



# **The Essence of Spiritual Formation**

A Reminder to God's Children

Dr. Lee Bee Teik

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August 2022

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Author: Lee Bee Teik

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**Note: The author, Lee Bee Teik, was taken home to the Lord on 11-June-2022. She was not able to proof read this final formatted digital book. To ensure that the text represents what she intended as far as possible, the manuscript is published “as-is”.**

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### **More about this book:**

In her struggle to define the meaning of the Spiritual Formation of a child of God, the author, Dr. Lee Bee Teik, discovered that many Christians view the process as a formal method to gain spiritual merit before God. Others ignore it as unnecessary as long as one is guaranteed a place in heaven. Yet others are confused over whether it is necessary to call the 'drawing nearer to God' spiritual formation. Is it not only for formally educated believers?

Unable to express her faith experiences to others without causing misunderstanding, she kept her views to herself while ministering to others as best she can since her school days in Penang. Finally, in her later years, she was able to briefly put down her thoughts on paper through a book.

Further, as Dr. Lee knows God through a mostly Malaysian-Chinese Christian background (family and church), there was much for her to experience and decipher as she was also influenced by English educated teachers, pastors and missionaries from the West. Is spiritual formation culture dependent? Difficult though it has been, she was not alone in her search to understand how God, her heavenly Father, relates with her. He guided her through different stages of earthly

life lived in various countries. In her later years, at last, she has the time to share her thoughts and convictions about the process of spiritual formation. She hopes that someone may be helped in having his false guilt, of how to relate with God, removed. Thus, he will appreciate, love and enjoy God more and without fear. He will discover that, no matter what background he comes from (e.g. racial, cultural, educational), he can glorify God if he trusts and obeys Him.

### **About the Author**

Dr Lee is a former medical doctor who is interested in helping the growth of the whole person in Christ. Being married to Bishop Emeritus Hwa Yung (from the Malaysian Methodist Church) has given her opportunities to meet fellow believers from different backgrounds. Out of this milieu is developed an insight into the spiritual formation of Christian believers in various walks of life. She was the founding Director of the former Reconre Sdn Bhd and continues to informally guide believers in their struggle to draw nearer to God and His ways through books, articles and personal friendship.

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## INTRODUCTION

I am not writing this message to undermine or overrule what is currently taught in Christian seminaries and churches about the spiritual formation of a child of God. I write this with a burden for the preparation of the bride of Jesus Christ, the only begotten and beloved Son of God the Father. I have been much encouraged by the many devout brothers and sisters Christ with regards to their desire to be spiritually formed for Jesus. When every believer conforms to the image of Christ, He will return, as promised in Revelations 19:6-9, to bring His bride (church prepared) home to the Father.

Sometimes, in our passion to help fellow believers recognize and live according to the process of spiritual formation, we place stumbling blocks in the paths of our brothers and sisters in Christ i.e. the beloved body of Christ. We may make the process sound so complicated and difficult that many believers get discouraged. They may accept that this is only for the 'holy, diligent or full-time' servants of God or certain well-educated lay people. If attending organized retreats is the only way to become more like Christ, then it is not for them. Others take it as an achievement or merit and so others get put off on hearing the former boast about and

compare the number of silent retreats they have attended.

But this is not so, as shown in the Scriptures. Jesus did not mention a specific place or posture when He commended the woman who sat at His feet to listen to Him. He told the Samaritan woman by the well that God is spirit and those who worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth. He is not limited to methods or venues. He is more interested in their heart and attitude. As long as we face Him and is focused on Him, He is pleased. Therefore, we may know Him better (be spiritually more formed) in formal or informal ways. Every 'born again' believer of Jesus Christ needs to be spiritually formed whether they consciously know the process exists or not. Paul, in 2 Corinthians 3:18, teaches us that to be increasingly conformed to His image. A child of God needs to be looking at Him wholeheartedly while He does the transformation of that child of God into His likeness. It is to allow His image to be imposed on us while our image disappears.

In the mid-1980's, at a silent retreat with nine other fulltime Christian workers, I had many of my doubts about formal silent retreats somewhat clarified as God gently spoke to me through a down-to-earth spiritual director. We laughed as we shared during that one-hour

session with her. I reckoned that since God has a sense of humour, He allows us to have one too. Silent retreats are not meant for “spiritual” people and talk only. That deepened my conviction that anyone may communicate with Him intimately, frankly and anywhere. He allows us to weep or joke before Him. He is real, caring and humanly normal!

Therefore, I invite the readers of this booklet to ponder with me and let the Holy Spirit be our Guide as we sit in the presence of the Lord Jesus whom we trust, love and obey without seeing Him yet.

May the peace and joy of our Lord Jesus be with us each day.

Lee Bee Teik

(A fellow child of God in Jesus)

## CHAPTER 1: THE SPIRITUAL FORMATION OF A HUMAN BEING INTO CHRIST-LIKENESS

*Mostly taken from Chapter 4 of  
**Building a Love House is Still Hard Work**  
by the author.*

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*“All of us, with unveiled faces, seeing the glory of the Lord as though reflected in a mirror, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another; for this comes from the Lord, the Spirit.” (2 Corinthians 3:18)*

### A PANORAMIC VIEW OF THE TERM – SPIRITUAL FORMATION

The term ‘Spiritual Formation’ has become popular among Christians in the Protestant church. It was only in the last five decades or so that it has been taught as a subject in many western seminaries. However, the issue of spiritual formation is as old as Genesis.

As soon as God said, “*Let us make man in Our image*”, the spiritual formation of each created human being has begun. The process will end when all God’s redeemed people have been completely conformed to the image of Christ.

However, many believers still believe that such transformation may be absorbed through mere attendance of, for example, seminars, spiritual retreats or small group formation. Many are spending time, energy and money running around from one such training programme to another, in their hunger and search to be better children of God. In the end, they may discover that there is insufficient time left to sit in the presence of our Lord Jesus to whom we need to be conformed. Hence, we may defeat the very purpose for which spiritual formation is all about! Let me quote from Ray Anderson...

*“Therefore, we must not mistake the imposition upon humans of arbitrary plan or standards of behaviour as spiritual formation – even if these are of an ideological or religious nature... Spiritual formation can no more be understood as ‘religious education’ than it can as ideological indoctrination. Formation, rightly understood, is conformation... It is personal, historical and spiritual.”* (From *On Being Family*, chapter on

‘Spirituality is a Domestic Skill’. This book has helped crystallize the thoughts for discussion in this booklet. It is also an excellent study on the social theology of the family.)

## WHAT THEN IS SPIRITUAL FORMATION?

### 1. It Is Not Superhuman But Merely Human

Spiritual Formation is a lifestyle and a life work of working out the salvation that has been worked in us (Philippians 2:12-13), in order that we will become increasingly like Jesus, the only begotten Son of God and our Elder Brother. The Father’s desire is that we will one day enjoy His truly wholesome family life. We did not start this process; God did. Further, as it is part of His plan for our existence, no human being will be contented in life if he or she is not engaged in the process of spiritual formation according to His will for us. Hence, the restlessness of humankind in search of God before they know Him personally.

Spiritual formation is not a cloak that we may put on or off as and when we like; it is more like our skin which is part and parcel of our humanness. The practical process includes the putting off of our old selves (through e.g.

repentance from sins, healing of emotions-minds-bodies and deliverance from specific oppressions by the evil one where necessary) and the putting on of the new selves in Christ (through e.g. the discipline of silence and solitude before God in order to listen to Him, meditation and study of Scriptures, worship and obedience of the true God, frugality, intercession, fasting, good works and chastity).

Did spiritual formation commence at conception while in our mothers' wombs by the creative grace of God, or at our second birth into the new forgiven family of God by His redemptive grace?

If you were asked, would you like to believe that it could have started in the mind of God when He first planned to create us through believing parents who willingly give their children back to Him? My grounds for wanting to believe this is based on what God said, and the understanding that He does not waste His words.

God said in Genesis 1:26-27,

*“Let Us make humankind in Our image, according to Our likeness... So God created humankind in His image, in the image of God He created them...”*

It seems to me that, before the fall, the first man and woman were good but not perfected through obedience yet. Recall that Jesus, the sinless man, had to undergo the discipline of obedience also (Hebrews 2:10). Before Adam and Eve sinned, it appears to me that spiritual formation meant only the putting on process as there was as yet no rubbish to put off. (Note that since Genesis 3, we need both the putting off our old sinful and damaged self (through e.g. pastoral counselling and deliverance) while putting on the character and personality of Christ (through the celebration of disciplines and giftedness).

God said to Jeremiah the teenager in Jeremiah 1:5,

*“Before I formed you in the womb, I knew you...”*

Jeremiah’s father, Hilkiyah, was a priest in the temple of the Lord. Therefore, it was more likely than not that he committed his offspring to the Lord as soon as he knew his child was conceived in his mother’s womb. Some Christian mothers today, aware of the significance of the intra-uterine growth of the child, actually do the same while pregnant or even before they conceive. I believe that, by the grace of God, faith might have been given to the baby earlier than we have been used to believe. We need to be born again before we may enter the kingdom of God is true, as Jesus explained to

Nicodemus (John 3:5-80) but when that second birth takes place is God's prerogative, not ours.

In the case of John the Baptist, it was again God who took the initiative to inform his father, Zechariah,

*"...Your wife will bear a son, and you will name him John... After those days, his wife Elizabeth conceived..."*  
(Luke 1:13, 24)

Once more, the above example cited is in the context of God-fearing parents who would give their children back to the Lord even before they were conceived.

Though personal repentance is unlikely to have commenced in the womb, God can certainly receive the child in utero, through the shed blood of His Son, when the child's parents bring him/her to Him in prayer, in humble acknowledgement of the baby's need for salvation. What he did with regard to John's and Jeremiah's lives he can do and does for us. In my experience and observation, it is Christian adults who find this difficult to accept, especially if they were brought up in nominal westernized Christian or non-Christian homes. The highly intellect based mind set of the enlightenment could be a stumbling block. In fact, it could be that the "I" has to "accept" Christ first before He can come into my life. We have yet to understand

the truth and mystery of God's amazing grace upon grace. In many Chinese churches, accepting Christ is more of a family decision. Wonderfully, children follow suit when their parents have made the decision. However, it is understandable that many converted in adulthood do not experience His grace in this way. Quite often, it is through the Christian children's changed lives that their parents come to receive Christ as their Saviour and Lord. A role reversal has taken place as far as family evangelism is concerned.

### Example

One day, a worried five-year-old girl, who has two older siblings, asked her mother,

*"Mum, where was I when Ke Ke (Big Brother) and Jie Jie (Big Sister) were playing with you?"*

She had felt left out of something great whenever the family talked about those times before she was born. Her mother immediately answered in a matter of fact way (because she was nurtured in a Christian home, she knew God as Father and Friend before she knew Him as Lord),

*"You were in God's mind!"*

Instantly, the little girl's anxious look disappeared. She turned away and carried on with her activity at hand. Do we need to wonder why Jesus persuades us to trust God like children do?

However, if we prefer to perceive the onset of spiritual formation as from the point in history only when a man or woman, boy or girl, consciously accepts Christ as Saviour, I personally do not see how this perception will affect our ultimate accountability to God to work out the salvation He has worked in us. God holds us responsible for that which we know, not what we do not yet know.

One thing is for sure – that God desires that we be born again as early in earthly life as possible. If we trace the history of God's people in the Old Testament, we will learn that He gave specific rules for Jewish parents to nurture their children according to His statutes, including circumcision, which marked the sons (who represent their family line) as His people. In the New Testament church, water baptism initiates a person into the family of God. Salvation is by grace for both those who live before Christ's atonement on the cross as well as for those who live after the cross.

In this context, some of you may want to further study and ponder on God's written word concerning the

extent to which our children may participate in the life of the living body of Christ, the 'organism' church, not just the 'organization' church.

Indeed, the grace of God could already have been received and effected in believing children's lives even before they may comprehend instructed theology through home or church education. One of the two thieves on the crosses, beside Jesus, simply asked Jesus to remember Him and Jesus took Him to paradise! Jesus Himself assures us that a childlike (not childish/self-centred) faith is what is required to enter God's kingdom (Matthew 18:2-4). Further, water baptism, as such, is more a sign of our total dependence on God's grace for salvation than an act which guarantees salvation though we must obey God in receiving baptism of both water and the Spirit (different events though they may be received simultaneously).

This becomes even more significant when we realize that it is we adults who, in our negligence to nurture our children for God as His beloved children, have hindered their understanding of who God is to them. We need to explain to them, at a certain stage, that

- All people on earth belong to God. However, our sins separate us from Him.

- When our ancestors sinned against Him, we are left to live in sin, doing our own things. We are never complete unless we are back home in a loving relationship with God again.
- He desires that we regain His loving fatherhood once more.
- We need to come back to Him in order to be complete in His warm embrace. We cannot live without Him!
- We therefore need a mediator between God and man and Jesus Christ is the Mediator.

In our stubborn adult world and church, God uses children to speak to us. Jesus once prayed...

*"...I thank You, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because You have hidden these things from the wise and the intelligent (or who thought they were) and have revealed them to infants (i.e. less than one year old by modern medical definition); yes, Father, for such was Your gracious will."* (Matthew 11:25-26)

Thankfully, Jesus does not leave us in any doubt as to when we humans can know Him - the Truth, the Way and the Life! All praise and thanks be to God alone and always!

(For a detailed discussion and biblical understanding of infant baptism, please read Michael Green's book: *Baptism - It's Purpose, Practice and Power*, Hodder and Stoughton 1987).

## HOW DO WE RECOGNISE THE PROCESS OF SPIRITUAL FORMATION?

Jesus teaches His listeners to recognize a tree by its fruit (Matthew 7:15-20). Hence, at least some aspects of the fruit of the Holy Spirit mentioned in Galatians 5:22-23 need to be seen in a person being spiritually transformed, not just when others are nice to them but even when they are nasty to them. Otherwise, as Jesus says, what difference does it make (compared to unbelievers) if we love only those who love us.

The crux of the matter is that the Creator and Father God has appointed the family as the vehicle for the development and growth of the human person. This family is not only the nuclear family but the community of the whole church family, bought with the precious blood of Christ our Saviour and Lord.

The task of the natural family and the Christian church, therefore, is not only to evangelise to those who are yet

to receive the grace of God in Jesus, but also to see that the children of God become increasingly conformed to the image of Christ. This takes persistent faith and, at times, mundane hard work! Further, since children are more vulnerable than adults, if we ignore the nurture of child believers at any stage, we may be causing them to be retarded, to stumble and to fall. In fact, it is good and wise for Christian couples and families to foster or adopt neglected, abused or orphaned children so that they too will be re-directed into His fold. Much as we dislike to hear, Jesus speaks strongly on this issue of stumbling children from faith in Him:

*“If any of you put a stumbling block before one of these little ones who believe in Me, it would be better for you if a great millstone were fastened around your neck and you were drowned in the depth of the sea.”*  
(Matthew 18:6)

Sadly, in this era of secularization, there are teenagers who accuse their Christian parents of not leaving them alone to find God. What a tragedy!

## **2. It Is Not Accidental But Intentional**

If spiritual formation of a person is necessary for a child of God to mature, then we need to consciously and

intentionally teach our children about it. It needs to be intentionally talked about and encouraged through practice at home and in the church community, imperfect as we all still are.

I am indeed grateful to my childhood church, the Hokkien Methodist Church located along Madras Lane, Penang. My Sunday School teachers, young people's advisors and a few pastors edified us not only through their teaching, preaching and expository Bible Studies but also through the witness of their lives and lifestyles. Further, the good side of Chinese culture concerned with the nurture of children-elders relationships was utilized effectively as part of our God-given orders for His people in general and His church in particular. The extended church family then seemed to socialize in harmony with the Christian nuclear and extended families.

Even though many young people, especially the English educated ones, were not able to express their views broadly in churches such as this one, I have since noticed this phenomenon: over the decades, many young people who trusted in the Lord Jesus when their parents did so, and then backslid, eventually returned to Father God. Some may have strayed from God's ways for many years after they left home, due to a lack of

spiritual discipline, fellowship and/or guidance. However, in their heart of hearts, they know that they belong to the one and only true and living God. I believe it is the witness of the Holy Spirit in them. Those from Christian homes would not have worshipped any other gods (idols) since birth except for the idol of self just like all of us did and still do now and then. If they disobey Him intentionally or unintentionally, the God of covenant love will bring repentance in their hearts to bring them back to Him again, all in His perfect timing and place. For those who seem never to have repented while on earth, I would question the authenticity of the initial 'conversion' rather than that they are lost again (John 10:27-29).

We need to point out, nevertheless, that due to the bad experiences of pastors in western societies where events such as baptisms, marriages and funerals are the only occasions when the public turn to the institution of the church for help, some pastors discourage the expression of household faith for infant baptism in today's local churches. This is to prevent the misconception that a child is saved by the mere external act of water baptism without having received saving grace from God through childhood parental commitment or personal faith. These shepherds fear that some parent may want their children baptised as

tickets to heaven. This thought pattern often surface in later life, when those who have not shown the fruit of their conversion, seek to be married or buried by mere Christian ceremonies and rituals without faith in Jesus Christ. This leads us to the next consideration...

### **3. It Is Not Only The Function Of A Person But Of The Whole Family**

In his book *On Being Family*, Ray Anderson argues that if the social nurturing of a child within his family is the primary means of bringing him up in the life of faith in the church and in society, then, as he grows up, his ability to function well in his role in family can be a sign of his maturity for a given stage of growth. Paul also reminded Timothy that, as a spiritual leader in God's church, he was to be able to lead his natural family in an orderly manner (1 Timothy 3:4-5). Admittedly, not many of us will become bishops or church leaders, but all believers are included in the repeated 'whosoever' used by our Lord in His teaching on discipleship.

Therefore, it is with fear and trembling that I write as a fellow pilgrim, not as a leader. For who is competent enough to mention such issues? Time and again, I have been guilty of wrong thoughts, words and actions at home. Yet, it is the grace of God that can and will

forgive and sustain me and all His children through our pilgrimage on earth. Hence, depending on the truth of His grace to save us from our sins and still on the truth of His grace to make us whole and take us to our eternal home very soon, let us persevere in spiritual formation.

## WHAT DOES THE PROCESS OF SPIRITUAL FORMATION ENTAIL?

### **A Renewal of the Mind leads to Transformation of the Person**

As the child of God is being formed, he is required to be transformed by the renewal of his mind. This process takes time though God sometimes hastens it miraculously.

Paul teaches that Jesus Christ has been made our wisdom, righteousness, sanctification and redemption (1 Corinthians 1:30):

- His *wisdom* is required to believe in the gospel of His substitution for our sin on the cross.
- His *righteousness* is required to take us into His Father's Kingdom. Once inside the Father's kingdom,

- He *sanctifies* us by cleaning us up from the effects of sin i.e. the damage of our living in a sin-sick world.
- Finally, we are made totally new to live with Him forever in His Father's house. *Redemption* is then complete!

Sanctification involves two arms:

Putting Off that which is *not* fit for His Kingdom  
and  
Putting On that which is fit for His kingdom.

### 1. Sanctification: Putting Off

Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God, came to save us from our sins, diseases and infirmities or weaknesses (Isaiah 53:4-5). Therefore, any man or woman, adult or child on earth needs help in these areas of his life. Sin and its effects have to go as the life of the Son of God grows in him. They cannot co-exist:

- The spirit needs repentance and forgiveness of sins
- The emotions need healing from wounds caused by others' or personal sins; the mind needs renewal from old ways of thinking and the will needs to be submitted to serve God

- The physical body needs healing from diseases
- The oppressions (which may produce symptoms and signs similar to those caused by the other problems mentioned above) caused by God's enemy need renunciation and/or deliverance from the powers of darkness.

### **A. Our spirits**

We have to accept the fact of sin. Ultimately, the whole creation has been damaged by sin. Consequently, human problems are also caused by the existence of sin, whether others' or ours. But most of us choose to avoid or deny the possibility that our personal sins still can and do cause us spiritual, emotional, mental and physical problems. God the Father punished Jesus because of our sins (Isaiah 53:5).

A.W. Tozer quoted John Wesley as saying,

*'...that we will not injure the cause of Christ by admitting our sins, but that we are sure to do so by denying them.'*

He further wrote,

*'A dreamy sentimental faith which ignores the judgements of God against us and listens to the*

*affirmations of the soul is as deadly as cyanide. A faith which passively accepts all of the pleasant texts of the Bible while it overlooks or rejects the stern warnings and commandments of the same Scriptures is not the faith of which Christ and His apostles spoke.'*

Oswald Chambers reiterates this point,

*'Not being reconciled to the fact of sin - not recognising it and refusing to deal with it - produces all the disasters in life... If you refuse to agree with the fact that there is wickedness and selfishness, something downright hateful and wrong, in human beings, when it attacks your life, instead of reconciling yourself to it, you will compromise with it and say that it is of no use to battle against it.'*

When we think about sin in our personal lives, do we think of some vague presence of evil intent in us or a specific fact we have to deal with in our lives today? Oswald Chambers puts it this way,

*'A person will easily say, "Oh yes, I am a sinner", but when he comes into the presence of God he cannot get away with such a broad and indefinite statement. Our conviction is focused on our specific sin, and we realize, as Isaiah did, what we really are. This is always the sign that a person is in the presence of God.'*

The Lord Jesus spoke to the woman at the well,

*“God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth”.* (John 4:24).

It is not surprising then, that in Revelations 3:20, Jesus’ request is that we open the door of our lives to Him. Cleansing begins from our innermost selves even if God has to separate the soul and the spirit, the marrow and the joints, as the writer to the Hebrews taught (Hebrews 4:12-13). The cleansing of the physical temple in Ezekiel 43 is but a symbol or type of the cleansing of the spiritual temple of God’s people after Christ has reconciled us to His Father.

## **B. Our minds, emotions and wills**

Paul urged us in Romans 12:1-2 to be transformed by the renewal of our minds. If we think about how we arrive at certain actions we take, the sequence of events goes like this:

- We are first presented with a *mental picture* of something or someone in a given situation e.g. a hungry child.

- Then we *feel* for the child's condition, as Jesus had compassion on the '*sheep without a shepherd*' (Matthew 9:36-38).
- Finally, we may be *moved* to give the child food e.g. by sponsoring a child through an organisation such as World Vision. Faith without actions is dead (James 2:14-26).

Therefore, an action begins in the mind which stirs the feelings into action by the exercise of our wills. This is clearly seen in Jesus, who, on seeing the condition of the crowds, feels for them and then teaches them to ask God for help. He then personally called His 12 handpicked disciples together, instructed them and sent them out to care for the lost sheep (Matthew 9:35-11:1). He did not do it all by Himself.

Having been influenced by cultures that emphasise the importance of the mind and willpower more than the emotions, we are often unsure of the significance of our feelings. Many feel guilty about expressing them or just talking about them. Some believers preach, teach and nurse without compassion while others focus so much on their feelings that they never get to do any good for others. However, if we are aware of the way human beings are made to function, we will be able to better

help one another work out the salvation God has worked in us.

### **C. Our physical bodies**

We cannot over-emphasise our need to be healed of diseases. Jesus' instructions to the 12 disciples summarised this ministry (Matthew 10:1). In today's churches, God has shown time and again that though we may ask Him to heal in a certain manner, the prerogative is His as to which method He uses...whether miraculously, by exercise or by medication or by both. In middle-age, I am learning to cooperate with Him in following the laws of nature in which He has ordained for us to function healthily though, in His mercy, He still heals miraculously and we shout for joy when that happens!

### **D. The enemy's oppression**

In Genesis chapter 3, Satan lied to Eve about the reason for God's command for Adam and her – they were not to eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. He wanted to show that God was not so good after all and he was also probably envious of God's love for the couple He had created in His image. God was portrayed as self-centred and fearful of man's abilities. Adam and

Eve believed his lies about God. Consequently, they had to suffer for their sin of rebellion against God.

On the other hand, Job faced severe suffering which was seen to be evidence of God's unjust treatment of Job. Satan wanted to show that God was not worthy of man's fear, worship and love. He was probably envious of God's generosity to Job and caused Job to *suffer though he did not sin* because he trusted in God whose character he knew well i.e. that God would not have allowed him to suffer without a higher reason. When Satan tempted Job to blame God, he refused to do so.

Take time to familiarise yourself with the cunningness and wickedness of one who wants to jeopardise our relationship with God. What God wants us to do is to put on the whole armour of God (Ephesians 6:10-17) daily and constantly for Christ alone is our Protector (John 17).

## **2. Sanctification: Putting On**

This is working out of the salvation that God has worked in us (Philippians 2:12-13). For this purpose, we need to exercise 'spiritual disciplines'. This is reiterated throughout the New Testament. For example, we need to:

- feed on God's written word by reading and meditating on Scripture (1 Peter 2:1-3)
- feed on the living Bread by spending time sitting in His presence (2 Corinthians 3:18)
- pray and fast in order to do His work and will (Mark 9:29)
- listen to God prayerfully in silence and solitude (Luke 9:18, Matthew 6:5-18)
- give generously to those more needy than us (2 Corinthians 8 & 9)
- worship Him in adoration with a pure and undivided devotion, relishing God's friendship with us (Revelation 3:20)
- serve God through serving others by the use of our natural and spiritual gifts (Ephesians 4:7-13).

In all these aspects of our Christian life, we need to be continuously filled with the Holy Spirit to be purified as we grow into Christ-likeness. We must not only pray but practise what we pray. We cannot and dare not substitute obedience with prayer (Matthew 7:21).

Therefore, to put off without putting on will not result in growth in maturity as God's child. Jesus Himself showed us that to drive an evil spirit away from a home without filling the cleansed home with His Holy Spirit will only lead to more evil spirits inhabiting the home. However, we also realise that to put on without putting off will hamper the normal growth process. Who wants to be suffocated by the carbon dioxide of our original unregenerated brokenness?

### **Pause**

Paul the apostle:

*“Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God — this is your spiritual act of worship. Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is — His good, pleasing and perfect will.” (Romans 12:1-2)*

The main task of pastors and teachers of God's Word is to exhort Christians to grow up in Christ. In Colossians 1:10, Paul reminded our Colossian brothers and sisters to live lives worthy of God, fully pleasing to Him, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God.

Though the processes of putting off our self-centred old selves and putting on the new personality of Christ are two separate events, they usually go on side by side... here a little, there a little, until a clearer image of the Son of God is reflected in us.

The life that is emptied of its sludge must be filled with the goodness and beauty of God. However, in the last 25 years of the work of pastoral counselling, I have discovered that many Christians expect the person in need to dramatically change overnight or at least within a short period. I believe the Lord's sovereign grace sometimes breaks a person's bondage to certain addictions, for example, as soon as he is born again or prayed for. However, as Jesus Himself warned us, if the house emptied of its evil resident is not occupied by the Holy Spirit, then the earlier resident will return with more of his evil ones. The issue is not about the Lord not being able to deliver and heal a person instantly. It is much more about His usual means of transforming a person's thought patterns and behaviour — his whole lifestyle, as long as he is still on earth. For such transformation to occur effectively, Paul believes that our minds need to be renewed. This often takes time.

Some psychologists have discovered this to be true even if the client is not a Christian. To a significant extent,

they can train cooperative counselees to unlearn certain unhealthy ways of thinking about their problems and relearn healthier thought patterns. Any good education system of a nation is also supposed to do that. However, without the Holy Spirit's power, this is often short-lived.

How much more, in matters of eternal value with Christ-likeness being God's goal for us, we need to take time to renew our minds. This seems to be the missing link in many Christians' lives. Some conscientiously work through their homework of rebuilding their lives in all areas: personal, family (single or married), vocational, church, social and even environmental. It is a joy to watch them change and grow by the Holy Spirit's enabling. But there are others who, when their immediate problems have been solved, default follow-up sessions because they think that they will be fine after that. I am not referring to those who have strong community support such as a supportive cell group or friends. Instead, I am referring to those who feel that as long as they can enjoy life again, they do not need responsible spiritual accountability to encourage, correct and love them.

## HOW OUR MINDS ARE RENEWED FOR TRANSFORMATION

### 1. The Necessity for the Renewal of Our Minds

*“We have not received the spirit of the world but the Spirit who is from God, that we may understand what God has freely given us. This is what we speak, not in words taught us by human wisdom but in words taught by the Spirit, expressing (or interpreting) spiritual truths in spiritual words. The man without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually discerned.”*  
(1 Corinthians 2:12-14)

*“Those who live according to the sinful nature have their minds set on what that nature desires; but those who live in accordance with the Spirit have their minds set on what the Spirit desires. The mind of sinful man is death, but the mind controlled by the Spirit is life and peace; the sinful mind is hostile to God. It does not submit to God's law, nor can it do so. Those controlled by the sinful nature cannot please God. You, however, are controlled not by the sinful nature but by the Spirit, if the Spirit of God lives in you. And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Christ.”* (Romans 8:5-9)

## 2. The Exhortation to Renew Our Minds in Christ

*“So I tell you this, and insist on it in the Lord, that you must no longer live as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their thinking... You, however, did not come to know Christ that way. Surely you heard of Him and were taught in Him in accordance with the truth that is in Jesus. You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; to be made new in the attitude of your minds; and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.”*  
(Ephesians 4:17-24)

*“Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ...”*  
(Philippians 2:5)

## 3. The Certainty of Hope that God Will Renew Our Minds

*“This is the covenant I will make with the house of Israel\* after that time, declares the Lord.  
I will put My laws in their minds and write them on their hearts.  
I will be their God, and they will be My people.  
No longer will a man teach his neighbour, or a man his brother, saying,  
‘Know the Lord,’ because they will all know Me, from the*

*least of them to the greatest.*

*For I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more.” (Hebrews 8:10-12)*

\*After Christ's atonement, Israel refers to His body, the living church (e.g. Galatians 3:26-29).

#### 4. The Time for Action to Renew Our Minds in Christ

*“Brothers, **stop thinking** like children. In regard to evil be infants, but in your thinking be adults.” (1 Corinthians 14:20)*

*“We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we **take captive** every thought to **make it obedient** to Christ.” (2 Corinthians 10:5)*

*“Let the word of Christ  **dwell** in you richly as you **teach and admonish** one another with all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God.” (Colossians 3:16)*

*“Therefore, **prepare** your minds for action; **be** self-controlled; **set** your hope fully on the grace to be given you when Jesus Christ is revealed. As obedient children, **do not conform** to the evil desires you had when you lived in ignorance. But just as He who called you is holy,*

*so be holy in all you do; for it is written: “Be holy, because I am holy.” (1 Peter 1:13-16)*

*“Therefore, since Christ suffered in His body, **arm** yourselves also with the same attitude, because he who has suffered in his body is done with sin.” (1 Peter 4:1)*

*“But we ought always to **thank** God for you, brothers loved by the Lord, because from the beginning God chose you to be saved through the sanctifying work of the Spirit and through belief in the truth.” (2 Thessalonians 2:13)*

If the renewal of our minds was not something we are to do, our Lord would not have instructed us to renew them. Having lived with a fallen though God-fearing earthly family for 30 years, surely Jesus had to overcome His infirmities by the renewal of His mind too. However, He never sinned because He did not allow His infirmities to become occasions for sin. *Recall how His life and words were different from what the Jews then were used to seeing or hearing from many of their religious leaders.* The Pharisees thought that if they performed their religious duties conscientiously, they could do anything they liked with the rest of their lives (compared with the washing of dirt off the outside of

cups and leaving the inside germ-infested). But Jesus said that they were to love God with all their whole life (Luke 10:27). Or on another occasion, though the Jewish leaders felt it normal to see only the woman caught in adultery as a sinner, Jesus saw the men involved as sinners too.

To watch and listen to Jesus is a call to renew our minds so that eventually, His thoughts become our thoughts, His feelings and His will becomes ours. But He wants us to be doers of His word and not merely hearers. Hence we also need to trust and obey Him in daily life. This needs a more systematic and disciplined approach, though not necessarily academic, for our God is the God of order (1 Corinthians 14:33-40). I believe too that an illiterate Christian is able to be as disciplined in obeying God as a highly-educated Christian, as long as he not only hears His word but trusts and obeys Him as well. In God, truly, literacy is irrelevant.

For example, I grew up in a church where a trishaw puller felt as comfortable worshipping the Lord and giving his offering as a rich businessman. This simple childhood observation convinced me that God is fair and gives His grace equally to all. Don't we hope this will be increasingly real in our churches today, especially in the cities in more “developed” societies where wealth,

status and education are held in excessively high esteem?

*Reminder:*

A distorted image of God mirrors part of Him and part of our old self, the world and the evil one, whereas the perfect image of God mirrors only Jesus His Son.

*“And we, who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord's glory, are being transformed into His likeness with ever increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.” (2 Corinthians 3:18)*

**Question:** So how do we exercise the muscles of our minds?

**Answer:** By working hard at some basic spiritual disciplines.

Ponder on The Shorter Catechism of the Westminster's Confession:

*“Man's chief end is to glorify God and enjoy Him forever.”*

## CHAPTER 2: CELEBRATING THE DISCIPLINES

Focused listening to God will enable us to watch Him, know Him, trust Him and obey Him with grateful love. Reading books by authors such as H. Nouwen and the desert fathers often refresh our souls and spirits. I think it is because God has called them to listen to Him in prolonged silence and solitude (though in a noisy world) on our behalf. In times of dryness, especially when we experience the “dark night of the soul” when God seems so distant, He often speaks to us through their words that have been birthed in the stillness of their souls before the holy and gracious God.

In recent years, Dallas Willard's book, *The Spirit of the Disciplines*, has clarified these disciplines for me. I have listed some of them below to help us seek Him more closely, trust and love Him more dearly and be stirred to obey Him more willingly.

These disciplines are generally classified into two categories namely, those of abstinence (something one intentionally does not do) and those of engagement (something one intentionally does). Recalling Paul's soul-searching heart cries in Romans 7:14-25, whereby he mourns the fact that he could not do what he wants

but does what he does not want, we may realise afresh how broken we are, and that we need the Lord's discipline to renew our minds and wills.

## **ABSTINENCE (KEEPING OURSELVES FROM DOING SOMETHING)**

Dallas Willard states:

*“If we feel that any habit or pursuit, harmless in itself, is keeping us from God and sinking us deeper in the things of earth; if we find that things which others can do with impunity [freedom/immunity] are for us the occasion of falling, then abstinence is our only course. Abstinence alone can recover for us the real value of what should have been for our help but which has been an occasion of falling... It is necessary that we should steadily resolve to give up anything that comes between ourselves and God.”*

Some common examples of 'Abstinence' Dallas listed are:

**Solitude:** one remains alone with God, away from other people

**Silence:** one avoids listening to sounds or thinking of ideas that distract us from hearing God speak into our hearts (e.g. abstain from watching television, listening to distracting music) while accepting the inevitable sounds around us e.g. passing traffic noises, sound of falling rain drops

**Frugality:** is not stinginess but prudence in the use of our material resources (to abstain from wasting good things)

**Chastity:** is to keep pure in the area of sexual desires and actions (to abstain from sinful sexual thoughts and behaviour by avoiding temptation)

**Secrecy:** is the keeping of personal or others' confidential matters (to abstain from revealing secrets)

**Sacrifice:** is the willing putting aside that which is good for the sake of someone else (to relinquish good things for others who need them more than we do)

**Fast:** to replace daily food with God's work to show our total dependence on Him

Tozer added:

*“The devil did not know Christ — apparently he knows Christians! The lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and*

*the pride of life have all been 'Christianised' (not by liberals, mind you, but by evangelicals) and are now offered along with Christ to everyone who will 'believe'. Blind leaders of blind souls now insist that Christians should not cut themselves off from the pleasures of the world, so the very values that Christ scorned are now being used to attract people to the gospel.*

*We stand in need of warning: in spite of prophetic voices that are raised here and there among us, present-day believers are being drawn to the world with irresistible force!"*

## **ENGAGEMENT (INTENTIONALLY DOING SOMETHING WITH DILIGENCE)**

Dallas also explains that:

*"The disciplines of abstinence must be counter-balanced by the disciplines of engagement. They are like the out-breathing and in-breathing of our spiritual lives, needed for effective nourishment. Life does not derive its power of growth and development from withdrawal but from action — engagement. Abstinence, then, makes way for engagement."*

For example, if the locations on our red blood cells designed to carry oxygen are occupied by carbon monoxide, we suffer or even die for lack of oxygen. If the places of our souls that are to be indwelt by God and His service are occupied by wrong use of food, sex, and society, for example, we die or languish for lack of God and right relationship with His creatures. *A proper abstinence actually breaks the hold of improper engagement so that the soul can be properly engaged in and by God.*

Some common examples of “Engagement” Dallas listed are:

**Study:** of God's word and His word at work in the lives of believers in history and in nature. The written word is only to lead us to the living Word, Jesus (John 5:37-40; Hebrews 4:12,13).

**Worship:** most profitable when centred on Jesus Christ and through Him to the Father; we find God through God Himself (John 1:14; 4:9).

**Celebration:** (includes dance, drama, art, handcraft, humour) *“increases our confidence in the God who does all things well and in His greatness, beauty and glory. We concentrate on our life and our world as God's gifts to us! We dishonour God as much as by fearing and*

*avoiding pleasure as we do by depending upon it or living for it. Celebration heartily done makes our deprivations and sorrows seem small, and we find in it great strength to do the will of God because His goodness becomes so real to us!"*

**Service:** Not every good done needs to be done as a discipline but out of spontaneous love and righteousness. However, in much of our present lives, we need to make extra effort to do a job well. As a discipline, service is good for those in lowly positions, so that they do not serve in resentment; it is good for those in high positions so that they learn to appreciate trained servanthood rather than be given positions in God's church just because they hold high positions in the world. Such people are often foolishly invited to make decisions for the churches simply because they are regarded as "having made it in the world". In Matthew 20:25-28, Jesus was teaching the great how to behave, not how to become greater.

**Prayer:** conversing with God, communicating with God aloud or within our thoughts, including sung prayers. This almost always involves the other disciplines of study, meditation, worship, solitude, fasting. The effect of conversing with God cannot fail to have a pervasive and spiritually strengthening effect on all aspects of our

personality and daily life in interaction with our neighbours. Through prayer, God turns us into agents of social transformation for His glory. During prayer, God will meet us in the security of His attentive love... anywhere... at any time (e.g. John 15:9-17; Revelation 3:20)

**Fellowship:** the members of the body of Christ must be in contact if they are to sustain and be sustained by each other. Christian redemption is not meant to be a solitary event, though each individual has a unique and direct relationship with God, and God alone is His Lord and Judge. The Triune God is community. Hence, to reflect His image is to be community.

**Confession:** we let trusted others know our deepest weaknesses and failures. We lay down the burden of hiding and pretending, which normally takes up much human energy. It is like trying to keep a balloon under water. But confession may be easily abused, and for its effective use, it requires considerable experience and maturity, both in the individual concerned and in the leadership of the group.

**Submission:** mutual submission for Christ's sake is the highest level of fellowship (Ephesians 5:21). It involves humility, complete confession and restitution, which are sustained by the discipline of submission to spiritual

authority and mutually, all to all (Philippians 2:3, Hebrews 13:17, 1Peter 5:1-3). Mutual submission functions at the horizontal human level though each person may have a different role in the body of Christ.

Let us rejoice with thanksgiving that the walk with Christ calls for individual creativity in the practice of disciplines such as these. The manner in which we relate with God is by mutual agreement, and guided by the Scriptures given to us. No one believer can dictate to another how to walk with Christ, though we can provide broad biblical guidelines. The Son of God has set us free to be the people God had originally intended us to be.

## **CELEBRATING OUR GIFTEDNESS**

(May be used within the engaging disciplines)

My husband and I approach things in different ways. Before we realized the differences in our personalities, we found it emotionally difficult to cope with them. Thankfully, God allowed us to discover how differently we were created and this knowledge liberated us. We found we could express our true selves more freely. Having learnt much from teachers like Professor

Reginald Johnson, I would like to share some of the lessons here.

Some of this material will not be new to those readers whose corporations have sent them to personal development courses. But for others, this may be new in terms of exposure, although not in terms of what God has given to us since the Garden of Eden.

Our **Temperament** is our basic frame of mind or disposition and giftedness including our strengths and weaknesses.

Our **Character** is how the person manages his temperament.

Our **Personality** is the final product, the distinct unique individual that results in relationship with others.

In summary, **Temperament + Character = Personality**

(J.I. Packer)

[Below are adaptations of notes produced by Professor R. Johnson for his spiritual formation seminar, used with his permission. They were presented to wives of seminarians at the Asbury Theological Seminary, 1991.]

## **At The Personal Level**

### *We Need to See Ourselves as Gifted*

Many of us do not see ourselves as gifted from the time of our birth. We even deny ourselves the joy of using our special gifts in life. We need to see ourselves from the Creator's angle more often because...

1. From a Biblical Perspective:
  - a. God's gifts are:
    - Ordinary for daily living e.g. homemaking, leadership, plumbing, craftsmanship, carpentry, construction, accounting, teaching children.
    - Diverse in areas of function e.g. on the road, at home, in offices.
    - Special when they are offered back to God from thankful hearts.

- b. Natural gifts may be transformed into spiritual gifts e.g. the skills of temple workers in the Old Testament (Exodus 31:1-5)
- c. Jesus did not differentiate between spiritual and natural talents in His parables (Luke 19:11-27). All He asks of us is faithfulness in using what He has entrusted to us.

## 2. From a Psychological Perspective:

- a. Gifts come from genetic endowment as well as environmental influences. Both psychological research and our experiences with, and observation of children by their own parents confirm this.

e.g. our younger daughter is like her older brother in being more extroverted and verbally expressive. However, she is more like her sister in her feminine and more feeling behaviour. Nevertheless, she has something of her own - her physically more-expressive self. All three of them are growing up in the same home, and have been treated as similarly as possible from the beginning. They show differences and similarities without intentional parental intervention.

But as each one is unique and special, we realise that even our behaviour towards them has to be customised. As our interactions and environment

change day by day, these experiences will in turn remould our usage of each of our gifts as well as endow us with new skills or gifts.

When I reflect on this, there comes a deep awareness of the God-given privilege to engage in such human-environmental interactions although not all our experiences are beautiful!

### **At The Community Level**

#### *We Need to Share Our Gifts*

Psychologists have observed the existence of temperament types in the general population. In recent decades, a mother-daughter team called Myers-Briggs discovered that, broadly speaking, people of any origin may be classified in one of 16 temperament types. Each type has four basic functions, namely:

1. The direction in which we orientate our inner lives
2. The way we receive information from the outside world
3. The way we reveal our decisions or thoughts to others
4. The way we live our daily lives

## At The God-man Level

*We Need to Surrender Ourselves to the Giver by:*

1. **Affirming the Gifts** God has given us and not long for others' gifts selfishly. Jesus faithfully used God's gifts and completed His Father's work for Him. (John 17:4).
2. **Denying our Self-Will** because “a seed must die” before it can bear fruit, His fruit. No matter how gifted we are, it is the way we use those gifts that forms our character, which is to be conformed to the character of Christ as demonstrated at Gethsemane (Matthew 26:36-46).
3. **Appropriating His Resources** as Jesus Himself did as Son of Man. He drew close to the Father and was obedient to the Holy Spirit's counsel in His life and ministry on earth. I am sure that He fulfilled the roles of eldest son-carpenter-breadwinner for His earthly family as efficiently as He fulfilled His roles of Saviour and risen Lord of all. With all His giftedness, He humbly and realistically stated that He could do nothing apart from the Father. Truly, God's grace was sufficient for Him (2 Corinthians 12:9).

## Nurturing Our Spirit

### 1. *In God's Relationship With Us*

#### God Takes Our Differences Seriously

Read Genesis 1 and 2 to see His initiative in making man and woman different and yet alike. No one can deny how wonderfully God has made each one of us, whether we are rich or poor, educated or illiterate, physically beautiful or ugly in the eyes of our fellow men, strong or weak, cultured or uncultured — all are precious in His sight and His love is for all, regardless of which mould we fit into. (See Psalm 139)

#### God Utilises Our Most Receptive Channel

Review how Jesus communicated with Peter and with John. Ask yourself: *“Who was the extrovert, and who, the introvert?”* How did Jesus relate with each of them?

#### God Moves Us Toward Wholeness

See how Jesus ministered to the Samaritan woman at the well, Zaccheaus or the woman with the issue of blood for 12 long years. Watch how He gently encouraged them to blossom in their real forgiven and healed selves.

## 2. *In Our Relationship With God*

### We Need to Make Use of Our Natural Path

For example, if we are Malaysian-born Chinese worshippers, let us worship Him as we are with all our cultural and national traits intertwined with our spiritual lives. We may want to pray in our familiar dialect and according to a particular tradition, as long as we abide by Scriptural truth. Only then are we giving Him all our hearts, souls, minds and strengths — the real you and me.

### We Need to Watch for One-sidedness

When God wants us to serve Him in certain ways or fields, we may wrongly assume that God wants everybody else to do the same, which may not be so. This applies to worship and preaching styles, too. Otherwise, we may be urging others to worship Him with their pretend “selves”. We dare not make God's specific calling for us the calling of someone we are shepherding.

### We Need to be Sensitive to the Spirit's Nudge Toward the Less Familiar

When God asks an introvert to visit someone regularly for a while, He is urging her to grow in the less familiar,

a denied area of her temperament, so that she may be stretched and brought closer to His likeness.

## **Understanding Our Congregations and Ourselves**

I wonder whether the different methods applied in our worship services, which sometimes cause conflicts, are due more to an ignorance of God's creation gifts than to our spirituality. If we allow one another more leeway to be honest before God, and to be honest before others and ourselves, we might worship Him in spirit (sincerely) and in truth (as He has revealed Himself to us, not as what we think He is) with more excellence.

Question: How do our various temperaments affect corporate worship?

For example:

### *How Information is Received*

1. **Sensing** People Focus On:
  - Appreciating beauty/listening to music/looking to God
  - Routine/order/schedules for worship, and devotional guides

- Being given “homework” for accountability purposes as opposed to unstructured presentations
- Looking back at the saints and old traditions for encouragement to keep growing
- Sermons that have practical applications
- The sacraments (such as the Lord's supper) as concrete expressions of faith.

2. **Intuitive** People Focus On:

- a. Enjoying changes in services
- b. Movement (worship with hands and body) /change in devotional times
- c. Imaginative interpretation of Scripture
- d. Smaller churches
- e. Needing quiet/contemplative time interspersed with a singing time for worship
- f. A more symbolic approach to the Bible.

## *How Decisions are Made*

### 1. **Thinking** People Prefer:

- Devotions which are insightful (as opposed to “feely” or illustrative material)
- Liturgical order of worship
- Structured sermons
- In-depth and more academic Bible Study
- Consistency in the service

### 2. **Feeling** People Prefer:

- Words of songs
- Personal testimonies
- Music
- Friendly people
- To focus on pre-worship attitude
- A positive message, with personal experience
- Honesty, warmth, touch, genuine feelings
- Spontaneity

## Facing Our Shadow

### 1. Infirmities

#### a. *Effects of Our Preferences:*

e.g. That “I like to stay away from people” may give others the idea that we are unfriendly.

#### b. *Sources of some of our weaknesses* include letting our strengths assert themselves proudly, or repressing/ devaluing the “opposite” capacities/ functions

e.g. When extroverts criticise introverts for not reaching out enough in evangelism.

#### c. *Characteristics of our least-used function* are those which are most neglected, least trusted, our “enemy” or disliked quality, our “sore” spot which make us embarrassed, unsure of self, defensive and repressed

e.g. When we find ourselves in an awkward situation we might say: “This is not ‘my thing’; this is not me.”

But we may be in a situation where onlookers do not understand us and make remarks that seem to belittle us when they are not doing so intentionally. In our insecurity, we may react angrily, to our shock!

- d. *Conditions which render us vulnerable/susceptible* — including fatigue, stress and illness.
- 
- 2. Infirmities (1 Corinthians 11:27-32; Isaiah 53:1-7; Hebrews 4:14-16)
    - a. Began with the Fall
    - b. Represent our diminished capacities
    - c. Can become occasions for sin e.g. some boys or men with homosexual tendencies fall into sin because they need affirming hugs. They did not get these hugs from their fathers who were emotionally detached from them during their childhood.
- 
- 3. Vulnerabilities (tendencies to sins secondary to our specific infirmities)
    - a. **Sensing** types may become overcritical of intuitive types for being presumptuous or less detailed than they are.

- b. **Intuiting** types may fail to understand that others may not share their vision because they do not grasp things as they do, not because they are less spiritual or committed.
- c. **Thinking** types may look down on feeling types as being of lower intelligence or less important in discussions or even “feminine”.
- d. **Feeling** types may feel hurt easily and harbour resentment because they are not aware that others may not be criticising them but only stating things objectively.

Imagine the multiple relational problems that may arise from our vulnerabilities!

### **From Brokenness Towards Wholeness**

1. Follow your “Real/True Self” in Christ
2. Allow Him to move you towards wholeness:
  - Accept responsibility for your sins
  - See your infirmities as blessings, not curses.

- Turn your weaknesses into a “friend”
- Use your weaknesses in prayer
- Get into a rhythm of withdrawing from people in order to be alone with God, and then going back into community again.
- Get into a habit of being flexible in non-essentials, firm in essentials, always teachable and humble in His hands.
- Find a small accountability group, such as a cell or parish group, where each member is accepted and lovingly encouraged to grow into His personality.

## IMPLICATIONS

If indeed Spiritual Formation is a God given task and process, then there are several implications:

1. Our contribution to the spiritual formation of another person (whether a child or an adult) is not the mere passing on of moral principles. The letter of the law kills, as Paul taught, but the spirit of the law gives life, renews, refreshes and enhances the abundant life in Christ (Romans 8:1-4). ***As this is a work of love***, we need

to avoid forcing our convictions on others, especially children who are extremely impressionable. On the other hand, loving examples in parents' lives are more likely to lead to a response of loving obedience to God and elders, even if now and then children will show signs of rebellion in their attempts to become independent. Such love shown by the nurturer is committed to the good of the other. In fact, from the perspective of Christ's church, our believing children are also our brothers and sisters in the Christ who commands us to love one another as He has loved us i.e. sacrificially (John 15:12-13).

2. The daily interactions between the members of a family inevitably influence spiritual formation positively or negatively. We either help one another to grow in the Lord or to become retarded (Matthew 12:19). Therefore, the church community needs to function in such a way that it ***encourages spiritual formation not only outside the home but also inside***. This is especially acute when we consider our excessive 'Christian' activities that take many parents of young children out of the house at the expense of family needs.

Do our church programmes reflect this order of priorities in helping our brethren grow into Christ's character? Do we too often sweep domestic needs and conflicts under the carpet as long as our members continue to show up at Sunday services, prayer meetings and seminars, and continue to give their

pledges and tithes? If we do, do we not need to repent and change our ways?

3. A life of love is ***a life of faith***. Abraham, for example, was secure enough in God's covenant love to trust Him with his only son, Isaac. Did his security and trust develop overnight? I do not think so. God's covenant love gradually freed Abraham to be himself so much so that when he met with a life threatening situation, he was allowed to make a mistake, like telling a half truth about Sarah being his sister, and then learning from that experience.

When God still accepted him, he knew that his God was forgiving, gracious and faithful. Hence, when commanded to sacrifice Isaac, though not fully understanding everything, he was sure that if God wanted Isaac to be father to his future generations, God would and could raise him up from the dead (Hebrews 11:18-19). God's loyal friendship saw him through the test of faith.

Do we love our children and brothers and sisters in Christ enough to encourage their trust in us because of our trust in God?

4. Enhancing the spiritual formation of another person means helping him/her express his/her love and faith in his/her daily life, even when things seem to have gone

wrong. This means helping the other person live his life according to God's purposes for him/her. He/she no longer depends on personal success or failure to know and feel that he/she is a person of worth to God and man. *"Such a believer has turned over his earthly life to his faithful Creator for good"* (Ray Anderson).

He no longer longs for present rewards. If he fails, as he will while in his old body, he knows that not only will the invisible God forgive him when he confesses his sins, but that his parents and church members will also receive him with love. In such a family and church community, the process of creation and redemption are played over and over again! Lost sheep are found, washed, healed, fed and returned to their rightful Owner and Shepherd God!

## CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the spiritual formation of God's children is the development of a lifestyle that grows in obedience to Jesus Christ. It is not a matter of choice for His people. Those enrolled in the process *"can stand hardship and discipline because they have a purpose higher than just earthly existence"*. This perspective, therefore, enables them to *"loosen ties"* with this world more easily even if it means temporary suffering. They look forward to the joy of seeing their Saviour face to face one day! The discipline required is NOT a harsh punishment for sin but a willing preparation in anticipation of meeting the One who first loved them!

Spiritual formation is also a household formation of the children of Abraham, not by natural genetics, but by faith (Romans 4:1-12). When God covenanted to bless Abraham's children of faith, He will keep His word, because...

*"God is not a human being that He should lie,  
Or a mortal, that He should change His mind.  
Has He not promised, and will He not do it?  
Has he spoken and will He not fulfil it?"*  
(Numbers 23:19)

Finally, Brothers and Sisters in our Lord Jesus...

*“May God Himself, the God of peace, sanctify you through and through. May your whole spirit, soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. The One who calls you is faithful and He will do it!”* (1 Thessalonians 5:23-24)

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### **A Prayer**

*Oh To Be Like Thee*

*Oh, to be like Thee, blessed Redeemer,  
This is my constant longing and prayer;  
Gladly I'll forfeit all of earth's treasures,  
Jesus, Thy perfect likeness to wear.*

Chorus:

*Oh, to be like Thee!  
Oh, to be like Thee!  
Blessed Redeemer, pure as Thou art;  
Come in Thy sweetness,  
Come in Thy fullness;  
Stamp Thine own image deep on my heart.*

*Oh, to be like Thee, full of compassion,  
Loving, forgiving, tender and kind,  
Helping the helpless, cheering the faint,  
Seeking the wandering sinner to find.*

T. O. Chisholm, Wm. J. Kirkpatrick

## REFLECTION

Temperament *[basic giftedness]*

+ Character *[how we use our gifts]*

= Personality *[relationship with others]*

(J.I. Packer)

1. Who is the real “YOU” that God has custom-made?
2. How has seeing yourself from the above perspectives affected your personal walk with God, self and others in church, at work or in society at large?

## APPENDIX

### 3 Samples Quiet Retreat Guidance & Sharing after Silent Retreat II & III

#### I. A PRIVATE SCHOOL PRINCIPALS' QUIET RETREAT

#### Retreat Guidance for a 2-Day Quiet Retreat in Ipoh SUGGESTED PROGRAMME

Wednesday Day 1	Thursday Day 2	Friday Day 3
	Breakfast	Breakfast
11am - Meet at a known location - Lunch - Depart for Clearwater Sanctuary Ipoh, Perak	8-10am - Silence: Reflection II	8-10am - Silence: Reflection III
	10.30am-12 noon - Session 2: THE TEACHER	10.30am-12 noon - Session 4: THE CURRICULUM
	12 noon - Lunch	12 noon - Lunch
Arrival at Clearwater Sanctuary	Rest	1pm - Depart for home
3.30pm - Tea	3.30pm - Tea	
4.00pm - Ice-Breaker - Group Devotion	Free and Easy	
4.30 – 6.00pm - Reflection I: "Why am I Here?" - Evaluation: Strategies for 2006- 2007	4.30 – 6.00pm - Fellowship	
7.00-8.00pm - Dinner	7.00-8.00pm - Dinner	
8.00-10.00pm - Session 1: THE STUDENT	8.00-10.00pm - Devotion - Session 3: THE STUDENT	

## **Reflection II**

Go to a quiet corner where you can be silent for 2 hours.

Use a Bible, paper and pen.

Do NOT rush... take your time...

**\*Listen to God, talk to Him and journal your thoughts.**

**\*Read:** Mark 6:30-32 - The Lord's invitation

**\*Psalm 62 - Our response**

"My soul finds rest in God alone;

my salvation comes from Him.

He alone is my rock and my salvation;

He is my fortress, I will never be shaken...

Find rest, O my soul, in God alone;

my hope comes from Him."

**\*Pause in Silence... wondering in awe of God's presence everywhere...**

\*Solitude is being alone with God, away from the physical presence of other people. Without solitude it is virtually impossible to lead a spiritual life. Solitude begins with a time and place for God, and Him alone. If we really believe not only that God exists but also that He is actively present in our lives – healing, teaching and guiding – we need to set aside a time and place to give Him our undivided attention. Jesus says, *"Go to your*

*private room and, when you have shut your door, pray to your Father who is in that secret place” (Matthew 6:6) - From Making All New Things New by Henri J. M. Nouwen*

**\*Reflect...**

### **I Want to Stop Running**

Eternal God, You are a song amid silence,  
a voice out of quietness,  
a light out of darkness,  
a Presence in the emptiness,  
a coming out of the void.

You are all these things and more.

You are mystery that encompasses meaning,  
meaning that penetrates mystery.

You are God,  
I am man [woman].

I strut and brag.

I put down my fellows  
and bluster out assertions of my achievements.

And then something happens:

I wonder who I am,  
and if I matter.

Night falls,

I am alone in the dark and afraid.

Someone dies,  
I feel so powerless.  
A child is born,  
I am touched by the miracle of new life.  
At such moments I pause...  
to listen to a song amidst silence,  
a voice out of stillness,  
to look for a light out of darkness.  
I want to feel a Presence in the emptiness.  
I find myself reaching for a hand.  
Oftentimes, the feeling passes quickly,  
and I am on the run again:  
success to achieve,  
money to make.  
O Lord, You have to catch me on the run  
most of the time.  
I am too busy to stop,  
too important to pause for contemplation.  
I hold up too big a section of the sky  
to sit down and meditate.  
But even on the run,  
an occasional flicker of doubt assails me,  
And I suspect I may not be as important  
to the world  
as I think I am.  
Jesus said each of us is important to You.

It is as if every hair of our heads were numbered.  
How can that be?  
But in the hope that it is so, I would stop running,  
stop shouting,  
and be myself.

Let me be still now.  
Let me be calm.  
Let me rest upon the faith that You are, God,  
and I need not be afraid. Amen.

*From "A Book of Uncommon Prayer" by Kenneth G. Phifer*

## **Pause**

### **\*Question A:**

How are you physically, mentally, emotionally, spiritually at this stage of your pilgrimage in the Lord?

Journal

If the Lord were to ask you "*My child how can I help you?*", what would you say to Him? (e.g. would you talk about your role as a teacher or as simply as His child or both?)

Journal

### **\*Prayer**

Gracious God, I put myself before You in this moment with waiting heart, expectant desire. Open my eyes that I may see Your promise fulfilled; open my ears that I may hear Your word whispered to my deepest being. Amen.

**\*Ponder on the following...**

There is a deep and wide difference between a vocation and a career.

A career is a job that we take in order to survive in this damaged world. Remember: Adam and Eve did not have to toil for food nor make garments for themselves before sin entered through their disobedience to their loving God. From Genesis 3 onwards, humans need a career to provide for shelter and food. Therefore, in a broken world, it is a blessing to be able to work to care for our loved ones and ourselves.

A vocation, however, is a calling placed in our hearts by the Creator God. It is something which if we do not do, nobody else can do as well or at all (e.g. mothering for a woman who has a child). A career, however, is a job which, if we do not do, many others can do. (e.g. being a teacher, etc.).

**\*Question B:**

1. Is teaching primarily a career or a vocation for you?

Review how you first came to be trained to be a teacher, with God by your side.

2. Has your passion for teaching children and/or teenagers changed?

If yes or no, how and why?

Journal and be honest before Him and yourself... He already knows your thoughts anyway.

**\*Question C:**

1. What will you do about your findings.

Journal

\*Ponder on this poem...

**Door keeper...**

I stand by the door.

I neither go too far in, nor stay too far out.

The door is the most important door in the world –

It is the door through which men and women walk when they find God.

There's no use my going way inside, and staying there,

When so many are still outside and they, as much as I,  
Crave to know where the door is.  
And all that so many ever find  
Is only the wall where a door ought to be.  
They creep along the wall like blind men,  
With outstretched, groping hands.  
Feeling for a door, knowing there must be a door,  
Yet they never find it...  
So I stand by the door.

The most tremendous thing in the world  
Is for men and women to find that door - the door to God.  
The most important thing any man can do (as a teacher or  
a guide)  
Is to take hold of one of those blind, groping hands,  
And put it on the latch - the latch that only clicks  
And opens to the person's own touch.  
Men die outside that door, as starving beggars die  
On cold nights in cruel cities in the dead of winter -  
Die of what is within their grasp.  
They live, on the other side of it - live because they have  
not found it,  
Nothing else matters compared to helping them find it,  
And open it, and walk in it, and find Him...  
So I stand by the door.  
Go in, great saints, go all the way in –  
Go all the way down into the cavernous cellars,

And way up into the spacious attics –  
It is a vast roomy house, this house where God is.

Go into the deepest of hidden casements,  
Of withdrawal, of silence, of sainthood.  
Some must inhabit those inner rooms,  
And know the depth and heights of God,  
And call outside to the rest of us how wonderful it is.

Sometimes I take a deeper look in,  
Sometimes venture in a little farther;  
But my place seems closer to the opening...  
So I stand by the door.

There is another reason why I stand there.  
Some people get part way in and become afraid  
Lest God and the zeal of His house devour them;  
For God is so very great, and asks all of us.  
And these people feel a cosmic claustrophobia,  
And want to get out. “Let me out!” they cry.  
And the people way inside only terrify them more.

Somebody must be by the door to tell them that they are  
spoiled  
For the old life, they too have seen too much:  
Once taste God, and nothing but God will do any more.  
Somebody must be watching for the frightened

Who seek to sneak out just where they came in,  
To tell them how much better it is inside.

The people too far in do not see how near these are  
To leaving – preoccupied with the wonder of it all.  
Somebody must watch for those who have entered the door,  
But I would like to run away. So for them, too,  
I stand by the door.

I admire the people who go way in.  
But I wish they would not forget how it was  
Before they got in. Then they will be able to help  
The people who have not yet even found the door,  
Or the people who want to run away again from God.  
You go in too deeply and stay in too long,  
And forget the people outside the door.  
As for me, I shall take my old accustomed place,  
Near enough to God to hear Him, and know He is there,  
But not so far from men as not to hear them,  
And remember they are there too.  
Where? Outside the door –  
Thousands of them, millions of them.  
But – more important for me –  
One of them, two of them, ten of them,  
Whose hands I am intended to put on the latch.  
So I shall stand by the door and wait  
For those who seek it.

“I had rather be a door-keeper...”

So I stand by the door.

*“I Stand by the Door” by Samuel Moor Shoemaker*

**\*Question D**

As a teacher, who do you identify with: the seeker, the person by the door or the one who has gone deep into the house, forgetting those who are still looking for the door? Why?

Journal

**Prayer:**

Write your own.

Break Silence at 10:00 am. You may continue this reflection at other times during the retreat. Just excuse yourself and meet with God alone in e.g. your bedroom.

### **Reflection III**

#### **\*Prayer**

Almighty God, create in us a clean heart, and renew a right spirit within us, that amid the din and confusion of this noisy world, we may always choose the more excellent way. Amen.

#### **\*Read Isaiah 40 & Romans 1:18-25**

Ponder on the vastness of His world and universe. If you have difficulty imagining with your eyes of faith, go lie down on the grass and stare at the sky and clouds for 5 minutes...or sit by the lakes to watch the ripples as fishes bob up to catch its food...or listen to the rustling leaves and songs of birds in the morning...while monitor lizards heavily make their way to the waters for an early dip.

\*Write a letter to God about His greatness as Creator God!

#### **Pause**

#### **\*Ponder**

*“Education is merely training our students to discover God’s gift of His creation so we could enjoy Him and His gifts in an orderly manner and bring joy to His*

*heart...and to hand all creation back to Him for His glory and praise!"*

**\*Question A:**

Do you agree with the above statement?

Why yes or no or why *"I don't know"*?

Journal

**\*Read Psalm 73**

**\*Question B:**

Have you felt like the psalmist in your days as a teacher (government or private)?

Who and what may you identify with in your struggles as a teacher in Malaysia?

Journal

**\*Question C:**

How will your answers to Question A affect your decision-making process for your school curriculum?

Journal

**\*Reflect**

Mother Teresa of Calcutta said,

*“Pray for me that I do not loosen my grip on the hands of Jesus even under the guise of ministering to the poor (or teaching).”*

That is our first task: to grip the hands of Jesus with such tenacity that we are obliged to follow His lead, to seek first His Kingdom.

The next step is so simple I am almost embarrassed to mention it, and yet it is so important that I must. Begin now to obey Him in every way you can.

*(From Freedom of Simplicity by Richard Foster)*

**\*Question D:**

Given the choice, what may be some useful biblical guidelines for formulating a curriculum for a school you are in charge of, whether under a private or public category?

Journal

**\*Prayer**

*“I want a principle within, of watchful, godly fear;  
A sensibility of sin, a pain to feel it near.  
I want the first approach to feel of pride or wrong desire,*

*To watch the wandering of my will, and quench the  
kindling fire.*

*From Thee that I no more may stray, no more Thy  
goodness grieve,  
Grant me the filial awe, I pray, the tender conscience  
give.*

*Quick as the apple of an eye, O God, my conscience  
make;  
Awake my soul when sin is nigh, and keep it still awake.*

*Almighty God of truth and love,  
To me Thy power impart;  
The mountain from my soul remove, the hardness from  
my heart.  
O may the least omission pain my reawakened soul,  
And drive me to that blood again, which makes the  
wounded whole.”*

*(Charles Wesley 1749)*

### **\*Exercise**

If Your time with God in silence has affected your conviction about your mission as a teacher, how will this affect the curriculum you will prepare for the rest of your teaching life?

**\*Benediction**

***May our Lord Jesus Christ Himself and God our Father, who loved us and by His grace gave us eternal encouragement and good hope, encourage your hearts and strengthen you in every good deed and word."***

**2 Thessalonians 2:16-17**

**II. SHARING FROM PASTORS AFTER A 3-DAY SILENT RETREAT IN YANGON**

*"When we help one pastor, we help a congregation."*

1. K: A senior lady pastor:

*"I have been through 35 years of rubbish in ministry life. I am encouraged to carry on and I will encourage younger pastors to meet with God like this."*

2. M:

*"Here I realize I have hurts and resentment but I have forgiven those who hurt me in ministry and I want to thank them."*

3. O:

*“I was willing to come. Silence is important. The sessions and reflections help renew my strength (I was tired in body, soul and mind). I find God’s love through repeated forgiveness and reconciliation. I was angry with God but now am right with Him.”*

4. CS:

*“I have many hurts and failures. I now know that to love God 1st and to put Him 1st is necessary.”*

5. T:

*“I am encouraged by the transformation in Martha’s life as she found friendship with Jesus. Initially, Martha thought she was doing right to be very busy but later found that it was wrong in God’s eyes. I was too busy doing the business of ministry and was separated from Him. Now I have found that friendship with God is right and essential.”*

6. Kim:

*“Many of my sins were uncovered. Now I understand what friendship with God means. I had wondered how*

*to have the first love for God. I did not know that it can be real. Now I have found 1st love for Him. The reflections taught me about my relationship with God and that God is with me.”*

7. A:

*“This is my first time at a silent retreat. Previously, most of the time I talk and debate to help others find the truth in life. I now know that that is not necessary. God is now my best Friend!”*

8. M:

*“I have been to so many seminars, each with some encouragement. During this silent retreat, I am counselled through the reflections. For the past 20 years, I had to struggle with court cases and I hate my accusers. I thought I had forgiven but in these few days, resentment surfaced from deep inside. I released my burdens to Him, by His love. Also, through the personality lesson, I know myself better now. I see that, for pastors, silent retreat is very important; it is God’s valuable gift to us. I am now willing to listen to Him to find answers to problems.”*

9. MS: (was 1 out of 10 Myanmar church representatives at Lausanne III in Cape Town, Oct 2010):

*“About God’s question to Elijah...”What are you doing here?” (1 Kings 19), I did not want to come because it is a silent retreat. I am usually very talkative. The bishop asked me not to talk so much. I come needing to know God’s direction for my future. The reflection question, on what my future role would be for the next 10 years in Myanmar, spoke to me. God’s instruction to Francis of Assisi (in last reflection): ‘Francis, build My church with simplicity, humility and hope’ touched me. I want to do this for God. The words of the covenant service also spoke to me... I learnt how to let go of hurts and anger...and move on...I am willing to be ordinary like Jesus in Isaiah 53:1-3. I want to be like Jesus, with a servant heart, till He comes again.”*

10. LP (lady pastor in her 20’s)

*“There was some church problem where I was told to keep quiet for 2 years. I was proud and impatient and damaged the church further. I was angry and resentful because church problems reflected on me, the pastor. At this silent retreat, Jesus whispered to me (heard a voice)...‘I died for you.’ Immediately, I was released from*

*my sins. I know now that it is God who owns me (which means God is my Boss, not church members)."*

11. J:

*"Before I came, Bishop told me to be silent. I wondered how. But I am happy with the silence (in fact, only 3-4 of us kept complete silence!). At first I thought I was to pray for new mission fields. Then I was led to confess my sins, find God's forgiveness and admit my weaknesses. I then prayed for our church and pastors. As I wrote down names of people I am to forgive, Satan said, "Don't pray for this nasty guy!" I tried again to forgive and prayed for every name written down. I cried and read Psalm 139. Then I was able to love them all. I want to get people to pray together."*

12. T:

*"I now know that silence is important in life. I want to grow in Christ."*

13. Eliz:

*"I know silent retreat is for me. In 2011, I misunderstood God because bad things happened to me. I knew that God loves me in my mind but I did not know how He*

*loves me. I could only keep silent on day 1 because my friends around me talk. But I did all the reflections. Now I know that friendship with God will help me understand life and see me through in life. I must believe that forgiveness is possible only through God. I will now serve God because He has forgiven me. This will be a struggle that is to be repeated. I now find God real in my life, like the speaker's example of the 50 year old missionary who was angry with God for 40 years due to her past hurts as a child...but was released from her anger through forgiving others and receiving God's forgiveness."*

14. Pi:

*"A silent retreat is not new to me. I am a young and new pastor. At the beginning of my ministry, I had silent retreat (quiet time). It has been a long time since I practised this. I missed out some of the reflections here. The question God posed to Elijah..."What are you doing here?" spoke to me and now I find my direction again."*

15. MT:

*"I struggle with stress in ministry. Though I am a pastor, I was not happy. I also work with non-Christians among students in school. We hate each other. When something went wrong, I blamed others and cried much."*

*The pain in the boils of my resentment and the wounds in my body increased. Now I have released forgiveness to those who wronged me.”*

16. EZ:

*“I wanted to come. I confess I talked and kept silent for 1 day only. Before I came, I had felt lonely though I knew God was with me. No one else seems to listen. I told myself I wanted to start a new life. I often look for my sins and feel abandoned. Like the example of water being inside and outside a fish, I now realise that God is inside and outside of me. I cannot avoid Him and He does not leave me. I used to serve God out of duty; now I will serve Him because His loves me. Elijah was afraid and ran away. God asked me like He asked him...”What are you doing here?” I answered, ‘I want to start a new life in Your service, not run away with unfinished work.’”*

17. AM:

*“God invited me here. Silent retreats are for wounded soldiers!... I want to be like Jesus...”*

18. T:

*“I came to make up the numbers and started silence only n Day 2. I have now discovered friendship with God.”*

### **III. SHARING FROM A YANGON CHRISTIAN ORGANISATION STAFF AFTER A 3-DAY TEACHING SILENT RETREAT IN 2011**

1. F: staff

*“I looked at the sky and God gave me promises so that I was released from my worries!”*

2. X:

*“Session I... Matthew 6:33 spoke to me. I prayed for 3 days. He is my Rock and my Salvation. I am now 60 years and near retirement. Reflection II shows me that He is my all in all.”*

3. R:

*“I needed to be quiet. As I was disobedient to my leaders, I wondered whether God loves me. Then I learnt*

*that Jesus still called Judas “Friend.” I thank Him for His grace. I have become aware of God’s love...He went to hell for me.”*

4. B:

*“I too needed a quiet place to seek His will. I have been a lecturer at the seminary for 2 years and I did not want to take another degree. Now I have been offered a scholarship to pursue postgraduate studies. Isaiah 53 and 54 in Reflection VII spoke to me. By Reflection VIII, I switched off the TV.”*

5. C:

*“I am from Upper Myanmar. John 4 about the Samaritan woman spoke to me. From John 13-17, I learnt from the attitude of Jesus, humble and obedient to His Father. “My Father is greater than Me”, He said, and He loves the world. I came here wanting to see spiritual movement/revival in Myanmar but God showed me He is interested in me!”*

6. D:

*“Why did I come here? I came worried about my ministry. But in John 4, I saw that people came to the*

*Samaritan woman without much effort from her. The F and R booklet helped me forgive others and I was delivered.”*

7. N.

*“Day 3 – 9 am, I read F & R. I had to decide to obey or disobey God. I learnt from Hebrews 12:1-2 which says that unforgiveness is a hindrance in our lives.”*

8. S:

*“I must love God more...”*

9. P: (cried ++)

*“Day 1 – God really spoke to me through Psalm 139 and 27. I am 23 years old. My father deserted us 15 years ago. I could not forgive him and considered him dead. This morning, my sister called to say that my father is in Yangon...but I still cannot call him ‘father’. God revealed my sins to me here. God showed me that forgiving others purifies my life. I have forgiven my father and one day I may meet him again.”*

10. Z:

*“For 3 days, I feel God’s love. The O.T. God is a Judge and I had felt like a hypocrite. I now know He forgives me and is not a condemning God.”*

11. Q:

*“I enjoy the silent retreat! I have a single room because my wife shifted to another room. In the future, when I need God’s assurance and affirmation, I will go for a silent retreat!”*

12. U:

*“Thank you! I enjoy God’s presence! God is my Friend, so I can share my secrets with Him more than with my father and mother. Dad died when I was 19. Psalm 139 tells me that God knows everything though I do worry for my family.”*

*Note also that this group of graduate staff express their listening to God in a different manner than the 18 pastors... more with the mind than with the emotions except for 1, 9 and 11.*

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### **In Times Like This**

*In times like these you need a Saviour,  
In times like these you need an anchor;  
Be very sure, be very sure,  
Your anchor holds and grips the Solid Rock!*

Chorus:

*This Rock is Jesus, yes He's the One,  
This Rock is Jesus, the only One;  
Be very sure, Be very sure,  
Your anchor holds and grips the Solid Rock!*

*In times like these you need the Bible,  
In times like these, oh be not idle;  
Be very sure, be very sure,  
Your anchor holds and grips the Solid Rock!*

Mrs. Ruth Caye Jones

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## NOTES

### Recommended Books

1. *Building a Love House is Still Hard Work*  
by Dr. Lee Bee Teik (Cornerstone Corp Sdn Bhd 2016)
2. *Baptism – Its Purpose, Practice and Power*  
by Michael Green (Hodder and Stoughton, 1987)
3. *Renewed Day by Day Vol. I*  
by A. W. Tozer (Christian Publishers, 1980)
4. *Your Personality and Your Spiritual Life*  
by Reginald Johnson (Monarch, UK 1997)
5. *The Spirit of the Disciplines: Understanding How God Changes Our Lives* By Dallas Willard (Harper and Collins Publishers, 1988)
6. *A Passion for Holiness*  
by J. I. Packer (Crossway Books, 1992)