

## **An Introduction to the Life of Your Soul ACNA Assembly 2019**

**The Rev'd Geoff Chapman**

**Text: Luke 8.4-15**

**Presentation 1**

### **The Sower, the Seed, and the Soul**

A minister is "a chosen vessel unto him to bear his name. In great measure, according to the purity and perfection of the instrument, will be the success. It is not great talents God blesses so much as likeness to Jesus. A holy minister is an awful weapon in the hand of God."

"The greatest need of my people is my personal holiness."  
Robert Murray McCheyne

#### **Some Souls Are Hard**

*as he sowed, some fell along the path and was trampled underfoot, and the birds of the air devoured it.*  
Luke 8.5

*The ones along the path are those who have heard; then the devil comes and takes away the word from their hearts, so that they may not believe and be saved.*  
Luke 8.12

#### **Some Souls Are Shallow**

*"And some fell on the rock, and as it grew up, it withered away, because it had no moisture.*  
Luke 8.6

*the enthusiasm doesn't go very deep. It's only another fad, and the moment there's trouble it's gone.*  
Luke 8.20 (Msg)

"Superficiality is the curse of our age."  
Richard Foster (quoted in J Ortberg, "Soul Keeping", p.56).

"For much of our lives, we live in the shallows. Then something happens – a crisis, a birth, a death – and we get this glimpse of tremendous depth."  
John Ortberg, "Soul Keeping", pp 57-58)

**Some Souls Are Cluttered**

*"they are those who hear, but as they go on their way they are choked by the cares and riches and pleasures of life, and their fruit does not mature."*

Luke 8:14

*"With him, nothing is more than enough. Without him, everything is not nearly enough"*

*"Acquire the Spirit of peace, and a thousand souls around you will be saved."*  
St Seraphim of Serov

**Some Souls are Good**

*As for that in the good soil, they are those who, hearing the word, hold it fast in an honest and good heart, and bear fruit with patience.*

Luke 8.15

**Things I Do Not Want to Forget...**

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### **“How Goes It with Your Soul?” Assessment**

1. More and more often I notice that I am “going through the motions” of life—telling people to do things I am not currently doing in my own life, manufacturing emotion that I am not feeling, providing care but aware I don’t really care.  
*ALWAYS    OFTEN    SOMETIMES    RARELY    NEVER*
2. I am aware of a nagging sense that something is not quite right but I don’t seem to be able to take the time or make the effort to look into it. The truth is, I’m not even sure I know how.  
*ALWAYS    OFTEN    SOMETIMES    RARELY    NEVER*
3. I find myself rushing from one thing to the next without time to really pay attention to what’s going on in and around me.  
*ALWAYS    OFTEN    SOMETIMES    RARELY    NEVER*
4. I am keeping up with what my life requires but deep down I feel that I have lost touch with who I am in God and what he has called me to do.  
*ALWAYS    OFTEN    SOMETIMES    RARELY    NEVER*
5. I am tired, not just physically but spiritually and emotionally. I don’t really know how to get rested.  
*ALWAYS    OFTEN    SOMETIMES    RARELY    NEVER*
6. I am aware of an underlying irritability and restlessness just beneath the surface of my life.  
*ALWAYS    OFTEN    SOMETIMES    RARELY    NEVER*
7. I can’t stop working even when I know I need to.  
*ALWAYS    OFTEN    SOMETIMES    RARELY    NEVER*
8. I have become emotionally numb—unable to experience a full range of human emotion.  
*ALWAYS    OFTEN    SOMETIMES    RARELY    NEVER*
9. I find myself increasingly giving in to escapist behaviors (eating, mindless television viewing, substance abuse, shopping/spending, pornography/fantasy novels etc.) or escapist fantasies— dreaming about being somewhere else or having a different life.  
*ALWAYS    OFTEN    SOMETIMES    RARELY    NEVER*
10. I do not have time for attending to my human needs—exercise, eating right, getting enough sleep, doctor’s appointments and medical procedures, picking up dry cleaning, getting the car washed, making home repairs.  
*ALWAYS    OFTEN    SOMETIMES    RARELY    NEVER*
11. My most significant relationships are getting shortchanged.  
*ALWAYS    OFTEN    SOMETIMES    RARELY    NEVER*

12. I find myself hoarding energy—avoiding people in the grocery store, holing up at home or in my office—for fear that routine social interactions will rob me of that last bit of energy.

ALWAYS    OFTEN    SOMETIMES    RARELY    NEVER

13. My spiritual practices have slipped. Even though I know that practices such as solitude, prayer, personal reflection on Scripture, etc. are life-giving, I find I don't have time or energy for them.

ALWAYS    OFTEN    SOMETIMES    RARELY    NEVER

14. I feel isolated with no one to fully confide in and no one who fully understands my situation.

ALWAYS    OFTEN    SOMETIMES    RARELY    NEVER

15. My family and friends and I are very good at strategic planning and "thinking our way" into solutions, but aside from perfunctory prayers to book-end our conversations, we don't have a way of seeking God together.

ALWAYS    OFTEN    SOMETIMES    RARELY    NEVER

16. It has been a long time since I have felt connected with the presence of God in my own life beyond what I am doing for others. Sometimes I suspect that what I do for others has become more important to me than my own relationship with God.

ALWAYS    OFTEN    SOMETIMES    RARELY    NEVER

### Assessment Scoring

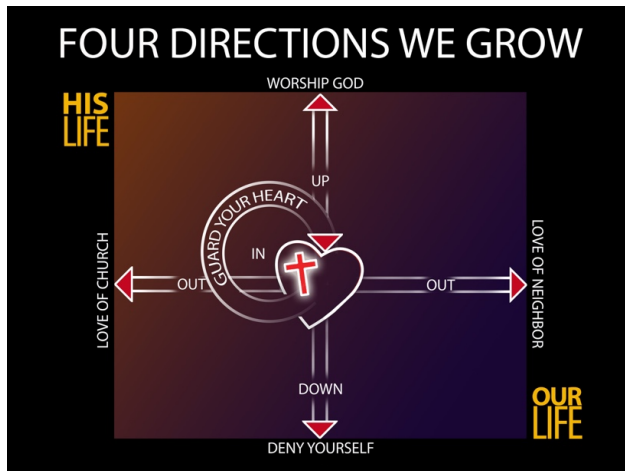
If you find yourself in the Always-Often portion of the continuum for three or more of these questions, then chances are you are already becoming dangerously tired and losing your soul. You will want to address this with the help of your church.

*The original version of this appeared in the March 2, 2010 Leadership Journal, authored by Ruth Haley Barton. We have lightly modified it.*

**Text: Luke 6:39-45**

**Presentation 2**

### **The Four Directions of our Life in Christ**



### **"In" - The Heart that Jesus Gives**

#### **Question: "Who is a Good Person?"**

*"Why do you see the speck that is in your brother's eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye? How can you say to your brother, 'Brother, let me take out the speck that is in your eye,' when you yourself do not see the log that is in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take out the speck that is in your brother's eye."*

Luke 6:41-42

*"Can a blind man lead a blind man? Will they not both fall into a pit?"*

Luke 6:39

#### **The Importance of the Heart**

*"For no good tree bears bad fruit, nor again does a bad tree bear good fruit, for each tree is known by its own fruit. For figs are not gathered from thornbushes, nor are grapes picked from a bramble bush. The good person out of the good treasure of his heart produces good, and the evil person out of his evil treasure produces evil, for out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaks."*

Luke 6:43-45

**1) Guard Your Heart**

*Above all else, guard your heart, for everything you do flows from it.*  
Prov 4.23

*'You may not love what you think you love.'*  
James K.A. Smith

**2) Christian Worship: God's Heart Clinic**

- We pray for cleansing of our hearts:  
*Almighty God, to you all hearts are open, all desires known, and from you no secrets are hid: Cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit, that we may perfectly love you...*
- We confess our divided, misdirected hearts  
*Most merciful God... We have not loved you with our whole heart; we have not loved our neighbors as ourselves.*
- We come to his Table...  
*Lift up your hearts.*  
*We lift them to the Lord.*
- This Holy Bread and Wine is **medicine**, for the healing of our heart  
*The gifts of God for the People of God. Take them in remembrance that Christ died for you and feed on him in your hearts by faith, with thanksgiving.*

**3) 'Watch Over One Another in Love'**

*"Confess your sins to one another that you might be healed"*  
James 3.1

Spiritual Direction and Small Group Log-Ins

**Some Closing Questions:**

What do you think of these remedies for our misguided hearts? Which of them would be good for you to use more?

**Things I Do Not Want to Forget...**

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**Addendum: Christian Spiritual Direction**

**What Is Christian Spiritual Direction?**

In Christian Spiritual Direction you will have an opportunity to speak with a trusted, mature Christian friend or pastor about the health of your soul, particularly in light of the framework of our Community life and our shared pursuit of Christlikeness. All of our Spiritual Directors are themselves also in Spiritual Direction, and are committed to living what we commend. The Spiritual Director stands, so to speak, at the side of a person as they face the Lord together.

Spiritual Direction is God-centered; it is anchored to a standard of spiritual reality and a standard of spiritual health that is revealed in the Scriptures, summarized in the Creeds, and prayed in the Lord's Prayer. So we will ask questions like, "*What does it mean that we believe in this triune God who has come to us in Jesus?*" In Spiritual Direction our faith grows as God becomes the vital reality of our lives.

Spiritual Direction is also person-centered, helping to gain awareness of the real inner life of the individual and to discern the presence and leading of the Holy Spirit

(or counterfeits) upon the life of the individual. In Spiritual Direction a profound friendship grows and deepens as the love of Christ takes first place.

This kind of Christian Spiritual Direction is a complex task, so we proceed with caution, humility and prayer.

Times of Spiritual Direction will be scheduled monthly, are targeted at an hour, and would involve (on the part of the Spiritual Director) prayerful listening, thoughtful questions, and, perhaps, especially if asked, a little advice. We open and close with prayer.

### **How should I Prepare?**

Careful preparation is essential to the process of Spiritual Direction. If there has not been adequate time for preparation, it would be wise to postpone the appointment. If you arrive unprepared, your Spiritual director may ask you to postpone the appointment.

Here are some suggestions to help you prepare:

- What recurring questions, problems, or difficulties do I have in my Christian life? If I could speak to God directly, what would I say to him or ask of him?
- Does my life increasingly look like Christ's life? If not, what blocks it?
- Are there things that rival my devotion to God? (You can ask yourself what you daydream about, what you fear, and what you work toward as indicators of what you value.)
- Reflect upon your small group 'log-in' (see below) and ask, *'As I shared with my group about the four directions of my life, about my 'habits', and about my pursuit of Christlikeness, what can I say about the health of my soul?'* How is the balance of the 'Four Directions'? How am I doing with the 'important point of growth' I shared with your group? Ask yourself, "Where am I stuck?" (if I am stuck), "Why am I stuck at this point?", "What might help me?"

Out of these questions, be prepared to talk about one or two areas that seem important to you in the development of Christlikeness in your life.

### **Confidentiality and Further Help**

Spiritual Direction is not confession and it is not pastoral counseling (though it touches on these) and it is not therapy. It has a limited focus and capacity. When further help is needed, Spiritual Directors will be able to refer people to their clergy, especially when the issues are pressing. Remember that confidentiality in the Community will be carefully kept, but can always include the Rector if the scope of pastoral circumstances warrant.

### **What Difference Will Spiritual Direction Will Make?**

We hope that the deep sense of isolation in our Christian life will come to an end, and that we will know the friendship and support of other Christians who know and love us deeply. We hope to gain a dependable sense of the reality of the Holy Spirit as someone here with us in the real life that we must live, with all our



temptations and hardships and circumstances, pointing us to our crucified and risen Lord Christ. As this happens, we find He is also here with us in our lives, and is profoundly for us in his goodness and power and grace. All this, we come to know, is true.

### **Addendum: Building a Healthy, Holy and Safe Small Group**

**Leaders:** Our leaders meet together from time to time for training, prayer and encouragement. In the groups, they set the atmosphere, facilitate the meeting and discussion, keep everything on track.

**Atmosphere:** These groups are designed to facilitate Christian Growth in Christlikeness of life, and as such they feature a partnership between the mercy and holiness of God, both given to us in Christ. We often grow slowly, and so patience and love are essential to our fellowship as we learn how to live the life Jesus gives us.

**Build a safe group:** Confidentiality in the group must be honored, and always (when needed) can include the Rector, who is able to provide extra pastoral support.

#### **Typical Group Meeting Agenda:**

- Greetings (10)
- Common Prayer (10)
- Study (20)
- Log-In (25)
- Final Prayer (5)

### **Addendum: Log-Ins**

On the first log-in, each person gives a brief overview of the '4 Directions' in their own life. Where are they weaker? Where are they stronger? This could take about 10 minutes, and the leader will help them keep on track, gently. Then the one logging-in will take another 5-10 minutes to identify and share something from the Rule that is 'an important point of growth' that they want to make real progress in.

Preparation is important! Here are some suggestions to help you prepare:

- What recurring questions, problems, or difficulties do I have in my Christian life? If I could speak to God directly, what would I say to him or ask of him?
- Does my life increasingly look like Christ's life? If not, what blocks it?
- Are there things that rival my devotion to God? (You can ask yourself what you daydream about, what you fear, and what you work toward as indicators of what you value.)
- Reflect upon your small group 'log-in' and ask, '*As I shared with my group about the four directions of my life, about my 'habits', and about my pursuit of Christlikeness, what can I say about the health of my soul?*' How is the

balance of the 'Four Directions'? How am I doing with the 'important point of growth' I shared with your group? Ask yourself, "Where am I stuck?" (if I am stuck), "Why am I stuck at this point?", "What might help me?"

- When they come to the end of their log-in, the Group Leader asks, 'How can we be of support to you?' The individual then tells the group how he/she would like them to help (generally this will be one or more of four possibilities: 'listen to me' or 'pray for me' or 'hold me accountable'). In general, we ask that 'advice' not be given; the rule is "no fixing." The leader makes sure the group respects these boundaries.
- There is a very important point here: We trust Christ to mend all things, and He will do it as we live the life he gives us to live. As we adhere to the patterns of his life, His Spirit will work within us to heal and sanctify. The Community honors that and makes room for that. Extra conversation on personal issues is the focus of Spiritual Direction. In the groups themselves, the foundational skills of listening, loving, praying and receiving one another are our focus. We 'Watch over one another in love,' as John Wesley put it. Group leaders will need to keep this patient process in place.
- On subsequent log-ins: Once people have logged-in with the Four Directions a couple of times, we begin to use the Golden Triangle as a format for log-ins. When doing this, we start with the Lower-Left Corner, describing some significant circumstances of our life. Then we move to the Upper Corner, and share what the Holy Spirit seems to be saying to us in the middle of these circumstances. Then we move to the Lower-Right Corner, and share our planned disciplines to take off the old life and put on the life Christ is giving us. At the end of the log-in, the facilitator asks, "How can we be of support to you?"

**Text: Mark 6.31**

**Presentation 3**

## **The Sabbath Rhythms of Jesus' Life**

### **Our Burden:**

#### **Jesus' Invitation:**

*"Are you tired? Worn out? Burned out on religion? Come to me. Get away with me and you'll recover your life. I'll show you how to take a real rest. Walk with me and work with me—watch how I do it. Learn the unforced rhythms of grace. I won't lay anything heavy or ill-fitting on you. Keep company with me and you'll learn to live freely and lightly."*

Matt 11.28 (Msg)

#### **The Rhythm of Solitude**

*And when it was day he departed and went into a lonely place. And the people sought him and came to him, and would have kept him from leaving them...*

Luke 4:42

*You will leave me all alone. Yet I am not alone, for my Father is with me.*  
John 16:32

#### **The Rhythm of Prayer**

*Yet the news about him spread all the more, so that crowds of people came to hear him and to be healed of their sicknesses. But Jesus often withdrew to lonely places and prayed.*

Luke 5:15-16

*"Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you."*  
1 Peter 5.7

#### **The Rhythm of Silence**

*Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan, and was led by the Spirit for forty days in the wilderness...*

Luke 4:1-2

*'I am practicing the discipline of not having the last word.'*  
Dallas Willard

#### **The Rhythm of Slowing**

*"Come with me by yourselves to a quiet place and get some rest."*  
Mark 6.31

"Ruthlessly eliminate hurry".  
Dallas Willard to John Ortberg

*"The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath."*  
Mark 2.27

*"The Sabbath is about restoring the diminished. It's about replenishing the drained. It's about repairing the broken."*  
(T Keller, "King's Cross", p.38)

*"For the Son of man is Lord of the Sabbath."*  
Mark 2.28

This is the kind of life Jesus lived, and it is the kind of life Jesus gives.

**Things I Do Not Want to Forget...**

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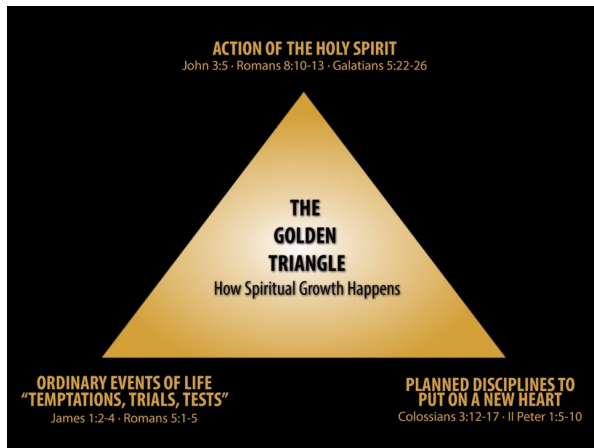
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**Text: Phil 2.12-15**

**Presentation 4**

## The Golden Triangle of Spiritual Transformation



Earlier we looked at the 'Four Directions' our lives grow as we follow Christ. This presentation looks at **how** that how spiritual change happens. Understanding how we change helps us to be alert to what is needed if we are going to become more and more like Jesus Christ. It also makes us aware of what might be missing, or out of balance.

Dallas Willard developed a very helpful model of the process of Christian spiritual formation that he called, 'The Golden Triangle'. His graphic is above, and below I have reprinted (and lightly modified) an article by him from [Christianity Today](#) summarizing this model.

*"Looking Like Jesus: Divine resources for a changed life are always available."*

By Dallas Willard. Published in *Christianity Today*, August 20, 1990. ©1985 Ron Harris Music. Available in [The Great Omission](#), Ch 4, San Francisco: HarperCollins, 2006.

*Is it possible to be like Jesus? Can we actually have the character of the heavenly Father? We know God shows sincere love for everyone and is consistently kind to even the ungrateful. Jesus likewise showed himself to be merciful, freely forgave injuries, and was glad simply to give, expecting nothing back.*

*It is possible, I now believe, to "put on the Lord Jesus Christ" (Rom. 13:14). Ordinary people in common surroundings can live from the abundance of God's kingdom, letting the spirit and the actions of Jesus be the natural outflow from their lives... .*

*While it is in one sense a result of God's presence within us, the New Testament also describes a process behind our "putting on" the Lord Jesus Christ. It is repeatedly discussed in the Bible under three essential aspects, each inseparable from the other, all interrelated. This process could be called "The Golden Triangle" of spiritual transformation, for it is as precious as gold to the disciple, and each of its aspects is as essential to the whole as three sides are to a triangle.*

### **The Ordinary Events of Life**

*One side of our Triangle is the faithful acceptance of everyday problems. By enduring trials with patience we can reach an assurance of the fullness of heaven's rule in our lives.*

*James, the Lord's brother, began his message to the church by instructing us to be "supremely happy" when troubles come upon us: "When all kinds of trials and temptations crowd into your lives, my brothers, don't resent them as intruders, but welcome them as friends! Realize that they come to test your faith and to produce in you the quality of endurance" (1:2-3, Phillips). When endurance or patience has been given full play in the details of day-to-day existence, it will make us "perfect and complete, lacking in nothing" (v. 4).*

#### **Lower Left: Ordinary Events of Life - 'Tests', 'Trials' and 'Temptations'**

James 1.2-4; Rom 5.1-5

"We must accept the circumstances we constantly find ourselves in as the place of God's kingdom and blessing. God has yet to bless anyone except where they actually are, and if we faithlessly discard situation after situation...as not being 'right,' we will simply have no place to receive his kingdom into our life.... We are not to try to get in a position to avoid trials...We are to see every event as an occasion in which the competence and faithfulness of God will be confirmed to us."

(Dallas Willard, Divine Conspiracy)

*Certainly James learned this from Jesus, his older brother, during more than 20 years of sometimes rancorous family life (John 7:2-8). We must never forget that for most of his life Jesus was what we today would call a blue-collar worker, a tradesman, an independent contractor. His hands had calluses from using the first-century equivalents of hammers, drills, axes, saws and planes. He was known in his village simply as "the carpenter."*

*There James saw him practice all he later preached. We know what it is like to "do business with the public." So did Jesus. Every single thing that Jesus taught us to do was something he had put into daily practice. In the trials of his everyday existence, in family and village life, he verified the sufficiency of God's care for those who simply trust him and obey him. And, at least in retrospect, James understood. Once he saw who his older brother really was, he realized the power of patience in the events of daily life—manifested above all by an inoffensive tongue (James 3:2)—as the path in which God's character is fulfilled in our lives.*

### **Opening our Lives to the Spirit**

*The second side of our Triangle is interaction with God's Spirit in and around us. As Paul points out, the Spirit allows us to "walk in" the Spirit (Gal. 5:25). This all-powerful, creative personality, the promised "strengtheners," the paraclete of John 14, gently awaits our invitation to him to act upon us, with us and for us.*

*The presence of the Holy Spirit can always be recognized by the way he moves us toward what Jesus would be and do (John 16:7-15). When we inwardly experience the heavenly sweetness and power of life—the love, joy, and peace—that Jesus knew, that is the work of the Spirit in us.*

*Outwardly, life in the Spirit manifests itself in two ways. Gifts of the Spirit will enable us to perform some specific function—such as service or healing or leading worship—with effects clearly beyond those of our own making. These gifts serve God's purposes among his people, but they do not necessarily signify the state of our heart.*

*The fruit of the Spirit, by contrast, give a sure sign of transformed character. When our deepest attitudes and dispositions are those of Jesus, it is because we have learned to let the Spirit foster his life in us. Paul confessed: "I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me" (Gal. 2:20). The outcome of Christ living within us through the Spirit is fruit: "love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control" (Gal. 5:22-23).*

#### **Top: The Action of the Holy Spirit**

John 3.5; Rom 8.10-13; Gal 5.22-26

"The function of the Holy Spirit is, first, to move within our souls, and especially our minds, to present the person of Jesus and the reality of his kingdom." (348)

"The Spirit continues to move upon us and within us to enable us to do the kinds of work Jesus did (through 'gifts' of the Spirit) and to grow the kind of inward character that manifests itself in the 'fruit' or outcome of the Spirit..."

(Dallas Willard, Divine Conspiracy)

*Both gifts and fruit are the result, not the reality of the Spirit's presence in our lives. What brings about our transformation into Christlikeness is our direct, personal interaction with Christ through the Spirit. The Spirit makes Christ present to us and draws us toward his likeness. It is as we thus "behold the glory of the Lord" that we are constantly "transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as from the Lord, the Spirit" (2 Cor. 3:18, NASB).*

### **The Disciplines of Christlikeness**

*The third side of our Triangle is made up of spiritual disciplines. These are special activities, many engaged in by Jesus himself, such as solitude and study, service and secrecy, fasting and worship. They are ways in which we undertake to follow the New Testament mandate to put to death or "make no provision for" the merely earthly aspects of our lives and to put on the new person (Col. 3).*

*The emphasis in this dimension of spiritual transformation is upon our efforts. True, we are given much, and without grace we can do nothing; but our action is also required. "Try your hardest," Peter directs us (2 Pet. 1:5, NEB). We are to add virtue to our faith, knowledge to our virtue, self-control to our knowledge, patience to our self-control, godlikeness to our patience, brotherly love to our godlikeness, and agapē to our brotherly love (vv. 5-7).*

*In Colossians 3, Paul urges us "as the elect of God, holy and beloved" to renew our inner selves with organs ("bowels" in KJV) of mercy, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, long-suffering, forbearance, forgiveness, and agapē (vv. 12-14). We should not only want to be merciful, kind, unassuming, and patient persons, we are also to make plans to become so. We are to find out, that is, what prevents and what promotes mercifulness*

#### **Lower Right: Planned Disciplines to Put on a New Heart**

Col 3.12-17; 2 Pet 1.5-10; 1 Cor 9.24-27

"The main task is, by engaging in ways of using the body differently, to disrupt and conquer habits of thought, feeling, and action that govern our lives as if we or someone other than God were God, and as if his kingdom were irrelevant or inaccessible to us... Appropriate disciplines for developing new habits, kingdom habits, are practiced. A further help in understanding what spiritual disciplines are (for the disciples of Jesus) is to recognize them as simply a matter of following him into his own practices, appropriately modified to suit our own condition."

(Dallas Willard, Divine Conspiracy)

We should not only want to be merciful, kind, unassuming, and patient persons, we are also to make plans to become so.



*and kindness and patience in our souls, and we are to remove hindrances to them as much as possible, carefully substituting that which assists Christlikeness.*

*Many well-meaning people, to give an example, cannot succeed in being kind because they are too rushed to get things done. Haste has worry, fear, and anger as close associates; it is a deadly enemy of kindness, and hence of love. If this is our problem, we may be greatly helped by a day's retreat into solitude and silence, where we will discover that the world survives even though we are inactive. There we might prayerfully meditate to see clearly the damage done by our unkindness, and honestly compare it to what, if anything, is really gained by our hurry. We will come to understand that for the most part our hurry is really based upon pride, self-importance, fear, and lack of faith, and rarely upon the production of anything of true value for anyone.*

*Perhaps we will end up making plans to pray daily for the people with whom we deal regularly. Or we may resolve to ask associates for forgiveness for past injuries. Whatever comes of such prayerful reflection, we may be absolutely sure that our lives will never be the same, and that we will enjoy a far greater richness of God's reality in our lives.*

*In general, then, we "put on" the new person by regular activities that are in our power, and we become what we could not be by direct effort. If we take note of and follow Jesus in what he did when he was not ministering or teaching, we will find ourselves led and enabled to behave as he did when he was "on the spot."*

*The single most obvious trait of those who profess Christ but do not grow into Christlikeness is their refusal to take the reasonable and time-tested measures for spiritual growth. I almost never meet someone in spiritual coldness, perplexity, and distress who is regular in the use of those spiritual exercises; that will be obvious to anyone familiar with the contents of the New Testament.*

*The single most obvious trait of those who profess Christ but do not grow into Christlikeness is their refusal to take the reasonable and time-tested measures for spiritual growth.*

### ***Like stars in a dark world***

*The three sides of the golden triangle of spiritual transformation belong together. No one of the three will give us a heart like Christ's without the other two. None can take the place of any other. Yet each, connected to the others, will certainly bring us to ever-increasing Christlikeness.*

*In Philippians 2 the apostle draws all three together in one grand statement:*

*"You must work out your own salvation in fear and trembling; for it is God who works in you, inspiring both the will and the deed, for his own chosen purpose. Do all you have to do without complaint or wrangling. Show yourselves guileless and above reproach, faultless children of God in a warped and crooked generation, in which you shine like stars in a dark world". (Phil 2.12-15, NEB)*

*When we accept moment-to-moment events and tribulations as the place where we receive God's provision, we patiently anticipate the action of his Spirit in our lives. In hope we do our best to find the ways in which our inner self can take on the character of the children of the Highest. This is the path of radical change—change sufficient to meet the needs of the world and prepare a people to be the habitation of God.*

**Things I Do Not Want to Forget...**

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## **Addendum: *An Experiment in Clergy Covenant Groups***

*by Geoff Chapman and Phil Ashe*

This document is an outline for a 5-month experiment in clergy covenant groups, gathered to build Christlikeness of character and strengthen key pastoral friendships, for the sake of resilient and effective parish leadership

### **Size, Location, Frequency and Members:**

We will form into groups of no less than three, and no more than six pastors of the same gender. Limiting groups to a maximum of 6 will enable each member to experience at least three 'log-ins' during the 5 months, a critical part of our work.

Groups best meet face to face, but where there are not enough clergy within a close local radius, we are prepared to gather groups by Zoom video link for our meetings. Most of our groups now meet online.

We will meet weekly. Each group will schedule 20 meetings over the 5 months. We ask people not to miss more than 2 meetings over these months. Each group will decide whether to leave certain weeks unscheduled.

### **Typical Meeting Schedule:**

8:00am	Opening prayer and sharing by those not "logging in"
8:15am	Morning Prayer
8:30am	Study and Discussion
8:55am	Log-In
9:25am	Closing prayer

### **Our Curriculum:**

Our curriculum, "[Growing into Jesus' Life](#)" has been a project of the Rev. Geoff Chapman over the past 13 years, developed out of his 2004 Sabbatical study with Dallas Willard and his follow up work with James Bryan Smith. The curriculum has been in use in his parish since 2015 with some 90 parishioners. It features 32+ chapters broken into 6 sections, moving from: 'The Character of God', to 'The Gospel of the Kingdom', to 'The Dynamics of Spiritual Formation', to 'Core Habits and Virtues', to a development of a Rule of Life, testing it all with central passages of Scripture and the Creed.

Over our 5 months, we will selectively introduce the core elements of the curriculum, exposing us to the dynamics of classical Christian Spiritual Formation. A full journey through the curriculum is beyond the scope of our 'experiment', and would take about two years.

The curriculum is engaged by study, prayer, discussion, and above all by putting it into practice in in collaboration with other like-minded 'apprentices' of Jesus.

The curriculum will be supplied by email in digital form.

### **A Shared "Rule of Life"**

Each clergy covenant group will agree upon a shared "Rule of Life" which will include:

- Daily prayer and Bible reading
- Weekly Eucharistic worship
- Preparation for and participation in our clergy covenant group meetings
- Regular fasting
- A covenant group retreat with spouses
- Honesty and confidentiality with each other
- Monthly Spiritual Direction
- Regular intercessory prayer for each other

Each group will clarify some of the details of the 'Rule' in their first month (for example, fasting, prayer and Bible reading) and will stay accountable to each other on their progress. Groups will have flexibility on how they put this into practice; we prefer to set the 'Rule' as a shared target (*'At the end of 5 months, we want these rhythms to be a faithful part of how we live.'*) rather than a beginning point.

### **Some Core Dynamics**

What are the central dynamics of our work together? Here are some:

- **Christ's life is a gift**, given to all who come to him in repentance and faith. We do not deserve it or earn it; it comes by his freely given grace. This grace creates in us a vigorous response of thankful apprenticeship, where we learn from him how to live the life he gives.
- **His life has a definite shape** that can be known, learned and lived, summarized in our 'Four Directions' chapter. The process of 'putting on' Christ, summarized in Dallas Willard's 'Golden Triangle' is also central to our maturity.
- **We grow best in circles of fellowship that are honest, encouraging, safe and redemptive.** *'Watching over one another in love.'* (J Wesley) is what we will learn to do. This is a love that is patient, and trusts the overall direction of the curriculum and the influence of the Holy Spirit to heal us thoroughly. Towards that end, we say 'no fixing each other' in response to our group 'log-ins'. This creates groups where we are safe to be honest with each other. Facilitators will remind us of this.
- **We want to recover lives** of deep and frequent prayer, that are soaked in the scriptures, characterized by modest self-denial, with Christ-like rhythms and rest, free of addictions, with time for one another and time for the Lord. This will mean that we will need to let some things go during these

months in order to simplify our lives and make needed room.

### **A Retreat with Spouses on Marriage and Family Life**

Our concern for the life of our pastors includes, of course, concern for the 'too often taken for granted' spouses and families of our pastors. A regular cycle of retreats for our clergy and spouses would be an important part of our care for one another. We have not yet planned any retreats, but will look for the opportunity to do so this summer. Our first retreat might be offered after the 1<sup>st</sup> of the year.

### **Facilitator**

Our clergy cohorts will be supported by Geoff Chapman. He will ask a facilitator from each group to meet with him by video for training, and will be available to each group facilitator to help with group dynamics.

### **Estimated Cost**

Costs for the 5 month Covenant Group experiment will be \$10/participant, which will cover the costs of video conferencing, and other inadvertent expenses. Any marriage retreat will have additional costs, yet to be determined.

### **Assessment**

These months are an experiment in classical Christian Spiritual Formation for clusters of Clergy. We will use some practices that are well tested, and proven. We will also use dynamics that are newly developed (log-ins, the 'Four Directions' and 'The Golden Triangle' for example). Because this kind formation is new to most of us in the ACNA, we are a learning community, out on the front edge of something important. At the end of the 5 months, we want to listen to you and gain the benefit of your own response to this experiment. We will look for the opportunity for feedback and collaboration as we make these offerings even better in the years ahead.

We are genuinely honored and excited about this project, and thank God for your partnership with us in this. We have longed for this kind of fellowship through the decades of our ministry, and are so glad to see God stirring up a shared hunger among so many of our brothers and sisters in Christian leadership. May the Lord of the church answer our prayers with more of his life

Blessings in Jesus,

Geoff and Phil

## Addendum: 'Growing Into Jesus' Life'

### ***A Curriculum for Christian Spiritual Formation*** ***Pastor Geoff Chapman*** ***St. Stephen's Church, Anglican***

This is a 70+ week curriculum for Christian Spiritual formation that is designed for congregational use in a parish or for Pastors meeting in clusters of 4-6 people. It begins with a 16 chapter look at God, at Jesus' Gospel of the Kingdom, and at the primary dynamics of classical Christian spiritual formation. The second half of the curriculum is a slow walk through the habits and the virtues of the Christian life. The final months give opportunity to look at the current rhythms of our life and make adjustments, embracing a way of life that is rooted in the Kingdom of God and the Spirit of Christ. A significant part of each chapter will be study, large and small group conversation, and illustrative examples from the lives of exemplary Christians and our own members.

The documents for 'Growing Into Jesus' Life' are posted here:

<http://www.ststephenschurch.net/content.cfm?id=379>

#### **Orientation**

- Briefing 1: Our Core Assumptions
- Briefing 2: Salvation is a Life
- Briefing 3: The Four Directions of the Life Jesus Gives
- Briefing 4: Christian Spiritual Direction
- Briefing 5: Building a Healthy, Holy and Safe Small Group
- Briefing 6: A Normal Month in the Community
- Briefing 7: Conversion of Life

#### **Section One: Getting to Know God Again**

##### Introduction: Entering the "Way of Jesus"

- Chapter 1: Getting to know God again: His Goodness
- Chapter 2: Getting to know God again: His Greatness
- Chapter 3: Getting to know God again: His Joy
- Chapter 4: Getting to know God again: His Presence
- Chapter 5: God's Love... and the Cross
- Chapter 6: God's Love... and the Trinity

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## Section Two: Jesus' Gospel of the Kingdom

Chapter 7: The Gospel Jesus Preached

Chapter 8: Thy Kingdom Come...

Chapter 9: Salvation is a Life

Chapter 10: [A Beautiful Life](#)

## Section Three: Primary Dynamics of Spiritual Formation

Chapter 11: [Four Directions of Life](#): Up and Out

Chapter 12: [Four Directions of Life](#): In and Down

Chapters 13: [The Golden Triangle of Spiritual Transformation](#)

Chapter 14: God's Grace and Human Effort

Chapter 15: The Role of the Body

Chapter 16: Stability

## Section Four: Core Habits and Virtues

Chapter 17: Repentance

Chapter 18: Study, Meditation, Imagination

Chapter 19: Solitude, Silence, Slowing

Chapter 20: Appetites and Fasting

Chapter 21: Anger, Retaliation, and Contempt

Chapter 22: Money, Generosity, and Simplicity of Life

Chapter 23: [Lying, Spinning and Honesty](#)

Chapter 24: [Lust and Sexual Purity](#)

Chapter 25: [Forgiven and Forgiving](#)

Chapter 26: Service and Submission

Chapter 27: [On Mission](#)

## Section Five: A New Way of Living

Chapter 28: Building a [New Life](#): My Current Habits

Chapter 29: Building a [New Life](#): New Habits and Rhythms

Chapter 30: [Stability: Hold Fast to What You Have Attained](#)

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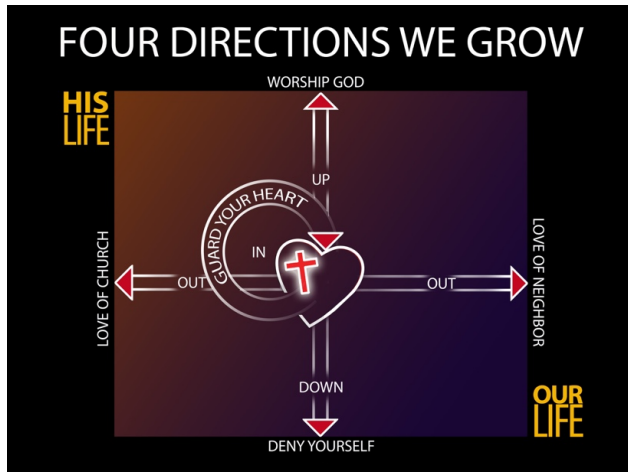
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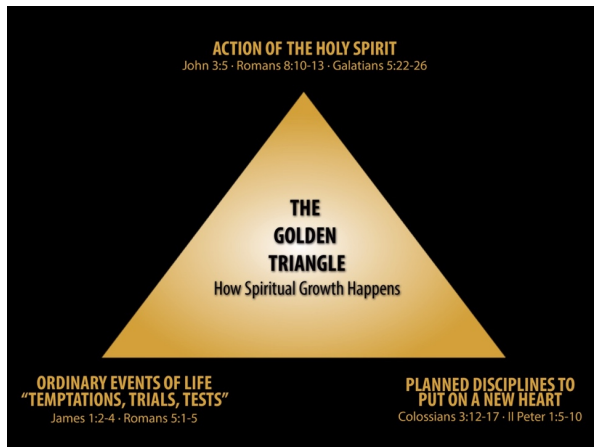


Thanks to Becca Chapman for her icon of St Seraphim of Sarov. You can read more about his extraordinary life in Christ here:

[https://orthodoxwiki.org/Seraphim\\_of\\_Sarov](https://orthodoxwiki.org/Seraphim_of_Sarov)







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