enlightening, informative, and has impacted my life and is effective. . . I wish for you to go deeper and use more of it for our benefit" causes this researcher to posit that a spiritually focused teaching (counseling) approach is, indeed, beneficial. Benefits are related to the individual's spiritual transformation, and, arguably, the individual's cognitive and behavioral transformation within a personal

which is to provide sufficient intradisciplinary integrative spiritual teaching to effect holistic coping strategies for Lake Providence's MWBSS members.

Faith

Faith is a religious impulse that often resides in the need for consolation in the face of a deeply felt and personal sense of helplessness, uncertainty, and loss brought on by life's circumstances.[443] In response, faith fosters an optimistic, anticipative disposition that reflects a profound and persistent transformation in mindset toward the world and others to take agency over one's lived experiences (Heb 11:1-6).[444] Faith "lights up our imagination and convicts us to act in pursuit of those ends. It is a common faith, precisely because each of us has it."[445] In essence, common faith can be described as hope oriented towards the hoped-for realization of God's promised reward and the present but unseen reality of God's existence, providence, fidelity, and power.[446] Faith that poses as a confident and assured perception of imperceptible realities.[447] Faith allows the believer to live in the light of hope.

Participant 6 expresses a common faith; a faith that is innate to humankind's spirit. Further explained, his faith is formed by his "spirituality" to the degree that it "transforms, grows, and matures" him. His faith is contextualized within the reality of his lived experiences

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and interpersonal domain. Cf. Rosmarin, *Spirituality, Religion, and Cognitive-Behavioral Therapy,* 185-187. Rosmarin adeptly elucidates the transformative connect between CBT and spirituality in this listed work. For example, CBT and spirituality integrated into therapy encourage counselees to engage in behavioral activation that sources meaning-making and informs valued domains of life; this concept has been proven to be effective in treating depression through positive reinforcement leading to sustainable schedules (165-168).

[443] Eddie S. Glaude, Jr., *An Uncommon Faith: A Pragmatic Approach to the Study of African American Religion* (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 2018), 43, ProQuest Ebook Central.

[444] Benner, *Strategic Pastoral Counseling*, 43.

[445] Ibid.

[446] David G. Peterson, *Hebrews*: *An Introduction and Commentary* (Westmont, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2020), 259, ProQuest Ebook Central.

[447] Ibid.

such that he can "testify and evangelize better" as he is consoled by feeling the "presence" of God. Thus, God has an immanent posture wherein Participant 6 constructs a faith belief that moves him to pursue thoughts and convictions with the internalized spiritual impetus that God is "a very present help in trouble" (Ps 46:1, NKJV). Faith in this sense of connection allows Participant 6 to get back into line when he feels himself struggling spiritually, "missing the mark": "I draw on my faith of not wanting to disappoint Him and this brings me back in line." What Participant 6 intimates here is an obedient faith born out of love for God. Faith that is loyal to God because God is faithful to him (Lam 3:22-23); faith that desires to be pleasing to God (Heb 11:6); faith that is obedient to the gospel (Rom 1:5); faith that is obligatory in the life of a spirit-filled believer (Acts 5:32). It is suggested that Participant 6 possesses a confident, hopeful, and assured faith that is based on the promises of a God who is Himself faithful (Deut 7:9).

Holy Spirit

In examining the influence of the Holy Spirit in the life of Participant 6, it becomes apparent that there is a pneumatic relationship that is present. In other words, there is an intentional mindset created by Participant 6 that aspires to be amenable towards God's active being in Participant 6's spiritual dominion. This interpretation is derived from his relating that the Holy Spirit "sets my mind on Christ," and "aligns my life" while creating a feeling of "connection to the Holy Spirit" (Phil 2:5; John 16:13; 14:26).

Participant 6's relationship with the Holy Spirit is one where the Spirit "indwells within me" and "helps me to pray" (1 Cor 6:19; Rom 8:26). His contextualization of the Holy Spirit as an aid in his prayer offerings is consistent with the Scripture text found in Romans 8:26 (ESV) which says, "Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness. For we do not know what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words." Prayer

is an important part of communicating with the Divine and is a significant spiritual practice for

Black Americans.[448]

Truly, his story reveals a relational initiative in which he is keenly and energetically

relating with the Spirit of God. One wherein he establishes and seeks to maintain a structure that,

in addition to previously outlined interpersonal elements, the Spirit supports him being

"transformed toward love for others" while also enhancing and driving "my worship

experience." The pneumatic relationship nurtured by connection with the Holy Spirit reveals a

reflective, protective, supportive relationship with God in the life experiences of Participant 6.

Storytelling

Historically, storytelling has been a means of intergenerational communication and

connection in the Black American community.[449] Narrative in oral tradition is a method for

 members of a community to pass down beliefs to younger generations, as well as make meaning

for themselves.[450] Even so, storytelling "has not been a major influencer" in the lived

experiences of Participant 6. He "did not grow up in a Christian home," therefore, there existed a

"lack of early childhood narratives about Christ" and "no foundation from stories about Christ

"was formed. Sadly, for Participant 6, this dynamic is contrary to the literature that presents

storytelling as a strong cultural component in Black American life. By his own admission, he can

"see value in [storytelling] in my older years." Consequently, he expresses a "desire to grow in

this area to aid my witness" of Christ. These assertions are interpreted to mean that Participant 6

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[448] Antonius Skipper, Travis James Moore & Loren Marks, "The Prayers of Others Helped": Intercessory Prayer as a Source of Coping and Resilience in Christian African American Families," *Journal of Religion & Spirituality in Social Work: Social Thought* 37, no.4 (August 2018), 374-376, https://doi.org/10.1080/15426432.2018.1500970.

[449] Fabius, "Toward an Integration of Narrative Identity," 423. See also, Susan VanZanten, "Introduction: African Narrative and The Christian Tradition: Storytelling and Identity," 369-370.

[450] Fabius, "Toward an Integration of Narrative Identity," 423.

sees storytelling as a developmental aid for self-identity as he constructs internalized and

evolving meaning and purpose to enrich his life's story.[451] Storytelling, in contextualization,

offers Black Americans cultural insight and a sense of belonging that characterizes their

understandings.

Table 1.8: Archetypical Reduction for Participant 7

Theme	Reduced to	Final Themes
Spiritual Relationship	1	wholesome and sincere relationship with God; striving to fulfill His commandments; gives meaning to God working in my life; honor Him with all my mind, heart, soul, and strength
Transformation	2	ready to connect and follow His commands; Mid-Week Bible study moves us from the basic foundation of who Christ is; I have been enlightened by MWBSS; I must love; prayer changed my thought process; since I have accepted Christ, I have a sense (mindset) of confidence and worthiness
Faith	3	express my spirituality at work; shown by my deeds; in God and His power to control situations for my good
Holy Spirit	4	spirit plays a part in healing; emboldens me to proclaim Christ; gives understanding as to who God is; drives my behavior

[451] Fabius, "Toward an Integration of Narrative Identity," 426-427.

Storytelling	5	I cannot remember hearing stories about who God is; we did not go to church; parents worked all the time; use my life experience from years past to tell others about the grace of God

Participant 7 is a Black sixty-four-year-old female. She is a faithful member of the MWBSS. She has served in the church positions of Sunday School teacher and Church Treasurer while also being a regular attendee of church services and various other Bible classes. She is astute in the dissemination and understanding of God's Word with a visible desire to pursue Christ as seen in the "fruit" that she bears. Participant 7's narrative formed data for the themes associated with spiritual relationship, transformation, faith, Holy Spirit, and storytelling.

Spiritual Relationship

Participant 7's spiritual nature is a foundational part of who she is as a spiritual being whose heart is centered on God and relational reverence to Him. For example, she offers comments defining her spirituality as seeking a "wholesome and sincere relationship with God," "striving to fulfill His commandments," and "honor Him with all my mind, heart, soul, and strength" (Mark 12:30) These allowances lend support to concluding she has a spirituality that reflects a heart orientation that underlies and directs the rest of her being.[452] It identifies her personality as being in relationship with a relational God who created us in His image for intimate relationship with Him (Gen 1:26-27; cf. John 15:4-5). She has integrated loving surrender and service to God as the spiritual direction of her personality such that her spiritual relationship "gives meaning to God working in my life." Her humanness is not separate from her

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[452] Benner, *Strategic Pastoral Counseling*, 63.

intimate relationship with God; it is the essence of who she is as a spiritual being grounded in the existence of God as Spirit.[453]

In deeper observation, Participant 7's identifiable spiritual nature moved this researcher to consider the importance, as a pastoral counselor, to assume the core assumption that God is already working in the individual's life.[454] Her statement that "God [is] working in my life" highlights the value of the pastoral counselor to be attentive to God's presence and activity in a person's life and be sensitive to indications of each occurrence. In the case of Participant 7, her spirituality narrative contextualizes her life experiences in a way that will help the pastoral counselor to discern any issues through a theological and spiritual lens. Engaging her in a spiritual response creates a mutual dialogue that demonstrates counselor allegiance and investment in shared solution development. Also, listening for the spiritual implications aids the counselor in resolving problems that the individual may present in a manner that is plausible to the individual.

Transformation

Transformation can only be achieved in one's life through a heartfelt relationship with God that moves the individual to reflect His image and His glory in becoming more like Christ (2 Cor 3:18; Eph 5:1).[455] Participant 7's statement "ready to connect with God and follow His commands" arguably reflects the character of spiritual transformation. Prayer has also influenced her inner change in manner that moves her to understanding she "must love" (Mark 12:31; 1 John 3:11). Love not only for the other but love for self, as well, in the sense of "confidence and

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[453] Benner, *Strategic Pastoral Counseling*, 63.

[454] Ibid.

[455] Glen G. Scorgie, *A Little Guide to Christian Spirituality: Three Dimensions of Life with God* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2007), 47, ProQuest Ebook Central.

worthiness" based on having "accepted Christ" into her life (Ps 139:13-14). It is an abiding

relationship with Christ "because He has given to [her] of His Spirit" (1 John 4:13). Real and

lasting transformation is possible because the Spirit lives in us.[456] Participant 7 has a

transformation of desires in her longing to please Jesus Christ and align herself with His gospel-

inspired instructions as a fulfilment of her relationship with Christ. She seeks to experience a full

spiritual transformation wherein her spirituality fosters a transformative heart and mind that is

synonymous with the Christian life lived with God.[457]

Furthermore, Participant 7 relates that the MWBSS has aided her transformation in that

she has "been enlightened about how to consider things that can help me." For example, she

intimates that the MWBSS "moves us from the basic foundation of who Christ is to developing

thoughts about how He wants us to live." This statement affirms the purpose for the use of the

intradisciplinary integrative approach by this researcher to provide a holistic way of thinking to

create beneficial transformative outcomes for individuals. Thusly creating a holistic spiritual

concept that allows lived experiences to encompass things such as repentance, moral renewal,

soul-crafting, community building, witness, service, and faithfulness to one's calling.[458] Holistic

spiritual transformation is a matter of the heart that moves towards being "transformed by the

renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is" (Rom 12:2). Participant

7's aim appears to be understanding spiritual transformation in a more complete manner.

Faith

Black women have narratives that reveal they depend on faith to provide support and

cope with life's challenges. Faith provides empowerment and resilience which manifests as

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[456] Scorgie, *A Little Guide to Christian Spirituality*, 49.

[457] Ibid., 17.

[458] Ibid.

strength in witness and spiritual formation. These mentioned manifestations are confirmed in

Participant 7's revelations that her faith allows her to "express my spirituality at work." Her faith

is integrated into her response to Jesus' call to discipleship (Matt 28:19-20). In addition, her faith

understanding, and praxis is displayed "by my deeds" which aligns in spiritual formation with

James' admonishment to "prove yourselves doers of the word, and not just hearers who deceive

themselves" (James 1:22). Participant 7 engages in an active faith. A faith that demonstrates as

spiritually sensitive within a communal construct that is impactful as it unfolds in a personally

connective manner.

Lastly, her faith is portrayed in her hope being placed "in God and His power to control

situations for my good." This is the type of trusting faith outlined in Hebrews 11:6 (KJV), "But

without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and

that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him." A trusting faith that centers her Christian

perspective and relationality to God in the confident manner posited in Romans 8:28 (KJV),

"And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God. . ." Faith for

Participant 7 is fashioned as belief in and love for God which is reflective of her intentional

reverence for the immanence of the Creator in her lived experiences.

Holy Spirit

The Holy Spirit plays a key role in the life of Participant 7. She proclaims that the Holy

Spirit "plays a part in our healing." Research has established that in the healing narrative of

Black women spirituality is significant.[459] The meaning of the power of the Holy Spirit

expressed within her spiritual nature provides a sense of security and stability and is consistent

with the preponderance of the literature concerning Black Americans' responses during periods

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[459] Gregg, "I'm a Jesus Girl," 1046-1049.

of crises.[460] In essence, this behavior can be described as "spiritual surrender" wherein the individual is "turning things over" to a Higher Power in relationship with God or other divine entities.[461] Spiritual surrender for Participant 7 is not a concession, rather it is empowerment over her emotions and confusions.[462] As a result, she is able to envision and move toward outcomes she would not have been able to achieve on her own strength (Phil 4:13).

The Holy Spirit was sent to indwell within us to provide power to witness and to guide us to understanding of God's intentions for humankind (Acts 1-2; John 14:26, 16:13). These Spirit-influenced traits are interpreted as present in the lived experiences of Participant 7 as she mentions that the Spirit "emboldens me to proclaim Christ," "gives understanding as to who God is," and "drives my behavior." Her worship is inspired by a "sense of connection to the Holy Spirit." For Participant 7, the Holy Spirit is a prime mover in the expression and development of her spirituality and relationship with God. Her narrative is interpreted to present her as one who taps into "the power that worketh in us" (Eph 3:20) to activate God's Spirit as the catalyst that affords meaning-making to the outcomes in her life.

Storytelling

Storytelling as an oral tradition holds a very prominent place in Black American culture. However, Participant 7's experiences indicates that storytelling was not a significant piece of her recalled cultural upbringing as she intimates that "I cannot remember hearing stories about who God is." She goes on to say that she did not hear stories about Christ in her home nor were they availed to her in a worship setting as "we did not go to church," because my "parents worked

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[460] Gregg, "I'm a Jesus Girl," 1047.

[461] Mattis, "Religion and Spirituality in the Meaning-Making and Coping Experiences of African American Women," 313.

[462] Ibid.

all the time." It is unfortunate that participant 7cannnot relate to the richness found in oral

traditions connected to Black American culture. Storytelling serves a unique role within the

historical context of Black Americans' lived experiences as it serves to link generations in

knowledge and experiential meaning.[463]

Even so, Participant 7 recognizes the power of narrative, particularly as it relates to her

witness for Christ. She says that she uses "my life experience from years past to tell others about

the grace of God." She is in the understanding that her story about what God has done for her in

guiding her life has noteworthy influence in empowering and potentially leading others to Christ.

In principle, storytelling has manifested for participant 7 as discipleship. She is fulfilling the call

found in Mark 16:15 (ESV), ". . . Go into all the world and proclaim the gospel to the whole

creation." Participant 7 utilizes storytelling to operate in the ministry of reconciliation (2 Cor

5:18). Storytelling shares the good news.

Table 1.9: Archetypical Reduction for Participant 8

Theme	Reduced to	Final Themes
Spiritual Relationship	1	connection to Higher Power (God); seek God's guidance; feel His presence; listen for His voice in my spirit; seek God; takes me to the Rock
Transformation	2	God has been at work in my life; teaching and directing me; the MWBSS adds understanding and gives ideas and strategies for helping me in my situations; saved by grace; all things come from God; for me to live is Christ; psychology and

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[463] Fabius, "Toward an Integration of Narrative Identity," 423.

		theology, coupled with spirituality, improved my self-esteem, changed my life, coping better
Faith	3	witness to others about my faith experiences; at ease talking about God anywhere; prayer gives me peace and strength
Holy Spirit	4	sense of connection to the Holy Spirit drives my worship; led by the Holy spirit; empowers me; informs my behavior
Storytelling	5	your story (this researcher's story) of transformation causes me to see how powerful God is in changing lives; I tell stories about my faith in God helping me along the way

Participant 8 is a Black seventy-four-year-old female who has been at LPMBC for eight years. She is a regular attendee of the MWBSS and the former wife of a pastor. She has a good biblical understanding and demonstrates keen interest in learning more about God's Word to live a better life. Participant 8 does not serve on any ministry but does attend Sunday School on a regular basis. Interpretations from her story formed along the themes of spiritual relationship, transformation, faith, the Holy Spirit, and storytelling.

Spiritual Relationship

Consistent with several other participant responses, spiritual relationship for Participant 8 formulates around "connection to Higher Power (God)." The sense of connection is a recurring mention in this study and points to the relational component of spirituality as an essential

element in the relationship.[464] Connectedness is interpreted here as a feeling of oneness with self and with God.[465] It is akin to the relationship that Jesus had with the Father as based on the Scripture found in John 10:30 where He says, "I and the Father are one." Connectedness for participant 8 is argued to be an abiding behavior that allows her to "feel His presence."

Spiritual relationship is a means of honoring God and trusting in His faithful character (Lam 3:22-23).[466] This piece is exhibited in Participant 8's spiritual nature as she says that her closeness moves her to "seek God's guidance," to "listen for His voice in my spirit" (Prov 3:5-7; John 10:27; 1 Sam 3:9-10), "He is my Rock" (Ps 18:2; 2 Sam 22:2). Further developed, honoring God is trusting that what His Word says to us is beneficial for our enhanced life experiences. In that regard, Participant 8's expressions lend to the interpretation that she desires to "seek the LORD while He may be found; Call upon Him while He is near" (Isa 55:6). She knows that if she listens intently with her spiritual ear, she will hear His call: "Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and eat with him, and he with me" (Rev 3:20, ESV). Each of these indwelled, intentional behaviors by Participant 8 points to intimate, abiding, trusting relationship with a relational God (Jas 4:8). Connection to God facilitates access to His divine power in the lived experiences of Participant 8.

Transformation

As a pastoral counselor, this researcher must always be attentive to the activity and presence of God in the life of the individual being engaged.[467] In the narrative of Participant 8

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[464] Lewis et.al, "African American Spirituality," 19.

[465] Ibid., 19, 21.

[466] Ibid., 21.

[467] Charles Allen Kollar, *Solution-Focused Pastoral Counseling*: *An Effective Short-Term Approach for Getting People Back on Track* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2011), 62.

she alludes to changes, grace events, and strengths that give clues to God's activity in her heart, mind, and spirit. Therefore, it is assumed that she recognizes God's presence and activity in her circumstances. In fact, she directly says that "God has been working in my life. . . teaching and directing me;" I have "been saved by grace" (Eph 2:8). Spiritual transformation of her heart and mind is present in her allowance that "for me to live is Christ" (Gal 2:20). Her statement here is the essence of true spiritual transformation in that Participant 8 renounces herself to make room for the life of Christ.[468] The complete credibility of the Son of God opens for Participant 8 the possibility of a life of faith, which is the life of Christ in her and her life in Christ; a marvelous reciprocal interiority of thoughts, feelings, and actions.[469]

Participant 8's association with the MWBSS has had a transformative impact. Support for this interpretation derive from her comment that "the MWBSS adds understanding and gives ideas and strategies for helping me in my situations." Adding further credence to the effect of the pedagogy utilizing an intradisciplinary integrative approach within the MBWSS is her testimony that "psychology and theology, coupled with spirituality, improved my self-esteem, changed my life, [I am] coping better." This researcher's desire is that intradisciplinary integrative teaching, once availed to the MWBSS membership, would have the expressed transformative outcome as expressed by Participant 8. It is offered that a teaching methodology incorporating intradisciplinary integration lends to spiritual transformation wherein one is aided in developing a meaningful relationship with God, community, and self.[470]

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[468] Cardinal Albert Vanhoye and Peter S. Williamson, *Galatians (Catholic Commentary on Sacred Scripture)* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2019), 82, ProQuest Ebook Central.

[469] Ibid., 83.

[470] McMinn, *Psychology, Theology, and Spirituality in Christian Counseling*, 32.

Faith

Faith is based on the trustworthiness of Jesus Christ. His love for His creation and His willingness to sacrifice Himself for humankind are two reasons that Christ is a secure foundation for faith.[471] Participant 8 has a trusting faith; a faith that she is not afraid to "witness to others about my faith experiences" with the assurances that "God will do for others what He did for me." Her faith allows her to be "at ease talking about God anywhere." It is posited that her faith is not only based on trust in the truths about who God is but is fortified by her surrender of her whole being (body, mind, soul) to the personhood of Christ.[472] Faith is a holistic involvement of the individual. It is intended to bring about a complete transformation that requires loyalty of the intellect, the will, and the affections as it expresses itself in action.[473] In reflecting upon Participant 8's narrative, it is argued that these faith elements inform her faith experiences.

Moreover, faith is not primarily a knowing but a way of meaningfully coping with life's experiences.[474] One meaningful way of exercising faith to cope is through prayer. Prayer and faith are interconnected. Hence, Participant 8's prayer "for peace and strength" is an exercise in faith. Further explained, engaging in prayer indicates that prayer is what Calvin calls a "perpetual exercise of faith."[475] It can be said that prayer is the "language game of faith" and as such inevitably linked to faith.[476] Consider what Jesus say to His disciples in Matthew 21:22 (ESV) as suggesting that prayer is futile and unproductive without faith: "And whatever you ask in prayer,

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[471] Vanhoye and Williamson, *Galatians (Catholic Commentary on Sacred Scripture)*, 83.

[472] Ibid.

[473] Ibid., 164.

[474] Vincent Brümmer, *What Are We Doing When We Pray?*: *On Prayer and the Nature of Faith* (Milton, Oxfordshire, England: Taylor & Francis Group, 2008), 124, ProQuest Ebook Central.

[475] Ibid., 121.

[476] Ibid.

you will receive, if you have faith." Faith understands God in a relational loving, trusting fellowship. Prayer is taking personal agency, as motivated by faith, to communicate with God in a mystic way seeking living communion.[477] Participant 8's faith connects to her prayer life to create union with the Divine.

Holy Spirit

In Black worship experiences, it is common for the flow of the Holy Spirit to direct the tenor of service. Neichelle R. Guidry Jones refers to this pneumatological occurrence as "good worship."[478] From Participant 8's expression that a "sense of connection to the Holy Spirit drives my worship," this researcher interprets that she is speaking about experiencing "good worship." Explained further, the improvisational character of the Holy Spirit shifts the atmosphere into a new direction; she invites the Holy Spirit's presence into the secret corners and dark cracks of her life, to see into her, and to risk being known and loved enough to be healed.[479] Her relationship is borne in the Spirit and is natured in worship. Indeed, her worship is expanded as a contagious fire exuding resilience and uplift to the spirits of those present in her sphere. It is like a "burning fire shut up in [her] bones" and she is tired of holding it, "indeed [she] cannot "(Jer 20:9).[480]

The Holy Spirit was sent to lead us into all truth (John 16:13-15). Participant 8 is "led by the Holy Spirit." The leading of the Holy Spirit keeps her from floundering or getting off track in her Christian walk. To be led by the Holy spirt requires Participant 8 to hear and be obedient to

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[477] Brümmer, *What Are We Doing When We Pray?,* 86.

[478] Neichelle R. Guidry Jones, "Good Worship," *Liturgy* 29, no.2 (January 2014):37, 41, https://www-tandfonline-com.ezproxy.liberty.edu/doi/pdf/10.1080/0458063X.2014.867140?needAccess=true.

[479] Ibid., 40-41.

[480] Hinson, *Fire in My Bones,* 17. Hinson calls the experience "*feeling the fire,*" "*filled with the Spirit*" (17).

the words of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit allows her to discover through discernment and through reading her Bible what God's will is for her life, what He prohibits and what is satisfying in His sight (Ps 143:10). As a result, she alludes that the Holy Spirit "empowers me" and "informs my behavior." Interpreted here is that Participant 8 links the Word of God with the Holy Spirit to chart her path through life and instruct her in problems she faces. The Word and the Spirit form a powerful spiritual combination in the life of believers like Participant 8.

Storytelling

Black American saints articulate their faith in the language of experience. [481] As such, narrative is powerful in depicting experiential encounters in Black spiritual lived experiences. Often these testimonies, as they are sometimes called, served to inform others of the "workings of the Lord in bringing them from 'the sea of doubt and jaws of hell' to the very 'throne of grace.'"[482] Such is the case of storytelling in the MWBSS experience of Participant 8 as she shares that "your story (this researcher's story) of transformation causes me to see how powerful God is in changing lives."

Narrative serves many facets in Black culture. One of them is the strength of one's shared conversion experience as the giving of a "holy touch" to the life of others.[483] It is as Participant 8 intimates that "I tell stories about my faith in God helping me along the way" to encourage others about what God can do in our lives. Experiential spiritual narrative causes the hearers to consider how the message may be applied to their own lives and how it speaks to their own souls in a search for communion with the Divine.[484]

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[481] Hinson, *Fire in My Bones,* 15.

[482] Ibid.

[483] Ibid., 16.

[484] Ibid.

Table 1.10: Archetypical Reduction for Participant 9

Theme	Reduced to	Final Themes
Spiritual Relatioship	1	Spirituality is my relationship with the Lord; His presence and my response to His activity in my life; He is the God of the Word; the true God whom I depend on; connection to Him; very spiritual; influences my behavior
Transformation	2	relatedness of mind, body, and spirit; MWBSS is a transformative process that adds coping skills; teaching on intentionality has become a spiritual guide for changing my behavior for the better; God's love gives peace and assurance in loving God and others
Faith	3	share my faith with others in any setting; centers who I am in Christ; fully committed to Christ
Holy Spirit	4	guides me; moves me; depend on Him; the power within [me] to keep [my] stayed on Christ; indwells me and knows all about me; drives my worship; creates relationship with the God and the Spirit; relates to my spirit in knowing who God is
Storytelling	5	stories heard in church helped understanding about God; storytelling in the Black church is important for knowing God; tell stories

about God to my children and
grandchildren as a foundation

Participant 9 is a Black seventy-six-year-old female. She has been a member of LPMBC

over twenty-five years. She attends church regularly, teaches Sunday School, writes for the Daily

Devotional ministry, attends MWBSS consistently along with participating in other Bible study

groups. She is well respected for her calming spiritual nature, sense of community, and love for

and knowledge of the Word of God. Interpretations by this researcher of her responses fostered

data attached to the themes of spiritual relationship, transformation, faith, the Holy Spirt, and

storytelling.

Spiritual Relationship

All human creation has a spiritual life (1 Thess 5:23; Heb 4:12). In the Black American

religious context, spiritual is central to all we do; the whole life is permeated by spirituality: the

encounter with the Lord.[485] Participant 9 describes herself as very spiritual relative her definition

of spirituality and the level of her of spirituality. This researcher agrees based on interpretation of

her comments that "spirituality is my relationship with the Lord," and she has a "connection to

Him" relative to "His presence and my response to His activity in my life." Again, there is the

appearance of the spiritual connection motif as established in the commentary of previous study

participants. Spirituality has a cultural connection with the Black lived experience as it arises out

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[485] Olehile A. Buffel, "Black Theology Versus Black Spirituality and Black Faith: The Centrality of Spirituality and Faith in Black Theology of Liberation in the South African Context," *Hervormde Teologiese Studies* 77, no. 3 (December 2021): 5, http://ezproxy.liberty.edu/login?qurl=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.proquest.com%2Fscholarly-journals%2Fblack-theology-versus-spirituality-faith%2Fdocview%2F2611043512%2Fse-2.

of their experience of social conditions; "it is out of their existential struggles with realities of life."[486] Spirituality becomes transformative in the identity of self and community. Therefore, Participant 9 is understood in a cultural sense in her proclamation that she is very spiritual.

Moreover, she views her spiritual relationship as based on God's Word: "He is the God of the Word." She is sanctified in His Word because His "Word is truth" (John 17:17) that emanates from His Spirit (John 16:13). As such, her worship toward God is conducted with reverence for Him in both spirit and truth (John 4:24). Her spiritual connection to God's Word causes her to see Him as "the true God whom I depend on" (Psalm 121:1-8). His instructions "influences my behavior." For Participant 9, spiritual relationship with God is an intentional action catalyzed by an intimate response to God's character, to His word, and to His Spirit.

Transformation

Spiritual transformation encompasses a psychological move to something new, such as a new religious language, which is also psychological in nature and is understood as spiritually more expressive (2 Cor 5:17-21).[487] For Participant 9, the psychological move that has aided her spiritual transformation has occurred within the teaching approach of the MWBSS utilizing intradisciplinary integration. This interpretation is derived from her comment that the "MWBSS is a transformative process that adds coping skills; teaching on intentionality has become a spiritual guide for changing my behavior for the better." She also adds that "intradisciplinary integration pieces interconnect [where] there is a value and an enrichment that produces the fruit

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[486] Buffel, "Black Theology Versus Black Spirituality and Black Faith," 5. See also, Dwight N. Hopkins, "Spirituality and Transformation," in *Heart and Head*, ed. Dwight N. Hopkins (New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillian, 2002), 77, Google Books.

[487] Al Dueck and Austin Johnson, "Cultural Psychology of Religion: Spiritual Transformation," *Pastoral Psychology* 65, no. 3 (June 2016): 307, http://ezproxy.liberty.edu/login?qurl=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.proquest.com%2Fscholarly-journals%2Fcultural-psychology-religion-spiritual%2Fdocview%2F1785959772%2Fse-2%3Faccountid%3D12085.

of the spirit that produces better outcomes and better life management skills" (Gal 5:22-25).

Consequently, from these two primary offerings, it is posited the intradisciplinary integrative approach is validated for connecting with the purpose of this study: The purpose of this DMin action research thesis is to provide sufficient intradisciplinary integrative spiritual teaching to effect holistic coping strategies for Lake Providence's MWBSS members. The desired outcome is to create a paradigm for the individual wherein they become psychologically and spiritually whole to enjoy a healthy, intimate relationship with Christ and others.[488] There develops, as Participant 9 describes, a "relatedness of mind, body, and spirit" for grasping that "God's love gives peace and assurance in loving God and others." Hence, the lived experience manifests as enveloping the capacity for self-efficacy for improved learning patterns affording greater freedom for healthy, meaningful associations.[489]

Faith

Faith beliefs are important aspects in the lives of most Black American persons.[490] As such, faith is essential in the construction of religious and spiritual identity for Black women.[491] Faith, used in this context, refers commitment to a set of religious beliefs. For many groups who are often marginalized, such as Black women, faith is an important variable and can

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[488] McMinn, *Psychology, Theology, and Spirituality in Christian Counseling*, 58.

[489] Ibid.

[490] Joy L. Kennedy, "Order My Steps of Faith: A Philosophical Self-Reflection of Faith using an African-American Womanist-Feminist Standpoint," (PhD diss., The University of North Carolina at Greensboro, 2014), Abstract Cover Page, ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global, http://ezproxy.liberty.edu/login?qurl=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.proquest.com%2Fdissertations-theses%2Forder-my-steps-faith-philosophical-self%2Fdocview%2F1615370930%2Fse-2%3Faccountid%3D12085.

[491] Sandra P. Dixon and Nancy M. Arthur, "Recognizing Faith: A Perspective on Black Caribbean Immigrant Women," *Canadian Journal of Counselling and Psychotherapy* (Online) 53, no. 2 (2019): 169, http://ezproxy.liberty.edu/login?qurl=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.proquest.com%2Fscholarly-journals%2Frecognizing-faith-perspective-on-black-caribbean%2Fdocview%2F2226386690%2Fse-2%3Faccountid%3D12085.

be a counterbalance against adversities.[492] In giving competent attention to the religious and

spiritual dimensions of people's faith identities as expressed within their religious and spiritual

paradigm, pastoral counselors can enhance their knowledge when addressing prominent

characteristics of faith in their counseling approaches.[493] For example, when Participant 9

reveals that her faith "centers who I am in Christ" she is disclosing an interpersonal connection

to the Divine that shapes her spiritual and religious identity presents as meaning-making (Heb

11:6).

As a pastoral counselor, it is critical to competently assess spiritual and religious identity

in the cultural context of how research has shown that Black women spiritually formulate their

faith behaviors based on a trusting relationship with Jesus Christ.[494] Participant 9 further

solidifies this interpretation as she allows that she is "fully committed to Christ (Ps 37:5; Matt

22:37). Finally, her discipled mindset moves her to "share my faith with others in any setting."

Herein her abiding and trusting faith practice is verified as honoring Christ within the context of

Matthew 10:32 as Jesus says, "Therefore, everyone who confesses Me before people, I will also

confess him before My Father who is in heaven." She is displaying a oneness with Christ; an

identification of relationship that causes her to confess Christ as a profession of the sincerity of

her faith. As a Christian, Participant 9 is triumphantly exercising her duty, her reasonable service

to glorify His name (Ps 86:12; Dan 4:37; Rom 15:6, 12:1-2).

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[492] Dixon and Arthur, "Recognizing Faith," 170.

[493] Ibid., 169.

[494] Gregg, "I'm a Jesus Girl," 1043 1046-1050. See also, Jeronda T. Burley, and Dawn Thurman, "Faith, Family, and Friendship: Experiences of African American Women Living in the Margins," *Social Work and Christianity* 46, no. 1 (Spring, 2019): 18, http://ezproxy.liberty.edu/login?qurl=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.proquest.com%2Fscholarly-journals%2Ffaith-family-friendship-experiences-african%2Fdocview%2F2220746635%2Fse-2%3Faccountid%3D12085; Dixon and Arthur, "Recognizing Faith," 185-187.

Holy Spirit

The Holy Spirit holds an integral and potent role in the religious and spiritual life and praxis of the Black American Christian community.[495] Also, the Holy Spirit provides for the Black Christian experience a means for sharing and affirming other religious expressions.[496] This dynamic is seen in the sequence of Participant 9's offering that the Holy Spirit "indwells me and knows all about me" (Gal 4:9) and "drives my worship." Herein is an historical expression about how the power of the Holy Spirit is grounded in the personhood of Participant 9 as an intrinsic part of her lived experiences.

Also, her articulations continue as she states that the Holy Spirit "guides me," "moves me," as I "depend on Him" to provide the "the power within [me] to keep [my] mind stayed on Christ" (Is 26:3). It is interpreted here by this researcher that Participant 9 is expressing freedom vis-à-vis a connection to the presence of the Holy Spirit in her personal accounts. It is posited that this connection is affirmation of the Spirit that Christ promised to avail to His followers in John 16:13 (KJV), "Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth. . .", and in John 16:7 (CEV), ". . . The Holy Spirit cannot come to help you until I leave. But after I am gone, I will send the Spirit to you." The Spirit of God that would live inside of His believers that would fill them with the power that Jesus had (Luke 4:1). The Spirit that is called in some translations Counselor (CSB), Friend (MSG), Helper (ESV), Comforter (KJV) with each moniker having a relational, meaning-making connotation as expressed by Participant 9 when she says the Holy Spirit "relates to my spirit in knowing who God is." This personal element

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[495] James H. Evans, Jr, "The Holy Spirit in African American Theology," in *The Oxford Handbook of African American Theology*, eds. Katie G. Cannon and Anthony B. Pinn (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2014), 166, Google Books.

[496] Ibid., 167.

speaks to the legacy of the Holy Spirit in the Back Christian religious and spiritual life. There is a communication of deeper cultural insight into the objective dimension of the Third Person of the Trinity within the lived experiences of this people group.

Storytelling

Storytelling has the cultural element of providing Black people with the opportunity to inspire and educate one another in addition to preserving history, mores, and other cultural information.[497] Storytelling is an integral process by which socialization into Black culture takes place; it is the foundation for the communication and propagation of culture.[498] Also, narrative as a cultural oral tradition contributes to the importance or retaining traditional stories related to past experiences and establishes thematic characteristic patterns of the group.[499] As Participant 9 relates that "stories heard in church helped [her] understanding about God," and that "storytelling in the Black church is important for knowing God," these musings present storytelling as having a spiritual thematic pattern of a group member expressing their lived experiences.

This researcher attaches Participant 9's utterances to the primary offering from author, Jan Carter-Black, when she writes "I recall with absolute clarity the biblical stories that resounded from the pupil on Sunday morning. . .the stories [were] lessons on how to live a Christ-like existence. . .on earth."[500] Moreover, Participant 9 continues her learned oral tradition as she tells "stories about God to my children and grandchildren as a foundation" for their lives.

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[497] Angela Khristin Brown, "Black Culture," *International Journal of Education & Literacy Studies* 1, no. 1 (July 2013): 109, http://ezproxy.liberty.edu/login?qurl=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.proquest.com%2Fscholarly-journals%2Fblack-culture%2Fdocview%2F1746910550%2Fse-2. Cf. Fabius, "Toward an Integration of Narrative Identity," 423.

[498] Carter-Black, "Teaching Cultural Competence," 33, 42-43.

[499] Ibid., 43.

[500] Ibid., 34.

Storytelling in the Black spiritual experience has the effect of culturally endowing one with a spiritually inspired legacy of empowerment and identity.

Table 1.11: Archetypical Reduction for Participant 10

Theme	Reduced to	Final Themes
Spiritual Relatioship	1	intrinsic feeling for God and my relationship with Him; spend time daily with the Lord communing with Him; wait to hear back to see what He will say to me; relationship with God is first; move, breathe. and have my being because of Him; architect of my life; the author and finisher.
Transformation	2	free [in my] mind to walk by faith and not by sight; mindset and posture of spirituality; psychology has a relative place inside of theology and spirituality . . . they do relate; MWBSS has transformed me and others in this class; being transformed by the renewing of their minds from the education of MWBSS teaching; foundation is being laid; I become a disciple that makes other disciples
Faith	3	allowed me to minister to others; study to show myself approved to proclaim His gospel; not ashamed of my relationship with Him; prayer that brought me through; my faith file of experiencing Him

Holy Spirit	4	connection to the Holy Spirit; moves me to encouragement of a better day; Holy Spirit centers my worship in an experiential way; guides me in counseling others
Storytelling	5	my experience in the Black Church [is] that storytelling and testimonies are important; relate to others the power of the Word from my experiences; stories about Christ are transformative for the hearer; I am able now to tell others about my story in a beneficial way to them.

Participant 10 is a sixty-three -year -old Black female. She has been a member of

LPMBC for nine years and is a regular member of the MWBSS. She is very much the model of

servant-leadership inside the body of believers. She has taught Women's Small Group Bible

Study, taught Sunday School, led prayer groups, served as custodian, kitchen committee

chairperson, church decorator, and served on the planning committee for the building of her

previous church home. Participant 10 has a transcendent spiritual nature that affords the gift of

discernment and a deep and clear reverential understanding of God's Word. Her narrative

reflected the spiritual attachment traits mentioned above as she offered content that developed

the themes of spiritual relationship, transformation, faith, the Holy Spirit, and Storytelling.

Spiritual Relationship

Traditionally, in almost all aspects of Black life, spirituality has a vast influence on Black

Americans: it presents as a core element of Black culture.[501] Spirituality may be defined as "a relationship with God or whatever is held to be the ultimate that fosters a sense of meaning, purpose, and mission in life."[502] Simply stated, spirituality affords meaning-making to the lived experiences of Black Americans. This construct is attached to the narrative of Participant 10 as she mentions that she is "very spiritual" and has an "intrinsic feeling for God' through "my relationship with Him," "relationship with God is first" in my life. She further offers that her intimate relationship with God motivates her to "spend time daily with the Lord communing with Him" (Phil:6), and to faithfully "wait to hear back to see what He will say to me" (Habakkuk 2:1).

Further developed, the piece about communing and waiting for God's answer correlates to spirituality's mystical characteristic of inquiry by the individual.[503] Because her spirit connects with God's spirit (John 4:24), she can engage in dialogue with a God who is communicative and seeks relational experiences with His creation to better their understanding of who He is (Rev 3: 20-22; James 1:5). Communing with God supports the notion of revealing. Prayer is the the usual method for communing with God. Prayer is simply intentionally, within our consciousness, telling our feelings to God in worship, praise, or supplication believing His omniscience allows Him to hear and answer one's petitions. Participant 10's spiritual relationship with God is at the core of who she is and centers her motivation and inspiration for

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[501] Cristobal Salinas, Jr. et al., "The Role of Spirituality for Black Male Community College Students," *Community College Journal of Research and Practice* 42, nos. 7-8 (February 2018): 504, https://doi.org/10.1080/10668926.2018.1429961. See also, Wood and Hilton, "Spirituality and Academic Success," 29.

[502] Salinas, "The Role of Spirituality for Black Male Community College Students," 505.

[503] Michael E. Dantley, "African American Spirituality and Cornel West's Notions of Prophetic Pragmatism: Restructuring Educational Leadership in American Urban Schools," *Educational Administration Quarterly* 41, no. 4 (October 2005): 654, https://doi.org/10.1177/0013161X04274274.

life.[504] This intimacy with God causes her to "move, breathe. and have my being because of

Him" (Acts 17:28); she mentions that He is the "architect of my life," "the author and finisher"

of her faith (Heb 12:2).[505] Her overall narrative relative to spiritual relationship is interpreted as a

belief system that affords meaning-making which manifests as improved self-efficacy, self-

worth, and self-esteem in her lived experiences.[506]

Transformation

Spirituality assists transformative conduct in the individual.[507] Spiritual relationship with

God sets in place a change in mindset and behavior for Participant 10. Her operative

comportment demonstrates that she is "free [in my] mind to walk by faith and not by sight"

(John 8:36; 2 Cor 5:7) because she functions from a "mindset and posture of spirituality" (Col

3:2; Rom 12:2; Phil 4:8-9). The intentionality in which Participant10 formulates her thought

process adheres to a spiritual discipline posing the behavior of Christ as her guide for her actions.

As such, it is proffered by this researcher that Participant 10 has purposed her spiritual attitude to

align with Gods' Word in Philippians 2:5 (NKJV) which says, "Let this mind be in you which

was also in Christ Jesus." The mind Paul is writing about here is a mindset exampled by the

humility of Christ as demonstrated in His birth, death, and resurrection to redeem fallen

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[504] Dantley, "African American Spirituality and Cornel West's Notions of Prophetic Pragmatism," 654.

[505] Daphne C. Wiggins, *Righteous Content*: *Black Women's Perspectives of Church and Faith* (New York, NY: New York University Press, 2004), 80, 84, ProQuest Ebook Central. Wiggins addresses the reconstituted identities and personal relationship the Black women in her study recounted to her about God. Her offering closely relates to the narrative Participant 10 gives in creating her relational, meaning-making identity with God. Wiggins posits that, "They believe in a God who is immanent, always present, full of power, and dependable" (80). "…[these] women spoke of God as "my everything," "my life," "my breath"— "God is the beginning and end of everything." Their words reveal a conception of the self [as] transformed by God but also suggest a submergence of the self, a sense of incapacity without God."

[506] Salinas, "The Role of Spirituality for Black Male Community College Students," 505.

[507] Dantley, "African American Spirituality and Cornel West's Notions of Prophetic Pragmatism," 654.

humankind—the Incarnation.[508] The Incarnation asks believers to follow Jesus' unparalleled example of humble self-denial, self-giving, self-sacrifice, and selfless love as He lived out the Incarnation in obedient submission to His Father's will (cf. Luke 2:49; John 3:16– 17; 5:30; 12:49; 15:10).[509] Hence, it is suggested that Participant 10's spiritual transformation is motivated by her purposed desire to take on the Incarnate character of Christ by displaying a genuine attitude of humility in her personhood. Her spiritual awareness that she is a child of God moves her to live life in a Christlike way (Rom 8:16; John 1:12). Therefore, it is interpreted that Participant 10 has experienced spiritual transformation based on her intimate, intentional relationship with Christ and a devout connection to the work He has done on her behalf (Phil 3:17-21).

Participant 10 concludes that the "MWBSS has transformed me and others in this class." She goes on to state that they are "being transformed by the renewing of their minds from the education of MWBSS teaching" (Rom 12:2). In this regard, Participant 10 is relating to the teaching pedagogy of intradisciplinary integration approach within the teaching structure of the MWBSS. She confirms this notion by offering that "psychology has a relative place inside of theology and spirituality. . . they do relate" and as a result a "foundation is being laid" for effecting change in her and the group's lived experiences. This researcher posits that the spiritually transformative occurrences formed by encountering intradisciplinary integration are an underlying result of spiritual formation within the individual. The person has matured into a spiritual life wherein one is interacting cooperatively with God and the spiritual order arising

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[508] John MacArthur, *Philippians MacArthur New Testament Commentary* (Chicago, IL: Moody Publishers, 2001), 104, ProQuest Ebook Central.

[509] Ibid.

from God's personality and action.[510] Spiritual formation has assisted Participant 10, and others, to utilize the spiritual component of intradisciplinary integration to reaffirm that "if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new" (1 Cor 5:17, NKJV). Spiritual formation aids spiritual transformation in the regard that one moves away from a misplaced sense of sufficiency of the self-guided life towards a surrender to dependence on the grace of God and His strength to holistically work within the individual (2 Cor 12:9-10).

Faith

Faith is something that is spoken of as a constant source of strength among Black women. Black women have a "faith in God" that is experientially based, tried, and proven: Each could say, "I know God for myself."[511] Participant 10 examples this assertion as she says her experiential knowledge and relational attachment to God has created "my faith file of experiencing Him." She has spiritual data that informs her trust in God not based on what others say about him but from the fact that she knows God for herself through previous situational encounters with Him (Ps 40:1-3).

Faith provides spiritual fortification and places God as the locus of her belief system that grants her empowerment to transform individual lives and communities.[512] Empowerment as demonstrated in her allowance that her faith has "allowed me to minister to others" because I have studied "to show myself approved to proclaim His gospel." Her faith drives her unabashed reverence for God as she is "not ashamed of my relationship with Him" (Rom 1:16). Moreover,

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[510] McMinn, *Psychology, Theology, and Spirituality in Christian Counseling*, 11.

[511] Wiggins, *Righteous Content*, 80.

[512] Ibid., 5.

it is vital to her self-understanding and her religiosity. Participant 10's faith is a credible portrait of what lived spiritual connection, as exhibited in the dimension of faith, is among Black women.

As present in Participant 8's reveal about faith, Participant 10 speaks to the power of prayer as a significant practice in her faith. When she says it was "prayer that brought me through" she is testifying to the power of prayer in the life of a believer. She is intimating that she has an awareness of God's provision during a difficult period in her life. Moreover, this researcher ascertained by closely listening to her reflections upon her prayer life that for Participant 10 prayer has a spiritual quality that she cultivates (1 Thess 5:17).[513] It is an intimate relational communication with the Living Spirit designed to create presence with God to explore the infinite divine facets of His personhood. [514] For example, when she says prayer brought her through tough times what she is doing is responding in a spirit of humility to the activity of God's grace in her life (1 Pet 5:10).[515] Prayer, in its most intimate and effective sense for Participant 10, attaches a ubiquitous feeling of the divine presence of God and offers a life-fulfilling richness.

Holy Spirit

In Black Christian tradition, there is the experience of God the Spirit which develops for the individual as a thirst, a longing for an abiding relationship wherein the Holy Ghost indwells the spirit nature of the individual.[516] The apostle Paul recognized this immanence as he says in 1

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[513] Lewis V. Baldwin, *Never to Leave Us Alone: The Prayer Life of Martin Luther King, Jr.* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2010), x.

[514] Ibid.

[515] Ibid., xi.

[516] William C. Turner, "Pneumatology and Contemporary Theological Discourse," in *T&T Clark Handbook of African American Theology*, eds. Frederick L. Ware, Antonia Michelle Daymond, and Eric Lewis Williams (London, UK: Bloomsbury Publishing PLC, 2019) 171, ProQuest Ebook Central.

Corinthians 3:16, "Do you not know that you are a temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you? A sense for the Spirit (a *sensus numinis*) cultivated in people who know the world as a place pulsating with the tempos of life that interconnect the "visible and [the] invisible (Col 1:16).[517] This context defines Participant 10's sense of the Spirit as he conveys that she feels a "connection to the Holy Spirit." An awareness of presence that, though not seen in temporal measures, nevertheless, bears on her inner being.

Participant 10's lived experiences find identity within a spiritual reality that "moves me to encouragement for a better day," while the "Holy Spirit centers my worship in an experiential way."[518] The Spirit moves in her heart to make her pray and perform other acts of worship. She exists in a spiritual reality that assists her gift of discernment which is inspired by a deep knowledge of God's Word). This gift, as motivated by the Holy Spirit, "guides me in counseling others" (2 Tim 3:16). The Holy Spirit is her friend who empowers her in her anointing and operation of her gifts.[519] The Spirit fills her with the fullness of God.

Storytelling

The contextual and historical effects of storytelling are vital aspects of the Black American oral tradition.[520] Storytelling in the Black American tradition utilizes an oral medium to interactively engage in the process of sharing stories that articulate one's sense of historical and cultural meaning-making relating to values, traditions, and rituals.[521] Participant 10's

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[517] Turner, "Pneumatology and Contemporary Theological Discourse 172.

[518] Ibid.

[519] Ibid., 173.

[520] JoAnne Banks-Wallace, "Talk That Talk: Storytelling and Analysis Rooted in African American Oral Tradition," *Qualitative Health Research* 12, no. 3 (March 2002): 410. https://doi.org/10.1177/104973202129119892.

[521] Ibid, 411-412.

comment that "my experience in the Black Church [is] that storytelling and testimonies are important" aligns with the contextual and historical elements established within Black American storytelling. Further connection to the meaning-making construct of oral tradition in Black American culture is in her statement that her storytelling allows her to "relate to others the power of the Word from my experiences." In listening to Participant10 speak of the influence of storytelling in her lived experiences, this researched postures that Participant 10 felt empowered by exercising her ability to convey spiritual wisdom to enhance the lives of others (Eph 4:29). [522]

Elucidated further, it is posited that Participant 10's storytelling has a communal and relational purpose as well. For example, she states, "stories about Christ are transformative for the hearer," and that her hope and desire is that because "I am able now to tell others about my story" it will serve "in a beneficial way to them." Interpretation here goes to the assertion that Participant 10 desires for her story of spiritual freedom to manifest as an impetus for change in the lives of those who hear her narrative (John 8:36). Her intentions are akin to what David intimately testifies in Psalms 40:9-10

> I have proclaimed good news of righteousness in the great congregation. . . I have not hidden Your righteousness within my heart; I have spoken of Your faithfulness and Your salvation; I have not concealed Your mercy and Your truth from the great congregation.

Storytelling in the Black American cultural context, as interpreted through the narrative of Participant 10, emphasizes offering instruction, developing community, cultivating the Spirit, and sustaining a unique culture.[523] Storytelling is a means to gift others with words that can potentially improve life.[524] Storytelling gives unique expression to our Participant 10's

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[522] Banks-Wallace, "Talk That Talk," 417.

[523] Ibid.

[524] Ibid.

encounters while her stories of lived experiences assign knowledge and wisdom from one

generation to the next.

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION

Conclusion

This writer ascribes to a belief system that relies on a personal relationship with Jesus Christ as central to meaning-making and coping approaches. Considering this assertion, sustainable holistic outcomes from this writer's own therapeutic encounters served as a primary testament of how an intradisciplinary integration approach may frame a healing intervention that potentially manifests useful coping strategies. If the members of Lake Providence's MWBSS receive intradisciplinary integrative teaching, then holistic coping strategies may be created. The participant expressed transformative behavioral and spiritual outcomes of this research project demonstrated support for this thesis.

The caring usage of intradisciplinary integration within a pastoral counseling and Christian Education perspective centers CBT and Narrative theory with spirituality to create the therapeutic and pedogeological structure of this project. This theological and theoretical approach focused on the assumptions that Black Americans have an indigenous culture of story-telling and spiritual character traits that form meaning-making and activate coping strategies in their lives. Hence, it is argued that the member participants of the MWBSS demonstrated these mentioned cultural traits in the recorded interactions with this facilitator. The intervention design allowed the participants to reflect on how the process may affect them. The respondents relayed stories and expressed experiences that identified the implemented process methodology as beneficial. The participants gained increased awareness both in recognized behavioral applications and solution experiences as framed within a spiritual and cognitive paradigm.

Further developed, it is posited that the participants extended the social context of their experiences gained in this process to a broader level that allows them to see themselves not only

as disciples but as disciple-makers. It is believed that that the stakeholders gained a cognition of

self and the value of their stories to expand the community of believers in a manner that attaches

to the Great Commission (Matt 28:18-20). It is in the construct of the "beloved community" that

the improved self-will relationally infuses the being of the other in a behavior that presents as the

love of God; agape love that mirrors the *imago Dei* demonstrated as care for God and the other

(1 John 4:7-8; John 13:34-35).[525]

Intradisciplinary integration methodology shares limitations with all other integrative

approaches.[526] As such, this methodology needs further research to establish validity over a

larger and varied cross-section of participants. For example, it is not known if the same results

could be anticipated with a group of non-believers, of a younger age set, or with a different

ethnic or non-Protestant background.[527] Even so, it is argued that the asserted beneficial

outcomes from this type of study may help fill the gap in the literature. This research typology

may also prove noteworthy for driving additional in-depth research concerning the value of

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[525] Richard W. Wills, *Martin Luther King, Jr., and the Image of God. New York* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2009), 133, https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=nlebk&AN=299033&site=ehost-live&scope=site. In unpacking the concept of "beloved community" in theological and anthropological framework, it is critical to turn to Dr. Martin Luther King's intellection of "beloved community." King felt that ". . . beloved community represented the epitome of human possibility. For King, the prevalence of oppression, exploitation, and separation did not have to be the normative indicia by which human existence was measured. Rather, beloved community implied that "the disconnected aspects of reality" could be brought "into a harmonious whole," with broad application and currency that reached across religious, race, gender, class, and cultural lines. . . At bottom, the image of God as a theological construct provided King with an engaging, inclusive social framework, in which a collective vision of mutual regard could be practiced. . . King defined community to include every member of the human family. Every human being was made in the image of God, every human being was birthed with a degree of dignity, every human being possessed the capacity to desire and do good, and therefore every human being was viewed as having been invited to participate in the community of the beloved. . . to work toward beloved community. . . required a conversion of one's attitude and will. . .as a prerequisite condition to sharing in the commonwealth of this community and working to further its goal of global goodwill. While thoroughly Christian in his personal theological conviction, King anthropologically understood the image of God to be that universal condition that interrelated all humanity at its most basic level" (133) . . . "All humanity is involved in a single process, and all men [and women] are brothers [and sisters]" . . .created in the image of the one God. . . (134).

[526] Worthington, Jr., "Constructing a Trail Up the Mountain of Intradisciplinary Integration," 77.

[527] Ibid.

integrative psychotherapy and spiritually for providing holistic coping strategies for Black Americans.

Future Recommendations

The impact of spirituality regarding religiosity should be considered relative to the Black counselee's religious traditions within the counseling relationship.[528] It is posited that religiosity and spirituality mediate the effects of social control stressors and psychological distress in Black Americans. As such, it is recommended that Christian counseling, in particular pastoral counseling, should take into consideration an objective viewpoint weighing specific cultural dynamics within the counseling relationship relative to spiritual and religious perspectives of Black American counselees. The following is offered for paradigmatic consideration.

This researcher has argued and defended with primary accounts within this essay that intradisciplinary integration— psychology, theology, and spirituality—serves as beneficial for the pedagogical and theological construct of the MWBSS. When viewed from a psychological perspective, effective counselors participate in the healing relationship while also forming an independent view of the association that considers the problems of the client and the nature of the relationship in an objective manner. In other words, while the counselor reflects emotional concern during the engagement, they are also appraising and measuring from outside the counseling relationship.[529] Close notice is given to verbal intonation, facial and body motions, and unique style of interaction demonstrated by the counselee. This type of counselor awareness can be developed through proper training, cultural sensitivity on the counselor's part, and

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[528] Chatters et al., "Spirituality and Subjective Religiosity," 731.

[529] McMinn, *Psychology, Theology, and Spirituality in Christian Counseling*, 328.

supervised experience.[530] Of import, counselors are advised to give careful notice to the cultural

sensitivity element in the counseling relationship with Black Americans relative to the

significance given to spiritual and religious meaning-making within this group. [531]

Theological considerations must receive credence as the psychological tasks are being

engaged. The historical theology of Black Americans should be valued and viewed as an

essential component of counseling. The counselor must be aware that Black Christians have

distinctive subtleties and spiritual connections to their theological views that differ from other

ethnic groups even though general beliefs and praxis are similar in varying ways.[532] Explicated

further, the renowned God of deliverance is seen by Black Americans and Black churchgoers, as

a specific sub-grouping, in an elevated and major spiritual standing in Black worship practices as

compared to other cultures. The counselor must be aware that the God of the Bible for Black

Americans represents spiritual and physical freedom from historical societal oppression and

subjugation.[533] It is suggested that the counselor be sensitive to the fact that the emphasized

theology of Black Americans invokes a relational response with and from a divinely relational

and immanent God (John 15:4).[534]

Christian counseling must also account for the spiritual life of the counselee. Attempts to

ascertain if a problem is due to lack of spiritual connection, or is the problem simply a behavioral

or deeper element concerning lack of connection to God or others, or can Scripture or

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[530] McMinn, *Psychology, Theology, and Spirituality in Christian Counseling*, 328.

[531] Jang and Johnson, "Explaining Religious Effects on Distress Among African Americans," 242.

[532] Lincoln and Mamiya, *The Black Church in the African American Experience*, 17.

[533] Boyd-Franklin, "Incorporating Spirituality and Religion," 989.

[534] Stokes, "Leaning on the Lord," 13.

prayer be used competently as a cathartic aid is a critical line of investigation.[535] It is suggested

that the intervention makes use of the preceding line of scrutiny. In addition, as it relates to

counseling intervention with Black Americans, it is recommended that the counselor pay close

attention to "religious/spiritual language" used by the counselee to communicate feelings and

perspectives.

Explained further, as mentioned earlier, Black Americans' responses in therapy settings

often attach relationally to a God who is seen as relational and immanent. As such, Black

Americans will use spiritual metaphors or sayings to describe their emotional state of being.[536]

This unique communicative style emanated from a strong message of spiritual resilience in

the face of adversity throughout Black American history that is reflected in spirituals and hymns

connected to Scriptural texts (e.g., Scripture: Exodus 6:1-13; 12:31-42; 14:1-30; hymn: "He

Didn't Bring Us This Far to Leave Us"). So, it is not unusual to hear Black Americans use

spiritual metaphors or messages in counseling such as "God will see me through" (2 Cor 12:9;

Isa 43:2), and "He never gives you more than you can carry" (1 Cor 10:13, Matt 11:28-30).[537]

Quoting Bible verses is not surprising in therapeutic sessions involving Black Americans; this

display is a coping mechanism that offers comfort to the individual and creates environmental

meaning-making. Competency of the therapist requires asking the Black counselee what message

of hope is attached to the expressions of faith and spirituality. Hence, therapists who work with

Black American clients are urged to acquaint themselves with these spiritual metaphors so that

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[535] McMinn, *Psychology, Theology, and Spirituality in Christian Counseling*, 328.

[536] Boyd-Franklin, "Incorporating Spirituality and Religion," 989.

[537] Ibid.

further inquiry about and discussion of these metaphors can be incorporated into treatment when appropriate.[538]

Finally, it is this researcher's prayer that God will guide each of us to a deeper place of relational understanding and empathetic sensitivity regarding the other as motivated by our faith, passion, courage, humility, compassion, and love—*for His glory*.

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[538] Boyd-Franklin, "Incorporating Spirituality and Religion," 990.

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Appendix A

Participant Interview Responses

(**1.**) *How do you define spirituality?*

- **Participant #1**: Spirituality means to me a close relationship with God.

- **Participant #2**: Something that pertains to the church, clergy, and ministry. It is meant to help us grow in grace; grow in spirit, study helps to understand who Christ is. Adds to our prayer and meditation life, helps open our mind to a new realm not thought of before.

- **Participant #3**: God is a Spirit; He put breath in me and made me spirit also. It's all spiritual (God, the Son and the Holy Spirit). I have a relationship with the Lord. Belief in Christ and relationship with Him even though I can't touch Him I can feel him.

- **Participant #4**: Spirituality is my interconnected relationship with Christ. My best buddy, my best friend.

- **Participant #5**: I define spirituality as the connection to Him and the His Holy Spirit; constant abiding and fellowship everywhere I go.

- **Participant #6**: Having a personal relationship with God that leads me to becoming more like Christ.

- **Participant #7**: Spirituality is having and demonstrating a wholesome and sincere relationship with God; striving to fulfill His commandments.

- **Participant #8**: A state of being where there is a connection to a higher power that directs us, unseen, which gives us knowledge, insight, wisdom, and protection. I equate this being to God.

- **Participant #9**: Spirituality for me is my relationship with the Lord, how He shows who He is in my life and how I respond to the way He shows who He is in my life. He is the God of the Word not some other god as some may perceive.

- **Participant #10**: I think, I feel it is an intrinsic feeling for God and my relationship with Him.

(**2.**) *To what level do you consider yourself spiritual? (Answer Options: Not Spiritual, Slightly Spiritual, Moderately Spiritual, Very Spiritual, Don't know). Explain.*

- **Participant #1**: (Very Spiritual) I depend on the Holy Spirt for all my needs because I feel like He knows me, and I know Him. His spirit is in me. I can feel Him guiding me and moving me.

- **Participant #2**: (Moderately Spiritual) I am still learning, room for growth, and maturity. I am not there yet.

- **Participant #3**: (Very Spiritual) Because in my process in growing and maturing daily I am very spiritual.

- **Participant #4**: (Moderately Spiritual) Varies by situation. Life circumstances can create a shift, say from very spiritual to less spiritual.

- **Participant #5**: (Very Spiritual) My scripture study and morning devotional keep me feeling in a very spiritual nature. My morning Scripture is the key.

- **Participant #6**: (Very Spiritual) Because I have a close and personal relationship with Him; I know Him and what He has done for me. I believe in eternal life.

- **Participant #7**: (Very spiritual) Very spiritual says I can make mistakes because God allows me too not be perfect but to be righteous. I don't have a choice; I feel I have to be ready to connect and follow His commands.

- **Participant #8**: (Very Spiritual) I seek the guidance of my God; not perfect but I feel His presence and He is faithful to his Word; I listen for His voice in my spirit.

- **Participant #9**: (Very Spiritual) I am growing spirituality, in understanding, in knowledge of who God is. I have come a very long way. So, I am very spiritual. I depend on Him for my life. If I did not feel that dependency, then maybe I would be less spiritual. But I feel that I am very spiritual because of my connection to Him and His relationship with me because He continues to show me who He is.

- **Participant #10**: (Very Spiritual) Spirituality is communing. I spend a great deal of time daily with the Lord communing with Him but also waiting to hear back from Him to see what He will say to me.

(3.) *What power do you understand spirituality to have for giving meaning to your life experiences? (Answer Options: None, Slightly Powerful, Moderately Powerful, Very Powerful, Don't Know). Explain.*

- **Participant #1**: (Very Powerful) I see God having a hand in the things that I experience in my life. I am a cancer survivor and when I went through that He brought me out. I have been cancer free for 8 years. I believe it is because of my faith in God.

- **Participant #2**: (Moderately Powerful) I think about our ancestors and slavery, they

developed a need for serving the Lord, out in the fields, made up songs. When I look back and think of them we tend to look more toward the Lord. The trials and temptations get our attention and lets us know we are not in control as much as we think.

- **Participant #3**: (Very Powerful) Learning to depend on God; He is my all and all; He is my protection even though I can't see Him I know He is there. I can walk by faith and not by sight.

- **Participant #4**: (Very Powerful) This is easy for me. I know who God is and what He has done to change my life. I thank Him every day for turning my life around from where I was because only He could have done that. He stepped in and made a way for me for a better life. I was worth saving.

- **Participant #5**: (Very Powerful) Spirituality gives meaning to all parts of my life.

- **Participant #6**: (Very Powerful) Spirituality has given me an identity. I know that I am a child of God. I was made to worship, serve, and obey Him. All that allows me to become more like Him; Christ is in me by the power of the Holy Spirit; given me a loving heart and wisdom of all things.

- **Participant #7**: (Very Powerful) Situations in my life have fallen into line after I prayed, and I know it was Him leading me. My aunt was healed, my relationship with my husband was resolved; my son got a promotion for which I was praying. These things give meaning to God working in my life.

- **Participant #8**: (Very Powerful) What the devil meant for evil the Lord turned around for my good. God is constantly teaching me and directing me, even though some things I do not understand. As I look back over my life, I know God was at work.

- **Participant #9**: (Very Powerful) In this sanctification process, this maturing process, I am going through I see God in all aspects of my life. That interconnectedness gives me an assurance of His power to guide me in this relationship with Him.

- **Participant #10**: (Very Powerful) My relationship with God is first and foremost in my life with the Father. I move, breathe. and have my being because of Him. He is the architect of my life, pretty much there is nothing I try to do that He is not the author and finisher of.

(4.) *Contemporary theology is connecting psychology with theology and spirituality to provide deeper understanding of the healing connections between the mind, body, and spirit of humankind. This Christian counseling approach is called intradisciplinary integration where psychology, theology, and spirituality are interconnected for helping people. What is your opinion on this idea of connecting psychology with theology and spirituality to grant healing for the mind, body, and spirit of God's people? Answer options: Completely Agree, Somewhat Agree, Neutral, Somewhat Disagree, Completely Disagree). Explain your choice.*

- **Participant #1:** (Completely Agree) Although I don't know much about psychology, I know it has to do with the mind. If we take our mind and point it towards God then I can see combining these together can be helpful to people. God said everything He made was good, so, there has to be something good in what these things can do together for people.

- **Participant #2:** (Completely Agree) I think they all work together. I kind of relate it to Romans 8:28 and Philippians 2:5. They all have their good points, which align with the Word of God. Jesus was a Master Psychologist. The "renewing" of our mind (Romans 12:2). The Bible speaks about the mind all the time.

- **Participant #3:** (Somewhat Agree) I search everything through the Word, as long as it does not go against the Word I am okay with it. The Scriptures have provided the answer.

- **Participant #4:** (Completely Agree) Once you use your mind to understand who God is then you understand what He will do in the future. The spirit of God is a fact that should be believed though faith. The theology tells of who God is and then that belief gets into your mind then the spirit of God will come to you allowing transformation in my life.

- **Participant #5:** (Completely Agree)

- **Participant #6:** (Somewhat Agree) Basically I think this integration can be beneficial in the healing and counseling process. I have limited knowledge, but I think it has to adapt to the person and situation. We have to use all the knowledge and expertise we have to achieve the results we need. One size doesn't fit tall; we have to use all the tools in the toolbox. If it is to be Christian counseling, it must be rooted and grounded in the Scriptures.

- **Participant #7:** (Completely Agree) I feel since God physically created us in mind and spirit so they can and should play a part in our healing.

- **Participant #8:** (Somewhat Agree) Psychology and theology without spirituality is void. Psychologists can work with people but it's not the perfect way of healing the mind, body, and spirit. Psychologists that don't know my God may not go to where my spirituality is. Need the theology to understand the Word from an intellectual, spiritual point of view, and historical point of view. If you have all three together it makes the process less complicated and adds more meaning.

- **Participant #9:** (Completely Agree) My master's in psychology allows me to think that we're all psychologists in some degree. There is no doubt in my mind that there is a great connectivity to these disciplines for therapeutic and spiritual healing. Even with the pushback by some in the church against seeing a psychologist because they feel having God is enough. I believe God has made us unique in that we have a

relatedness of mind, body, and spirit and that each depend on each other for us to be a whole person.

- **Participant #10: (Completely Agree) You have to free your mind to walk by faith and not by sight. You have to have a mindset and posture of spirituality to be able to do that. Psychology has a relative place inside of theology and spirituality. They do relate but with this caveat. But I do believe that the presentation has to be authentic and not watering down the Word; however, if it is one that makes you question your spirituality then it is less effective and a lesser connotation.**

(5.) *The Mid-Week Bible Study/Service (MWBSS) has its mission as follows: "The mission of the Mid-Week Bible Study/Service is to serve God and edify HIs people through diligent and purposeful engagement with His Word. The desire is to develop spiritual discipline and spiritual growth that lends to a more abundant life in Christ. "I came so that they could have life—indeed, so that they could live life to the fullest" (John 10:10, Christian English Bible). The desire is to build Holy-Spirit empowered disciples through holistic (mind, body, and spiritual growth) Christian Education to impact others with God's power to create a spiritual experience that lends to a transformative life in Him. Do you feel you can gain helpful understanding for transformative behavior and coping strategies based on the Christian Education intradisciplinary integration principles gained from your experience in the MWBSS? (Answer options: Completely Agree, Somewhat Agree, Neutral, Somewhat Disagree, Completely Disagree.)*
Explain.

- **Participant #1: (Completely Agree) The (MWBSS) has been a great help to me in seeing things differently than before. I understand the Word better and some of the teachings you do make me look at how I can change my way of doing things for the better.**

- **Participant #2: (Completely Agree) When I hear the people calling in saying that you have helped them, it helps me as well. I make it a point to listen to your ministry; we want a more abundant life. Satan came to destroy; Jesus came to give us abundant life. Yes, I have grown by listening to the call-in ministry for Mid-Week. You are using the Word as foundation for teaching and connecting Scriptures to make sense of what you are teaching. It makes me think, gives me a new look at how to study and connect Scriptures. It gives me growth, deeper understanding the way you use Scriptures to make points.**

- **Participant #3: (Completely Agree). Through the process of living and the experiences of life and depending on God, as I have grown older, I have faith and strength that I have been transformed. I continue to be transformed daily. The Mid-Week has been beneficial for me. It has helped me transform my mind because I get better understanding from the teaching. I listen and then search it thought the scriptures as the Holy Spirit leads me in the right way. The MWBSS is giving me a deeper outlook and insight on the Scriptures in the way the class is being conducted.**

- **Participant #4**: **(Completely Agree) Your classes and message are not only helpful but very educational, explained to the point. I know it helps me and challenges me to go deeper, and the detailed teaching makes it clear and plain for me to apply to my life.**

- **Participant #5**: **(Somewhat Agree) I agree in the sense that I can transform my behavior in certain areas by connecting to the teaching from this Mid-Week study. The process of coping is a growth piece with me, but the teaching here helps me; it affects my behavior in a Christ like manner.**

- **Participant #6**: **(Completely Agree) Until I read this question, I had not linked the discipline of psychology in the class. But I do remember you talking about psychospiritual integration when you did the series on love. I think your teaching method has been enlightening, informative, and has impacted my life and is effective. Now that I understand the method, I wish for you to go deeper and use more of it for our benefit.**

- **Participant #7**: **(Completely Agree) I feel like your Mid-Week Bible study moves us from the basic foundation of who Christ to developing thoughts about how He wants us to live. I have not applied all the teachings 100% but I have been enlightened about how to consider things that can help me.**

- **Participant #8**: **(Completely Agree) The approach that has been taught in the MWBSS breaks the Word down with references and gives deeper and different insight. Scripture cross reference is a key to adding understanding to the teaching and the interactions with others along with teacher guidance which gives ideas and strategies for me to use for helping me along in my situations.**

- **Participant #9**: **(Completely Agree) We can gain knowledge through this transformative process, as well as added coping skills**. **The MWBSS as you teach it gives us things to think on and to make choices to act on. One of the things you teach on is "intentionality." It is the one thing that is sticking with me as a spiritual guide for changing my behavior for the betterment of my situation.**

- **Participant #10**: **(Completely Agree) It is not just me but is also those who are being transformed that I see in this class. I am a witness to those being transformed by the renewing of their minds from the education that is being offered in the Mid-Week study. I believe a foundation is being laid and each brick being laid is resonating with me and with others.**

(6.) *Do you feel that your perception of spirituality allows you to personally understand the meaning and application of Mark 12:30-31 (NKJV) – "And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength.' This is the first commandment." (Answer options: Completely Agree, Somewhat Agree, Neutral, Somewhat Disagree, Completely Disagree). Explain.*

- **Participant #1**: (Completely Agree) This Scripture tells me also to love my brother like I love God. Yes, I try to apply this to my life as a Christian.

- **Participant #2**: (Completely Agree) I can devote love to God and my neighbor.

- **Participant #3**: (Completely Agree) My growing process gives me a transformed heart through my relationship with the Lord.

- **Participant #4**: (Completely Agree) The change in my life in moving toward God causes me to treat people differently. I have a different mindset process, a different heart process because of my understanding of Gods' Word. I can love my enemies better now.

- **Participant #5**: (Completely Agree) The constant hunger for being nourished to gain spiritual discernment allows me to understand and apply this verse.

- **Participant #6**: (Completely Agree) Yes. This is a verse with which I have struggled. I want to but I am not sure if I could, I don't know if I have the capability. Like Paul, I want to do right but find myself doing wrong at times. God loves me and I don't want to cheat him with my behavior toward Him.

- **Participant #7**: (Completely Agree) If I love Christ, then I must honor Him with all my mind, heart, soul, and strength. I must love that of which I am a part of given that I am a part of Christ as are my brothers and sisters whom He also created. I must ask for deliverance and strength for all people.

- **Participant #8**: (Completely Agree) I think verse thirty-one is the one that guides my spirit. Unless I can treat people the way I want to be treated I can't apply this, but first I have to love God. The first verse is important and so is the second verse.

- **Participant #9**: (Completely Agree) My spirituality has helped me to understand and apply this Scripture in my life. My growth in understanding the extent of God's love allow me the peace and assurance to operate in loving God and loving others with my whole self.

- **Participant #10**: (Completely Agree) I believe that discipleship is repeating the process. Once you understand we are called to be fishers of men then I am able help others become transformative in their own lives. I become a disciple that makes other disciples.

(7.) *Storytelling is a time-honored tradition for passing on information and creating understanding in the Black American worship experience. "Storytelling" within your cultural environment has influenced your current understanding of who God is? (Answer options: Completely Agree, Somewhat Agree, Neutral, Somewhat Disagree, Completely Disagree). Explain.*

- **Participant #1:** **(Somewhat Agree) I was baptized at an early age, and it was because of the stories I heard about Jesus from my parents, grandparents, others in my family, and at church.**

- **Participant #2: (Completely Agree) Listening to stories told by my grandparents and parents helped me learn about traditions, stories about revivals. I was on the mourner's bench in my day and the stories about Jesus made me want to be saved. People praying for me like the mothers and deacons, talking about Jesus and God to me influenced me greatly in accepting Christ.**

- **Participant #3: (Completely Agree) That's how I came to learn who God is, through storytelling.**

- **Participant #4: (Somewhat Agree) Different stories from my parents and grandparents that I was bought up on influenced the way I see Christ and how I came to know about religion. They heard the word from the preacher and passed it on to me. They were not able to really read that well, my grandparents, but they passed on the messages they got from the preachers.**

- **Participant #5: (Completely Agree). Culturally storytelling in the realm of faith represents discipleship. It gives the elements needed to understand the gospel and then leads to joining Jesus. You need storytelling to make disciples. I have seen this work in my family from my mother's testimony I was moved to Christ.**

- **Participant #6: (Neutral). Storytelling has not been a major influencer for me in getting to know God. My parents passed when I was very young; I did not grow up in Christian home, so this storytelling was not part of my foundation. Bible study, teaching, prayer in my later years have been bigger influencers. I can see that it does have benefits, though. [_Researcher's Note:_ _This lends credence to the fact of how important family tradition is in raising a child in the understanding of Christ. Use to draw parallel to cultural aspect concerning the impact of Black family spirituality and Black traditional religious narratives_.]**

- **Participant #7: (Neutral) In my recall I cannot remember hearing stories about who God is. Growing up my mother and grandmother worked all the time, and we did not go to church. I know there was a God but hearing stories about Him I did not hear that.**

- **Participant #8: (Completely Agree) I have heard your story of how God transformed your life (_i.e., this researcher_), and I can see how powerful God is in changing people's lives.**

- **Participant #9: (Somewhat Agree) I did not have explicit stories told to me about God**. **They told stories but did not connect them to the power of God. But thinking back on listening to the stories told in the church I gained an understanding of**

God's presence. Storytelling in the Black church was and remains significant for understanding who God is.

- **Participant #10**: (Completely Agree) Yes. When the Word is spoken to the unchurched or the unspiritual or the milk drinkers it is imperative that you are able to relate to them from your own faith file how you came to respect the spirituality, to respect the connectivity of faith and belief in Christ. . . forsaking not the assembling of the body. Telling all these things that are embedded in the foundation of Christianity. And I have found in my experience in the Black Church that storytelling and testimonies are important because often people can be ashamed of where they come from and fear that they cannot be used as Satan twists their minds negatively. But like the woman at the well people can be transformed by an encounter with Christ and they go and tell who Christ is and His transformative power. The Bible and its stories are transforming tools. The stories from Revelation helped me plant my feet in the Word of God.

(8.) Did/does storytelling help you convey your spiritual experiences to others (i.e., your children, grandchildren, church members, etc.)? Explain.

- **Participant #1**: Yes. I often tell my children about how I have experienced God in my life in different ways. I do this to let them know that they can call on Him, too.

- **Participant #2**: Yes, it does. My personal experience is a testimony that I have passed on to my children. They enjoyed listening and are blessed by my stories of my spiritual experiences. They were influenced by them to give their life to the Lord.

- **Participant #3**: Yes. I speak to my sons daily about the Lord and share with each other about our spirituality, our spiritual experiences. We talk about what God is doing for us in our lives. I bought my Grandson a Bible and directed him to Proverbs.

- **Participant #4**: Yes. I go back to Proverbs where it speaks about how to train up your children in the way they should go. I talk to my kids about Christ and what He has done for me in my life. About how we got to where we are and how God has gotten us over. Storytelling is like planting a seed.

- **Participant #5**: Yes. Storytelling helps my evangelism. It is a leveling form of fishing for men. Allows you to see eye-to-eye with the person you are telling the story to. My testimony of my life has power to move others to change their lives like I did.

- **Participant #6**: No. It is an area I wish to grow in to let my kids and others know about God through my witness and testimony about Him.

- **Participant #7**: Yes. I use my life experience from years past to tell others about the grace of God. God led me in making different moves in my life from one state to the other, for example.

- **Participant #8**: Yes. I like to let them know I didn't get to this place by myself. It took faith, God, and others helping me along the way.

- **Participant #9**: Yes. Telling stories about God to my children and grandchildren gives them a better foundation for learning about God.

- **Participant #10**: Yes. It gives you the comprehension of the depth of living and living for Christ, and it also gives authenticity to your story that I am able now to tell others about my story in a beneficial way to them.

(9.) *Do you feel you tap into the power of your spirituality to live out your faith in a way that exemplifies God's love toward others and encourages others to seek God? Explain.*

- **Participant #1**: Yes, I do. When I am doing things, the Holy Spirit comes to me and gives me alternatives for doing my best; the Holy Spirit has molded me to correct others in their poor behavior such as cursing and keeps me from judging others.

- **Participant #2**: Yes. Scripture that says bear the infirmities of the weak makes me show God's love towards others and encourage them to seek God. My evangelism helped me to give my testimony to convince them to come to the Lord. But I realized we can only plant and God does the rest.

- **Participant #3**: Yes. I have a friend in a marriage for 54 years and I help her out with the Word. We talk about God, and I tell her to give God the glory for putting me in your life. Look to God for help and release your problems to Him because He can fix it. We help each other. I know my God and I know He is all about love and about relationships. This is what I tell others.

- **Participant #4**: Yes. I have had conversations with my old friends to share Christ with them. Matthew 28 comes to mind when I talk to others about Christ. I am not ashamed of the gospel. I don't' hide or fake it. I carry my Bible because I am reading this thing. It is my sword.

- **Participant #5**: No at present. I am in an infancy stage, and I don't know what that looks like now in spiritual experience. I am still maturing to understand what power I do have considering spirituality.

- **Participant #6**: Yes, I think I have. The power of the gospel, the Holy Spirit, and God has transformed me and allowed me to grow and mature in learning how to love and displaying that love.

- **Participant #7**: Yes. I read the Daily Bread and send it out to fifteen people each day.

- **Participant #8**: Yes. I believe you treat others the way you want to be treated. I let people know I am saved by grace; all things I have come from God. It causes me to seek God and let others know about how my faith helped me and God will do the same for you, too.

- **Participant #9**: Yes, I think I do.

- **Participant #10**: Yes. My business was a ministry. My customers saw me favored; they trusted me with their hurt and pain and I dealt with it in spiritual and delicate manner.

(**10.**) *You are at ease expressing your faith and spiritual view within your interactions with others in different settings. (Answer options: Completely Agree, Somewhat Agree, Neutral, Somewhat Disagree, Completely Disagree). Explain.*

- **Participant #1**: (Somewhat Agree) I say somewhat because I don't want to be the know-it-all type of person. I am comfortable in doing it and am guided by the situation I am in; not to overexpress my beliefs. It is the ego or the spirit in me that causes me to express my beliefs to others. The "why" is critical.

- **Participant #2**: (Completely Agree) I don't mind testifying to what God has done for me. I am at ease doing this because I understand the Word and its meaning; the peace God gives me allows me to do this. Example: The peace I had when my wife passed, there was so much peace in my spirit that I was able to calm our children in their time of need; the kind of peace that passes all understanding (Phil 4:7).

- **Participant #3**: (Somewhat Agree) I am in constant discussion about God, particularly through my group of married couples. One of the members said he does not believe there is only one way to God. So, I took him back to the Word, he got really angry, so I backed off. He is just a die-hard in his beliefs because he has been in and out of some many religious groups. I pray for him, but I defended God's Word in talking to him.

- **Participant #4**: Yes. (****Combines with answer to #9. Essentially answered both questions in response to #9**)

- **Participant #5**: (Completely Agree) I completely agree and then some. In today's society my generation X finds it unpopular to share the gospel unsolicited. But that does not stop me because I share my testimony; I evangelize without any issues.

- **Participant #6**: Neutral. It is an area I need to grow in; I have not arrived, but I have left the station. I want to be a disciple and not just a convert; in order to do that I have to grow in sharing my testimony about how the Word has changed my

life and how relationship with God is a good thing for not only me but for others as well.

- **Participant #7**: (Completely Agree) Being in corporate America, I speak about God in those work situations, if led by the Spirit to do. I try to express my spirituality.

- **Participant #8**: (Completely Agree) I not ashamed of the gospel. I can do it no matter who is around; I'm at ease talking about God wherever I am.

- **Participant #9**: (Somewhat Agree). I feel for the most part I have no problem sharing my views on faith and spirituality. I say that because probably there have been some settings in which I have not been tested. I tend to remember who I am in Christ Jesus as opposed to who I am in an organization or in a community setting. Sometimes you get typecast and people expect you to evangelize. The test is when you are in a setting when people do not know who you are. I don't want to deny Christ in any setting because He did not deny me.

- **Participant #10**: (Completely Agree) This why I study to show myself approved. The Word tells me that I am be the salt of the earth and light in a dark word. If I am ashamed to say who He is, then I am not worth belonging to Him.

(**11.**) Is your worship experience based more on religious knowledge or a sense of connection to the Holy Spirit? Explain.

- **Participant #1**: It is based on my connection to the Holy Spirit; not so much on religious knowledge. Example of the thief on the cross where the one man humbled himself asking to be saved. His spirit moved him to ask for forgiveness and to be saved not his knowledge of Jesus' teachings. In the moment he felt the Spirit of the Lord moving on him to connect him to Christ.

- **Participant #2**: Sense of connection to the Holy Spirit. Because He is my teacher, guide, power source, comforter. He brings us to Christ and seals us there until redemption. I rely on the Holy Spirit to tell me what to do. When I am worshipping it is the spirit that drives my connection to the experience I am having. When I was saved is the first time I felt the Holy Spirit; I was uncaged like a bird let free from a cage, burden lifted at 13 years old.

- **Participant #3:** You cannot separate them. The knowledge of the Lord and the Holy Spirit becomes. . . they both play a part because He is leading me and guiding me. The still quiet voice gives me discernment. I say it is both. My knowledge informs my spiritual connection. It's not one or the other.

- **Participant #4**: It is a combination of both. Without the religious knowledge or the writing of the Word I would not know how to connect with the spirit. The Bible excites the mind and teaches of the spirit so I can now recognize the spirit when I

feel it in my worship experience. For example, when I read of God's love it moves a deep feeling in my spiritual nature. The Word exposes the spirit to me.

- **Participant #5:** Connection to the Holy Spirit. I have experienced the sense of knowledge in Scripture before I experienced the Holy spirit. So, I connect the Holy Spirit with my knowledge of the scripture, and this allows the spirit to reign in me and I feel a stronger faith.

- **Participant #6:** Connection to the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit talks to me, guides me, puts me back on the right path by reminding me I am a child of God. The Holy Spirit helps me to pray when I don't know what to pray for.

- **Participant #7:** Sense of connection to the Holy Spirit. In knowing the Bible, it provides a sense of connection with the Holy Spirit. It created a sense of connection to the Holy Spirit through providing understanding as to who God is.

- **Participant #8:** Sense of connection to the Holy Spirit. Because religious knowledge can be superficial, but if I don't have the meaning of those words in my heart and don't apply, and not be led by the Holy spirit religion means nothing. Acts 1:8 is what I think about here along with the Holy Spirit coming on the day of Pentecost to empower the disciples.

- **Participant #9:** I think it's a combination of the two. I believe my knowledge allows me to acknowledge the presence of the Holy Spirit. The spirit of God indwells me and knows all about me. Th knowledge of His Word and the power of His spirit allows me to know and relate in my spirit to who He is.

- **Participant #10:** It is a combination of both, but more so because of my life experiences it is a connection to the Holy Spirit that drives my worship. My worship is prompted by the Word, by the songs, which touches the very place I am in and moves me to an encouragement of a better day. The Holy Spirit centers my worship in an experiential way.

(**12.**) *Romans 8:6 (ESV) says, "For to set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace." Based on your view of what spirituality means in your life, what do you think this passage is saying to you as a believer concerning your mind and your spirit as drivers for your behavior and self-awareness?*

- **Participant #1:** "Garbage in garbage out." We reap what we sow. If we sow in the fruit of the spirit, we reap life and peace. Believers should set their minds on the spirit because no good thing rest in the flesh. My spirituality drives me to operate in the spirit. My spirituality causes me to repent and seek God as the guide for my behavior.

- **Participant #2**: The mind in me has to be like that in Christ Jesus. I have to keep my mind on Jesus. Keeping my mind in the spirit of Christ influences all my behavior. Walking the spirit brings me joy, operating in the flesh causes problems for me.

- **Participant #3**: I want life. I want to be with Christ. My goal is heaven, not this earthly life. It has transformed my life and my thinking; operate as drivers for my behavior; keeps me in the Word daily seeking understanding.

- **Participant #4**: You can't serve two masters. You can't have a carnal mind because that is death. The spiritual mind says you have to do something different. I can't straddle the fence.

- **Participant #5**: This says to me that I am in constant need of the Holy Spirit and without the Holy Spirit I cannot have peace.

- **Participant #6**: It tells me not to be selfish and carnal, but to set my mind on peace and set my mind on others and on God. My spiritual maturity helps me to set my mind on the spirit of Christ. I have discernment because of my spiritual growth that allows me to operate in choosing life and peace; it causes my life to align in a proper way.

- **Participant #7**: If your behavior is to satisfy the flesh then you are eternally dead. But if your mind is on God and His spirit then you have life eternally and peace through Him. My faith is shown by my deeds. My eternal destination is determined by my behavior. The spirit element drives my behavior.

- **Participant #8**: For me to live is Christ, but if I don't live in Christ, I am dead anyway. I am spiritually dead; I am no good if my mind is set on the flesh. Even though I make mistakes the spirit that lives in me gives me peace because I know God will give me a second chance to get it right. The spirit informs my behavior. I have to die to my flesh each day because no good thing lives in my flesh.

- **Participant #9**: I think this question speaks to the interconnectedness of psychology, theology, and spirituality because I know how important it is to keep your mind on Christ to drive your behaviors and your actions. The alternative is that I find myself operating in a fleshly manner which creates issues and distractions from the world; it gives the enemy entry to your heart and mind. The flesh is a great pull, but we have the power within us to keep our mind stayed on Christ.

- **Participant #10**: You have to place your mind on things above. That Scripture is saying to me that I have to look at every situation from a spiritual connotation and not from my fleshly thoughts. Yes, I am flesh but I try to let my spirit operate in Christ and be on a higher plane. I hide the Word in my heart so I can try and not sin against God. The spirit drives my behavior.

(13.) *Have you ever felt that your faith and spirituality was weakened and not effective in your life? If so under what circumstances? How did you "transform your mind" and get back on solid spiritual footing?*

- **Participant #1**: Yes, I have felt weakened. I have doubted and questioned. Recent weight loss because of past cancer has caused me to be concerned. Am I lacking faith because I am concerned about this? When trouble comes don't run but go to the Rock. Talking with you this morning helps me get back to the Rock. He has been my help in the past so why not trust Him now. He is the same God always.

- **Participant #2**: Yes. There was time when I did not have good teaching for a solid foundation in the Word after getting saved. Was not active in the church early on. But the Lord spoke to me and said you have to get back in church for your sake and your children's sake. I went back to church. Have not wavered since then, over 30 years ago.

- **Participant #3**: Yes. I got down on my knees and asked God to remove it from me. I knew what I was doing was wrong. I asked God to forgive me. I had to repent of it first. Please get me back on track because I knew I was out of line.

- **Participant #4**: Yes, when my wife died suddenly, I became a doubter in a small amount of time. I thought I had done something wrong. I had to go back to reading, praying, and my good friends helped me through. Let the Word take over not let your emotions take control.

- **Participant #5**: Yes. I had problems when I was not connected to God's Word. I got back on solid footing through meditation on the Scripture with an intentionality to start my day.

- **Participant #6**: Yes. When I have fallen short or missed the mark is when I am not renewing my mind on a daily basis. I don't pray, not studying the word, not being intentional in worship. I get back on track by acknowledging the presence of the Lord. He is ever present, and I draw on my faith of not wanting to disappoint Him and this brings me back in line.

- **Participant #7**: Yes. During COVID-19 I was weak and scared; I became obsessive/compulsive with cleaning, wiping down stuff, and not allowing people in my home. I was praying to God to turn this pandemic around and when nothing happened I wondered if he was hearing my prayers. Prayer changed my thought process and helped me regain my strength and faith in God and His power to control situations for my good. I know where I need to go to get my mind back in check—I pray.

- **Participant #8**: Yes. Ineffective, weakened, and forsaken. Through prayer to God and humble petition to God I was strengthened. Lord help me. Nothing has changed but prayer gives me that peace, talking to Jesus gives me that peace that passes all understanding. My spiritual relationship tells me to go to the Rock.

- **Participant #9:** Yes. I think back and wonder sometimes if my faith ever was strong or effective. There was time in my life when I straddled the fence with my commitment to following Christ. But God got my attention, painfully, and brought me back to dead center. I then had a transformation that brought me back into the fold. I was fooling the world about my commitment, but God knew I was not committed. Once I realized my uneasiness spiritually and that I needed to make a true decision, I changed my behavior and fully committed to Christ.

- **Participant #10:** Yes. Trials, tribulations, financial strain—financial, spousal relationship, health workplace trials and tribulations have placed me in a strained faith position in my life at times. It was prayer that brought me through and set my feet on firmer ground. . .worship, music, being reminded through my faith file of experiencing Him before, knowing and believing that He will bring me through it.

(14.) Galatians 5:22-23 (NKJV) says, "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness. . .gentleness, self-control." Do you feel a better understanding of how psychology, theology and spirituality can impact one's life and can potentially cause you to develop better coping strategies that grant an improved quality of life? Explain

- **Participant #1:** Yes, I feel it helps me in all these areas. I have experienced these to be utilized in my daily life (i.e., self-control when I was a bus driver); I prayed for patience to guide me in raising my children and refrain from physical spankings. Good person means nothing; it is serving Jesus' purpose based on our fruit of the spirit that counts.

- **Participant #2:** (Participant puts up a book that lists the fruit of spirit from the author Rose.) Jesus is represented by each element of the fruit of the Spirit. Yes, I believe that the tie-ins from psychology, theology, and spirituality can help me cope better with life. It has given me a better mindset to formulate my behaviors.

- **Participant #3:** Yes. The way you explained it as being a transformed life makes me see what impact this Scripture can mean for understanding how your teaching can impact people's lives.

- **Participant #4:** Yes. I look at Romans 8:28 that all things work together for the good of us. The key is to use those three things like the Trinity, they need to be interconnected to be effective. An understanding of each one supports and accepts the other for causing a change.

- **Participant #5:** Yes. I understand they have a Triune meaning. That is the union of the psychology, theology, and spirituality, particularly when it comes to the fruit of self-control. I believe Phil 4:8 gives the essence of what it means to connect these three things together for how to live a better life. Think on good things, believe on good things, and the spirit will move your behavior.

- **Participant #6**: Absolutely!!! Got to use all the tools in the toolbox as long as it is founded and rooted on the Scripture. If so, then this method is good for helping people.

- **Participant #7**: Yes. I am not sure I understand all the aspect connections between the three, but I do know that since I have accepted Christ, I have a sense (mindset) of confidence and worthiness that is centered in my heart and mind that makes me feel better about who I am and with what I can deal.

- **Participant #8**: Yes. I know that psychology speaks about what the Bible says in challenging people's thinking. Jesus was the Master Psychologist. The Bible says you got to love yourself. Jesus spoke in parables, spoke healing to people by challenging their mind and their belief and their faith for taking ownership, spiritually, for their healing. Psychology and theology have helped me gain improved self-esteem. Coupled with my spirituality, I now have a changed life and can deal with my life situations better as well as help other people.

- **Participant #9**: Yes, I absolutely do. If you understand how all these of intradisciplinary integration pieces interconnect there is a value and an enrichment that produces the fruit of the spirit that produces better outcomes and better life management skills. When you get in God's Word you can serve other people and serve Him with the love, joy, and peace that the fruit of the spirit speaks about.

- **Participant #10**: Yes. It is because this Scripture requires me to understand what the writer is saying. I first have to apply it to my life in the same way I apply Romans 12:1-3. I am having to transform my mind, be humble in my spirit, which then allows me to operate in the fruit of the spirit as this scripture lists. It is one fruit as He is one and I am one in Him. My connection to the vine allows me to operate in each element of the fruit as one characteristic that reflects Christ in me. Understanding how psychology, theology, and spirituality connect gives meaning to operating in the fruit of the spirit for my life.

Appendix B

IRB Approval

June 2, 2021

Christopher Stokes
Jonathan Sullivan

Re: IRB Application - IRB-FY20-21-804 Heart, Soul, Mind, and Strength: Understanding Spirituality's Transformative Impact as Assisted by Intradisciplinary Integration

Dear Christopher Stokes and Jonathan Sullivan,

The Liberty University Institutional Review Board (IRB) has reviewed your application in accordance with the Office for Human Research Protections (OHRP) and Food and Drug Administration (FDA) regulations and finds your study does not classify as human subjects research. This means you may begin your research with the data safeguarding methods mentioned in your IRB application.

Decision: No Human Subjects Research

Explanation: Your study is not considered human subjects research for the following reason:

(2) Your project will consist of quality improvement activities, which are not "designed to develop or contribute to generalizable knowledge" according to 45 CFR 46. 102(l).

Please note that this decision only applies to your current research application, and any modifications to your protocol must be reported to the Liberty University IRB for verification of continued non-human subjects research status. You may report these changes by completing a modification submission through your Cayuse IRB account.

Also, although you are welcome to use our recruitment and consent templates, you are not required to do so. If you choose to use our documents, please replace the word *research* with the word *project* throughout both documents.

If you have any questions about this determination or need assistance in determining whether possible modifications to your protocol would change your application's status, please email us at irb@liberty.edu.

Sincerely,

G. Michele Baker, MA, CIP
Administrative Chair of Institutional Research
Research Ethics Office