

Lipscomb University

Carolyn Wilson Digital Collections

DMin Project Theses

Hazelip School of Theology

6-4-2024

An Evaluative Assessment of Leadership Retreat as a Spiritually Formative Experience for Leaders of Campus Churches Affiliated with the Churches of Christ in Ghana

Frank Obeng Essien

Lipscomb University, essentials81@gmail.com

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalcollections.lipscomb.edu/dmin_project



Part of the [Christian Denominations and Sects Commons](#), and the [Christianity Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Essien, Frank Obeng, "An Evaluative Assessment of Leadership Retreat as a Spiritually Formative Experience for Leaders of Campus Churches Affiliated with the Churches of Christ in Ghana" (2024). *DMin Project Theses*. 15.

https://digitalcollections.lipscomb.edu/dmin_project/15

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Hazelip School of Theology at Carolyn Wilson Digital Collections. It has been accepted for inclusion in DMin Project Theses by an authorized administrator of Carolyn Wilson Digital Collections.

AN EVALUATIVE ASSESSMENT OF LEADERSHIP RETREAT AS A
SPIRITUALLY FORMATIVE EXPERIENCE FOR LEADERS OF
CAMPUS CHURCHES AFFILIATED WITH CHURCHES
OF CHRIST IN GHANA

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF
THE HAZELIP SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY
LIPSCOMB UNIVERSITY

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

BY
FRANK OBENG ESSIEN
CAPE COAST, GHANA

JUNE 4, 2024

This Doctor of Ministry Dissertation, directed and approved by the candidate's committee, has been accepted by the Hazelip School of Theology of Lipscomb University in partial fulfillment of the requirement of the degree.

AN EVALUATIVE ASSESSMENT OF LEADERSHIP RETREAT AS A SPIRITUALLY
FORMATIVE EXPERIENCE FOR LEADERS OF CAMPUS CHURCHES
AFFILIATED WITH THE CHURCHES OF CHRIST IN GHANA

By Frank Obeng Essien
For the degree of Doctor of Ministry



Director of Graduate Program

July 8, 2024

Date

Doctor of Ministry Project Committee



Carlus Gupton, DMin Chair



Greg Anderson, EdD



Samuel Twumasi-Ankrah, EdD

To my parents, Mr. Nicholas Essien and Mrs. Patricia Boafoa Essien, thank you for believing in me, praying for me, and planting the seed of faith and service in God's kingdom in me.

To my wife, Millicent, thank you for all the sacrifices and support.

To my children, Perez, Brady-Jon, Nana Yaw, and Randy-Jay, I pray you make His service your delight so that He makes your wants His care.

To all campus churches affiliated with the Churches of Christ in Ghana, especially the Campus Ministry at the University of Cape Coast, past, present, and future, thank you for validating my call to ministry, serving along with me, loving, and encouraging me along the way. I am so proud of all of you.

CONTENTS

CONTENTS	v
LIST OF TABLES	ix
LIST OF FIGURES	x
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	1
ABSTRACT	3
CHAPTER ONE	5
INTRODUCTION	5
Ministry Context	9
Statement of the Problem	18
Statement of Purpose	23
Significance of the Project	24
Basic Assumptions	24
Definitions	25
Delimitations	26
Limitations	26
Conclusion	27
CHAPTER TWO	28
LITERATURE REVIEW: RETREATS, CHRISTIAN SPIRITUALITY, SPIRITUAL FORMATION, AND TRANSFORMATION	28
Retreat as a Means of Formation	28
Christian Spirituality	33
Juxtaposing African Spirituality with Christian Spirituality	38

Christian Spiritual Formation and Transformation	40
Christian Spiritual Formation: The Process of Becoming	41
An Integrated Perspective to the Process of Becoming	45
Conclusion	51
CHAPTER THREE	53
BIBLICAL AND THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATION	53
Ministry as Preparation for Participation in God’s Life and Mission	56
Formation for Divine Ministry (Exodus 19:5–6)	56
Discerning a Telos of Ministry	58
Conclusion	70
CHAPTER FOUR	73
METHODOLOGY	73
Research Design	73
Population and Sample	74
Participants	76
Instrumentation	76
Data Collection Procedure	77
Data Analysis	78
Interview Questions	83
A Brief History About the Leadership Retreat	83
Profile of Themes for the Retreat	87
Conclusion	88

CHAPTER FIVE	89
RESULTS	89
Demographic Characteristics of Participants	89
Thematic Content Analysis Structure	90
Efficacy of Retreat as a Formative Experience	94
Activities During Leadership Retreats	94
Advocacy for a New Theological Vision	98
Ways to Improve the Leadership Retreat.	101
Evaluating the Telos of the Ministry Among Churches of Christ in Ghana	102
Conclusion	110
CHAPTER SIX	112
FINDINGS, DISCUSSION, IMPLICATIONS OF DATA, RECOMMENDATIONS, AND CONCLUSIONS	112
Discussion of Findings	114
Implications of Findings for Ministry Among Churches of Christ in Ghana	127
Recommendations for Future Studies	130
Conclusion	131
APPENDIX A	132
INFORMATION AND CONSENT FORM	132
APPENDIX B	135
IRB RESEARCH STUDY MULTIMEDIA RELEASE	135
APPENDIX C	137
IRB RESEARCH APPROVAL LETTER	137

APPENDIX D	138
HUMAN SUBJECT RESEARCH CERTIFICATE	138
BIBLIOGRAPHY	139

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1 Demographic Data of the Church of Christ Campus Ministry, UCC.....	11
Table 2: Participant Demographics.....	90
Table 3: Thematic Structure.....	91

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1: Word Cloud on Participants' General Impressions about the Leadership Retreat...	92
Figure 2: Word Cloud on the theme Efficacy of Retreat as a Formative	94
Figure 3: Word Cloud on the theme Advocacy for a new Theological Vision	98
Figure 4: Advocacy for New Resource Personnel.....	100
Figure 5: Word Cloud on the theme Evaluating the Telos of the Ministry Among Churches of Christ in Ghana.	103

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Given my personal circumstances, not many people, including myself, believed I could earn a doctorate. Therefore, having come this far suggests that there are several people who contributed to the attainment of this feat. I am profoundly indebted to a number of people, without whose help, encouragement, and support, I would not have been able to accomplish this academic milestone.

First, my heartfelt gratitude goes to the King of the ages, immortal, invisible, the only God, who, through His Son Jesus has loved, blessed, favored, and empowered me through the Holy Spirit. I am what I am merely by the grace of God. I am eternally grateful and indebted to the triune God for their investment and partnership with me.

Second, thank you to the Hazelip School of Theology and Lipscomb University for providing me with a generous tuition scholarship for my doctoral education. Through their generosity, financial constraints could not scuttle my dreams of preparing for greater service in the Kingdom of God in Ghana.

Third, to my amazing committee:

Dr. Carlus Gupton: I believe it was no coincidence that you were appointed the director of the DMin Program at Lipscomb at the time I enrolled. God knew you were the appropriate teacher that I needed for this ministry. Your love and heart for the church, for ministry, and for excellence are exemplary and admirable. Being your student has been a blessing, and I hope I can become a measure of the church-scholar that you are and educate leaders of integrity for the work of service.

Dr. Greg Anderson: Thank you for the constant encouragement and support throughout the process of this project. You always provided kind words and wise counsel.

Your calm but firm approach to scholarship and leadership are scarce and worthy of emulation.

Dr. Samuel Twumasi-Ankrah, president of Heritage University College, Accra-Ghana and my third reader: I really appreciate your encouragement and support toward my academic and spiritual development. From my master's degree through my doctorate work, you have willingly invested your accumulated wisdom and experience in my academic development, and for these I am profoundly grateful.

To the following individuals and congregations for their invaluable contributions, friendships, partnerships, and sponsorships in the course of my foray into ministry: Angel Nartey, Jon Herod, Cameron Williams, Chris Maxwell, Reagan Morgan, Phil Williams, Jay-Don Poindexter, Clay Taylor, Randy Taylor, James and Debbie McCoy, David Peterson, Clyde Church of Christ, Merkel Church of Christ, Waterview Church of Christ, Oldham Lane Church of Christ, and the entire congregation of Pecos Church of Christ.

Finally, to Dr. Augustine Tawiah: thank you for the mentorship, ministry conversations, as well as your spiritual and wise counsel. To Mr. Asare Gyimah and your wife, Mabel and to my parents-in-law; Mr. Paul Tenkorang and Mrs. Eunice Tenkorang, thank you all for the diverse ways God has used you to shape and mold me into the person I have become and am becoming, Dr. Mikee C. Delony; for editing and proofreading this work, and Dr. Kris Miller, for the helpful conversations. God bless you all.

ABSTRACT

The Churches of Christ in Ghana are a mission plant. They were planted by two American missionaries, Wendell Broom and Sewell Hall, around 1958. The Churches of Christ in Ghana pursue a theology of ministry which resolves around evangelism, edification, and benevolence. These are often referred to as the “mission of the church.” They represent the holy trinity of activities which was once and for all time delivered to the church in Ghana. Against these, there must be no rival theological focus. Any innovation beyond this risks the heresy or apostasy label which is punishable by ostracism. The general assumption among Churches of Christ asserts that the appropriation of biblical knowledge by itself will result in spiritual maturity.

After years of pursuing this theology of ministry, its deficiencies have become apparent. The emphasis on information and facts from Scripture does not seem to be producing commensurate levels of spiritual maturity and transformation. Leaders and members are still captive to self, sin, and society. Conformity to the image of Christ is still elusive. Therefore, leaders of campus churches affiliated with Churches of Christ in Ghana became aware of this spiritual stagnation experienced by members of the church, we resorted to retreats as viable alternatives to encourage pursuit of spiritual formation and transformation. This has been going on for more than a decade.

This study evaluates these retreats as spiritually formative experiences for the participants who are mostly emerging adult Christians. The study also seeks to advocate a review of theological vision and telos of ministry. Almost all participants in the retreat discussed in this study indicated that they have experienced some positive spiritual shifts related to their retreat experiences. They described the retreats as “educative and transformative.”

Participants credited the intentionality, intensity, and intimacy of relationships as the most transformative part of the retreat over the intellectual presentations.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

“Have you ever been in a situation where you knew your destination but couldn’t find your way?” This is the question that opens the door to Brian Hedges’ book on spiritual formation and transformation.¹ I chose to use it as an introduction to this study because it aptly captures and expresses the condition of the population that are the focus of this study. Like other Christians, the Churches of Christ in Ghana and the campus churches who are affiliated with them have a sense of their destination. However, the challenge they face is finding a way to reach this destination.

I agree with Hedges’ argument that the ultimate destination which motivates or ought to motivate the decision to be a disciple of Jesus is the aspiration to be like him. The words of the old Christian hymn aptly describe this motivation: “*O 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.*”² This hymn encapsulates what I believe is the telos of the spiritual life: conformity to the image of Christ (Rom. 8:29). Some additional and complementary questions include the following: How do we get to this destination? What are some of the programs, processes, and activities that are necessary for a Christian progress towards the achievement of this spiritual goal?

Historically, among the Churches of Christ in Ghana, not many alternative approaches and strategies for expanding beyond the legacy limits are on the table. We have often limited ourselves to the missionary legacy of evangelism, edification, and benevolence. These three

1. Brian G. Hedges, *Christ Formed in You: The Power of the Gospel for Personal Change*, (Wapwallopen: Shepherd Press, 2010), 17.

2. Thomas O. Chisholm, “O to be Like Thee,” in *Sacred Selections for the Church* no. 255, by Mrs. L. E. Sweeny Kirkpatrick, 1924.

were often referred as the “mission of the church,” the three core, principal pillars that undergird most programs and activities of the church. They represented the holy trinity of activities which was once for all time delivered to the Ghanaian Churches of Christ. Tradition argued that against these, there must be no rival theological focus. To pursue any other was to risk being labeled a heretic or an apostate. One would often hear leading figures in the Churches of Christ in Ghana repeat these concepts as if they were eternal constructs meant to be handed down generation after generation. Any alteration was perceived as a grave deviation punishable by ostracization.

This position, while well-intentioned, resulted in some emphasis distortions causing Churches of Christ in Ghana elevate doctrinal correctness over sanctification. We study for information rather than reformation and transformation. Consistent with research findings by the Barna Group in relation to Evangelicals and discipleship,³ among the Churches of Christ in Ghana, “there is an assumption that the appropriation of biblical knowledge will by itself lead to spiritual maturity.”⁴ We are knowledge based, externally focused, and often telling others what they are doing wrong, while neglecting to interrogate our own inner motives and values. Consequently, and over time, the incongruities between what we teach and how we live surface through sexual scandals, financial malfeasance, and so on. We tend to highlight what divides us more than what unites us.

3. To be sure, the Churches of Christ will likely resist or even reject any form of categorization. Their theological self-understanding rejects “denominationalism;” therefore, they avoid any form of association with other Christian groups. However, like other evangelicals, Churches of Christ place a high premium on Scripture, baptism as essential to salvation, and so on. Leonard Allen’s book: *In the Great Stream: Imagining Churches of Christ in the Christian Tradition* (Abilene: Abilene Christian University Press, 2021) sheds additional light on the historical and theological self-understanding of the Churches of Christ.

4. Barna Group, *The State of Discipleship: Research Conducted among Christian Adults, Church Leaders, Exemplar Discipleship Ministries and Christian Educators* (Ventura: Barna, 2015), 60.

Apparently, one of the pioneering preachers of the community noticed the subversive effects of such distortions and sounded the alarm bells as far back as 1997. In 1997, church leaders and missionaries affiliated with Stone Campbell Restoration Movement (SCRM) converged at the Chinhoyi Technical Teacher's Training College in Zimbabwe for the Africans Claiming Africa conference. At this conference, one of the representatives from Ghana, John Franklin Tamakloe, presented on the topic: "The Gospel, Not Issues." In his presentation, Tamakloe directed attention to the gradual invasion of this tendency into the church and the dire consequences it holds for spirituality in the community. He noted that:

Hobby doctrines and the elevation of opinions have become our pastime. The Movement today has produced people who only preach and teach what a few have written and are teaching. We have elevated the views and opinion of those we consider learned, to the level of Scripture. . . . We have stifled independent thinking, research, and study and imposed strict regimentation. Those who dare to think for themselves incur the wrath of the 'unthinking' fraternity. This way we have introduced 'partisan spirit' into the Body, something the Holy Spirit announced through the Apostle Paul (1 Cor. 1:2, 3) . . . Our Movement has gone astray. Our quest for unity has rather become the quest for disunity because we have lost sight of what constitutes the central theme of our missions and existence--the Gospel of Jesus Christ. We have submitted and elevated "Issues" far above the Gospel t[he] devil has sold to any militant group of the century. Labels and name-calling have become our hobby. We have within the Movement, its self-appointed 'custodians and defenders of the faith;' a kind of 'watchdog Committee.'⁵

After this riveting description of what I suspect to be a cultural idea creeping in the SCRM in Africa and not necessarily Ghana at the time, Tamakloe proceeded to describe the spiritual diseases and deficiencies this was inflicting on the community. He stated:

'Issues' may convert some people, but they do not change lives. The evidence of this is always before us. We have made the Church the central theme of our message to the neglect of its Founder and Builder. Consequently, we know more about the Church and very little to nothing about Jesus Christ. Let no one misunderstand me, the Church is important, it was bought at a great price (Acts 20:28). What I am saying is that our members have been given a false sense of security, by thinking that being a

5. Sam Shewmaker, *Africans Claiming Africa: Living the Vision* (Fullerton: Drumbeat Publications, 1999), 112.

member is all that one needs to be saved. Everything has been mechanized, patterns and form have taken the place of spirituality. Greed, envy, pettiness, and lack of Christian courtesy and charity etc., are things we are now contending with, because our brethren have misplaced their trust and loyalty. Our faith is more in the “Institution” than in the “Institutor.” Those things that may be aptly described as the ‘fruits of the Spirit’ are nonexistent in the lives of our members.⁶

More than two decades later, not much seems to have changed. If anything, the phenomena he diagnosed and described has become entrenched and widespread within the community. Our preaching and teaching are still generally issues driven. The effect is still the same; people are converted but few are transformed. Many learn about the pathway to justification, but few learn about sanctification. Greed, envy, pettiness, compulsive obsession with power and being in control, being right, and winning arguments have made unity an elusive aspiration among our community. Anecdotes of sexual immorality, abuse, and exploitation by ministers and church leaders permeate the community. Dearth of integrity and accountability on the part of church leaders has become the “elephant in the room” for the church. Yet, the community is slow to come to terms with and acknowledge the gap that exists between our current trajectory and our ultimate destination.

In light of these apparent distortions and incongruities, the younger generation of this faith tradition in Ghana seems to have identified the discrepancy and disconnect between their current location and their intended destination. Consequently, they are currently exploring other biblical and theological approaches to bridging this gap. Retreats have become an alternative pathway used by leaders of campus churches affiliated with Churches of Christ in Ghana to reach their spiritual destination.⁷ For more than a decade, these

6. Sam Shewmaker, *Africans Claiming Africa*, 117.

7. Further and better particulars about the Leadership Retreat, as it has come to be known, is discussed in depth in Chapter 4.

emerging spiritual leaders have been meeting twice in a year for the retreat. The retreat is used as a time for learning about spiritual leadership, spiritual formation, worship, fellowship, and rest (more details about the retreat are discussed in the chapter 4).

Thus, this study sought to ascertain the efficacy of retreat as a spiritually formative experience for emerging adults represented by leaders of the various campus churches. The results from this study served as an empirical basis for leaders to advocate for a new theological vision for the church in Ghana. Given the preponderance of evidence which suggests the dearth of spiritual growth, the study argued that perhaps it about time we reviewed the telos of ministry in Ghana in favor of a new one with stronger, deeper biblical and theological roots than those bequeathed to us by missionaries.

Consequently, Chapter One provided information about my ministry context. In doing so I attempted to excavate certain theological, practical, demographical, and even cultural peculiarities which interacted to instigate or occasion the issue-(s) which were explored. Next, I proceeded to state the problem, the specific issue(s) identified in the context that required or necessitated this study. Then I highlighted the contribution and significance of the project to the local and global ministry landscape. Additionally, I outlined the author's basic assumptions; the ideas and beliefs which were taken for granted as necessary or foundational for the study. Finally, I operationally defined key terms and delineated limitations and delimitations of the project.

Ministry Context

I am currently the resident minister of the Church of Christ Campus ministry at University of Cape Coast and have been serving in this capacity since October 2015. However, my first introduction to this group occurred in August 2008 when I gained admission into the university to pursue a four-year Bachelor of Science degree in Psychology.

Leaders of the congregation learned of my admission and appointed me to preach the very first Sunday I worshipped with them. I served the congregation as their minister in an informal capacity for the entire period of my undergraduate education. As a member of the congregation's Edification Ministry, I played a significant role in planning and implementing educational programs of the congregation. I preached frequently, taught weekly Bible classes regularly, and provided pastoral care and counseling for members of the congregation.

After graduating in May 2012, I was retained by the university as a National Service Person attached to the Counseling Center. Thus, I continued my relationship with the campus church until I left for further studies in United States in August 2013. In America, my original intent was to obtain a Master of Science degree in Counseling Psychology; however, due to financial constraints and what I believe was the unfolding of God's plan and purpose for my life, I was granted a full tuition to study Master of Arts in Christian Ministry (MACM). It was during this period that my calling into campus ministry crystalized. It became evident that all along, God had been preparing me for ministry on the university campus. In 2015, I transitioned from the MACM program into the Master of Divinity program and returned home to Ghana to assume the role of the first full-time preacher of the Church of Christ Campus Ministry at the University of Cape Coast (UCC).

The campus church at UCC began during the 1984/85 academic year through the pioneering efforts of members of the church who gained admission into the university.⁸ From its early days until now, the congregation has maintained its unique character of predominately being a students' congregation. It was established by students and led by

8. Frank Obeng Essien, "An Exploratory Study of Campus Ministries Affiliated with Churches of Christ in Ghana." Master's Thesis, Abilene Christian University, 2015. A detailed account of the establishment of the UCC campus church can found in this study. Individuals, events, and circumstances which precipitated the establishment of this congregation is recounted in the research.

students. From an initial membership of about fourteen, the average attendance now ranges between 290-350, depending on the time of the semester. At our last count, the enrollment is over 600. The table below gives further demographic details of the current membership of the UCC campus church.

The congregation's main focus is to provide spiritual support to members of the church as they pursue various academic disciplines in order to ensure their holistic development. Thus, the congregation provides a place of worship, where these young people

Table 1 Demographic Data of the Church of Christ Campus Ministry, UCC.⁹

CATEGORY	MALE	FEMALE	TOTAL
Level 100	82	64	146
Level 200	99	89	188
Level 300	78	62	140
Level 400	50	37	87
Level 500		1	1
Level 600	1	0	1
SERVICE PERSONNEL/SNR MEMBERS	22	20	42
DEAF MINISTRY	4	6	10
CHILDREN	6	1	7
GRAND TOTAL	342	280	622

Note. The table depicts the demographic configuration of the Church of Christ Campus Ministry, UCC

9. This data is limited to the 2021/2022 academic year. In relation to the categories, in Ghana, university students are categorized into "levels." Level 100 is equivalent to a freshman, level 200 equals a Sophomore, a Junior is akin to Level 300, and a Senior the same as Level 400. Level 500 and 600 refer to Masters' and Ph.D. students respectively.

can connect with God their creator and sustainer of their lives, Jesus Christ, the reason and giver of their lives, and the Holy Spirit, the conveyor, enabler, energizer of their lives.

The theology of ministry of the UCC campus church are: Transforming, Equipping, and Deploying. The theology of ministry was constructed based on the congregation's demography. The congregation is dominated by emerging adults, and this demography presents peculiar psychosocial and spiritual characteristics. In his book, *Lost in Transition*, Christian Smith describes in broad terms what he perceives as the "dark side of emerging adults." He describes them as morally adrift, captive to consumerism, prone to intoxication, sexually liberated, and socially and politically disengaged.¹⁰ Psychologist Jeffrey Arnett, who minted the term "emerging adulthood" has posited five interrelated characteristics which benchmarks this demographic category:

First, they actively engaged in identity formation, exploring personal meaning in love, work, and worldview. Second, they live lives marked by instability: regularly moving, changing jobs, and revising their life plans, Third, they tend to be very focused on themselves, free from parents' oversight and yet also free from significant responsibilities to others. Fourth, they feel "in between," recognizing that they have transcended adolescence and yet unsure if they have achieved full adult status. Finally, they see this time period as an "age of possibilities," optimistic about the future and desirous of keeping all of their options open.¹¹

Admittedly, Smith and Arnett's research comes from a western context and has yet-to be ecologically validated in an African context. However, based on personal experience gleaned from working with this group for almost a decade in Ghana, I will argue that their

10. Christian Smith, *Lost in Transition: The Dark Side of Emerging Adulthood* (New York: Oxford Press, 2011), 19– 224.

11. Jeffrey Arnett, "Emerging Adulthood: A Theory of Development from the Late Teens through the Twenties," *American Psychologist* 55, no. 5 (May 2000), 469, Cited by David P. Setran and Chris A. Kiesling, *Spiritual Formation in Emerging Adulthood: A Practical Theology for College and Young Adult Ministry* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2013), 4–5.

conclusions appear plausible among emerging adults in campus churches in Ghana with the exception of a few cultural variations. Emerging adults in Ghana utilize the opportunity of being away from the often-controlled home environment for self-discovery. They begin to explore and question meanings, values, and interests they have inherited from parents and significant people in their lives. They seek to achieve individualized meanings, values, and interests. The results are often mixed. Some successfully navigate this exploratory phase, achieving a healthy and balanced worldview. Others get lost along the way and are swept away by the unmoderated currents of their newly found freedom.

The Ghanaian and African context lack the economic, sociocultural, educational, and industrial growth and development which allow for the varieties, options, and alternatives available to their western counterparts. Therefore, even though this stage is associated with instability and constant change, in Ghana, emerging adulthood is characterized by stagnation and a stifling lack of opportunities and alternatives. The rate of unemployment does not allow for job exploration and change. The rate of poverty, corruption, and nepotism make revision of life plans a luxury not many emerging adults can afford. Yet, the conditions of feeling in-between along with optimism and hope that is connected to this stage of life seem to denote a commonality between emerging adults in Ghana and their western counterparts.

Additionally, researchers note a decline in religiosity among this group. They have been associated with “widespread religious decline in the areas of belief, behavior, and subjective inner life. On the cognitive level, there appears to be moderate erosion of basic belief in the orthodox tenets of the Christian faith.”¹² Other factors that account for the

12. David P. Setran and Chris A. Kiesling, *Spiritual Formation in Emerging Adulthood: A Practical Theology for Collage and Young Adult Ministry*, 12.

religious behavior of emerging adults include issues of identity, internalization, and the extent to which religious and spiritual convictions are personally formed and owned.

At this stage of life, their identities are still in flux, and religious and spiritual convictions are deeply tied to that of significant people in their lives, i.e., parents. Setran and Kiesling's analysis of the four-stage identity model postulated by James Marcia, indicates that emerging adults find themselves in the stage of foreclosure that is marked by borrowed beliefs and lifestyles uncritically adopted from parents or other influential authorities.¹³ Convictions and beliefs are neither internalized nor owned. Thus, since both their identities and beliefs have yet to crystalize and are not "built on a rock,"¹⁴ they begin to crumble at the university because they are away from the protective and dominating influence of parents and other significant people in their lives. At the university, they are encouraged to question and explore their values, beliefs, and lifestyles. Such unguided, unbridled, and even misguided exploration exposes these young people to all manner of alternative lifestyles and beliefs. They begin to behave like thirsty deer in the presence of flowing water brooks. This water, however, may pose a danger to their optimal functioning due to abuse.

They become victims of the exploration process. They overindulge and begin to suffocate on the unmeasured consumption of philosophies, ideologies, and worldviews. The lack of accumulated wisdom and experience diminishes their capacity to make wise decisions and choices in the face of the information overload. The net effect, in my considered view,

13. Jane Kroger, and James Marcia. "The Identity Statuses: Origins, Meanings, and Interpretations." In *Handbook of Identity Theory and Research*, 31–53, 2011. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-4419-7988-9_2. This article provides a detailed discussion about Marcia's constructs and how they influence emerging adulthood. Marcia is considered an expert on adolescent psychosocial development and lifespan identity development.

14. Matthew 7:24–25

culminates in what Smith describes as the dark side of emerging adulthood.¹⁵ They become victimized by the expression and appropriation of their newfound freedom of thinking and personalized identity. Moral degeneration, religious and spiritual stagnation, and anemia become the price they pay for the freedom of self-discovery.

I must point out once again that the research cited above are all from a western context, and the findings have not yet been ecologically validated and corroborated in an African context. However, from personal observation and experience, emerging adults in Ghana, particularly those in my ministry context, express similar traits albeit with some nuance. For instance, the observation of a decline in religious behavior and beliefs among emerging adults in Ghana seems to be a cross-cultural phenomenon. However, the extent and pervasiveness of the decline may not be as steep in the Ghanaian and African context as it is in the West. It is an open secret that Africans are religious even to a fault. Religion is critical to meaning making in many African societies. In a context of pervasive poverty, disease, and deprivation, religion serves as the foundation for coping with the seeming hopelessness, haplessness, and desperation that is the lot of many an emerging adult in the African context, generally, and in Ghana, particularly.

In situations as described above, religion rather than the republic, portends better prospects of hope and survival. Many African states including Ghana appear to have failed to provide the climate where their young people have any chance of making a meaningful life for themselves and their kindred. In the news article, “Ghana is a Failed Nation,” Dr. Nyaho Nyaho-Tamakloe, a founding member of the ruling New Patriotic Party, is purported to have

15. Smith, *Lost in Transition*, 19–69.

described Ghana as a failed nation.¹⁶ Dr. Nyaho-Tamakloe opines that the mismanagement of the Ghanaian economy by the current administration coupled with the seeming lawlessness and influence-peddling by those in the corridors of power have contributed to his description of Ghana as a failed nation.

According to Robert Rotberg, “Nation-states exist to provide a decentralized method of delivering political (public) goods to persons living in designated parameters (borders) ... [they] focus and answer the concerns and demands of citizenries. They organize and channel the interests of their people, often but not exclusively in furtherance of national goals and values.”¹⁷ He adds that it is the responsibility of states to cocoon their citizenry from exogenous forces and factors that impinge on the economic, political, and social wellbeing of their people while promoting the interests of the citizenry. The success or failure of states are determined on this rubric. Strong states perform creditably along these categories. Weak or failed states often demonstrate a variegated profile, meeting some expectations and renegeing in others.

In the case of many African countries, including Ghana, because of corruption, nepotism, avarice, and so much more, the political elite has succeeded in plundering and mismanaging the vast natural resources of the continent leaving most of their citizens in staggering and depressing levels of squalor and destitution. Extremely limited quantities of critical public goods are available and accessible by the citizenry. Existing economic opportunities are reserved for a privileged few. The oligarchs grow richer while the rest

16. Collins, Seyram Tordzro, “Ghana Is a Failed Stated. By Dr. Nyaho-Tamakloe,” *Joyonline* (Multimedia, November 16, 2022), last modified November 16, 2022, accessed December 12, 2022, www.myjoyonline.com.

17. Robert I. Rotberg, *State Failure and State Weakness in a Time of Terror* (Cambridge, MA: World Peace Foundation, 2003), 2.

starve and suffer undignified levels of deprivation. Religion, exemplified in many faith-based institutions, has become the last vanguard of hope for people in Ghana. Religious institutions through their businesses and para-church organizations are providing assistance for the citizenry, in the areas of jobs, education, healthcare provision, and social relief programs where the state has failed monumentally.

Intellectually, emerging adults in Ghana may harbor some mistrust for religion. They may be tempted to rebel and reject the religious traditions they may have inherited from their parents or significant people in their lives. However, their individual circumstances become irrefutable evidence that enlightens them about the existence and the goodness of God. Otherwise, nothing else can explain their own personal relative success evident in their access to higher education. Their own personal, financial, social, political, and cultural circumstances cannot account for their relative quality of life. In other words, no logical and scientific explanation can account for the positive changes in their personal circumstances. Any hope of further advancement and progress will definitely not depend on the state, but on God.

Thus, the university campus in Ghana, like many other African countries, is a beehive of religious activities and activism. These emerging adults are under no illusion that in our part of the world, it takes something more than a university diploma to make a meaningful life. Their hope for survival and success is neither vested in the university nor the state but in God. Hence, many emerging adults on the university campus, even with all the distractions and temptations, invest significant portions of their time and resources in religious and spiritual dimensions. It is common to see students' shuttle between the lecture theatre and a place of prayer and worship. In view of this palpable need and desire for God among this

group, many faith traditions have ministries on campus that cater to the religious and spiritual needs of these students. Churches of Christ are no exception.

Consequently, when these young people join a congregation, from day one it becomes the desire, purpose, and even burden of the church to create the enabling spiritual environment and culture for them to experience and encounter God. Any meaningful and sustainable spiritual transformation would likely emerge from this relationship. Worship services, Bible studies, community services, sermons, and pastoral care situations are all intentionally designed for faith formation, character formation, and spiritual formation, such that they can partner with God and participate in his story and the mission. By the end of their undergraduate degree, these emerging adults would be willing and ready to be deployed into the field of souls in the various communities and tribes from where they came as ambassadors of Christ.

Statement of the Problem

The Churches of Christ are the most well-established strand of the Stone-Campbell Restoration Movement in Ghana. They are a mission plant, by two American missionaries, Wendell Broom and Sewell Hall, around 1958. Since then, the Churches of Christ in Ghana have grown both qualitatively and quantitatively.¹⁸ Although there are still some strong connections with their American counterparts, over the years the church in Ghana has developed strong local content particularly in relation to leadership. The direct involvement of foreign missionaries in the life of the Churches of Christ in Ghana has been minimal. Most

18. Frederick Boadu Asare, "A History of Churches of Christ in Ghana: 1958–2008." Master's thesis (Abilene: Abilene Christian University, April 2013), 17. This work details the historical development of the Churches of Christ in Ghana and highlights the individuals and circumstances that interacted to result in the emergence of this faith tradition in Ghana.

of the congregations are self-governing, self-propagating, and self-supporting. To use a more familiar term, most of the congregations in Ghana are autonomous.

The emergence of campus churches affiliated with the Churches of Christ in Ghana is comparatively a recent phenomenon. The pioneering group of campus churches affiliated with the Churches of Christ in Ghana started around 1984.¹⁹ It is significant to note that campus churches did not emerge as a result of intentional, strategic leadership action by local church leaders, but as an expression of discipleship by individuals who were members of the church. As access to higher education expanded in Ghana, and as some members of the church pursued higher education, they took their faith along with them, identified others who shared their faith, and began meeting as an identifiable religious group on campus. They emerged organically. Currently, these campus churches have grown numerically and are present in almost all tertiary institutions, especially public universities.

According to the Ghana Tertiary Education Commission, there are 16 public universities, 106 private tertiary institutions--out of which 10 have attained chartered status--69 public Nursing Training Colleges, 47 public Colleges of Education, and 10 public Technical Universities.²⁰ Within these, campus churches affiliated with the Churches of Christ in Ghana function in almost all the public universities, Colleges of Education, public Technical Universities, and the public Nursing Training Colleges. It is in the private tertiary institutions that their presence is not so pronounced. Beyond the tertiary institutions, campus churches also operate on the campuses of High Schools across the country.

19. Essien, "An Exploratory Study of Campus Ministries Affiliated With Churches of Christ in Ghana," 97–101.

20. Ghana Tertiary Education Commission. "Accredited Institutions." *GTEC*. Last modified 2022. Accessed August 23, 2023. <https://gtec.edu.gh/accredited-institutions>.

The challenge with these campus churches is that for a long time they have been led by mostly young people without any formal ministry training. Thus, despite their best intentions, exuberant energy, and the potential presence and assistance of the Spirit, the capacity to skillfully oversee and superintend the spiritual formation and maturation of the members they serve is often questionable. This is manifested by these well-meaning young leaders transporting their experiences, strategies, and skills learned or gleaned from their local congregations without any modifications whatsoever into the campus church context. Since the theology of ministry of the Churches of Christ in Ghana is more evangelistic and legalistic than transformational, these campus churches adopt the same. This becomes the rubric or standard for determining spiritual maturity and faithfulness among these emerging adults.

Consequently, among the campus churches, the evangelistically inclined individual is deemed ready or worthy for leadership. When a young person has mastered the skill of mimicking some famous local preacher and is able to parrot almost verbatim what many within the Churches of Christ know and believe as the plan of salvation, this young person is perceived to be spiritually formed, matured, and portrayed or depicted as a standard worthy of emulation by his or her peers. While I appreciate evangelism as a principal part of the mission of the church and a dimension of spiritual formation and maturation, I believe it is simplistic to reduce the expression and demonstration of spiritual maturity to merely sharing the gospel when the apostle Paul reveals that the gospel may be shared from less than pure and noble motives (Philippians 1:15).

Evangelism is susceptible to the appropriation of the hypocrite (Phil. 1:16–17). One may not be inclined to live out what she or he is preaching. Sharing the gospel does not necessarily reveal one's interior landscape. It is an open secret that a person can "talk

learnedly and officiously about God” without any relationship with God.²¹ Nonetheless, based on my understanding of the history of the Churches of Christ in Ghana, I surmise that the obsession with evangelism as the only means of spiritual formation is a missionary legacy. It is the only tool bequeathed to us in the missionary toolbox and the only tool we know how to use in relation to spiritual formation. In a high respect society such as ours, there is a certain reticence or even a slavish attachment to how things used to be. As a result, emerging adult leaders can feel petrified by the mere thought of exploring other useful alternatives. Change, especially the adaptive type, is frowned upon. Change is generally perceived as a taboo word, and in certain circles, synonymous with apostasy.

Other contextual factors which seem to keep the community locked into the past include a misunderstanding of faithfulness, lack of or phobia of advanced theological education, zeal that is not connected with knowledge and opportunities for personal improvement, dearth of appropriate role models, and lack of awareness of and appreciation for the utilization of the diverse spiritual gifts. If I were to explain further, within the community in Ghana, to be faithful is equivalent to maintaining the ideas, beliefs, and traditions bequeathed to the church in Ghana by the American missionaries. Any idea, belief, or understanding gained through further and deeper exploration of Scripture is labeled “apostasy.” This has blinded us to novel movements and investment of the Spirit of God in the community. To be faithful within our faith tradition in Ghana is to mindlessly parrot ancient theological dogmas and refrains and to be a cognitive miser.

Additionally, within our tradition in Ghana, there is a growing orientation toward anti-intellectualism. We present a certain posture of suspicion against individuals in our fold who

21. Kay L. Northcutt, *Kindling Desire for God: Preaching as Spiritual Direction*, Kindle ed. (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2009), 309.

thirst and hunger for advanced theological education. As such people develop the capacity to question old norms and beliefs, they attract labels which may eventually result in their ostracization. The other side of this coin is a lack of opportunities for advanced theological education. For those who harbor a desire to pursue further theological education, not many opportunities exist. Thus, the communal aversion to higher theological education leads to a low or no turnover of knowledge. No new water flows through our intellectual harbor. Consequently, our only recourse is to wallow in the old waters served us by missionaries and regurgitate the same at every turn. The effect is that the community comes across as imperceptible to whatever God is doing in the present because of a seeming fixation with the past.

Therefore, in 2011, when I assumed the mantle of leadership of the Church of Christ campus ministry at the University of Cape Coast (UCC), I decided to introduce retreats as another tool for spiritual formation, except that these retreats were focused on those selected to serve in various leadership portfolios for the campus church. As a way of preparing and equipping them for the work of service to which they had been selected, I took them away for about three days to the facility of a preaching school that I am affiliated with in Agona Swedru, a town in the eastern part of the Central Region in Ghana. The preaching school allowed us to use their facility for free; however, feeding participants for the entire period was at my expense.

Calhoun suggests that a retreat is a withdrawal from the busyness and front lines of the battle of and in life for the express purpose of spending some time alone with God. This time allows the individual to put things in perspective while saturating and nourishing one's

soul with God's presence and Spirit.²² She concedes that retreating has been modified, given the nature of modern life and its attendant workload. Thus, even though retreats originally comprised slowing down, listening and focusing on God alone, devoid of lectures and other frontal activities has changed. Consequently, our retreat combined both disciplines of engagement and abstinence. There were lessons on spiritual leadership, times for personal reflections and confessions, fasting and prayers, worship in songs, fellowship, rest, and exercise.

Since 2011, the retreat has grown. From a duration of three days, it now runs for a week. It has also transitioned from being an annual program to a biannual one. Additionally, from its initial focus on the leaders of the UCC campus church, the retreat, through word of mouth, has six other campus churches participating. These campus churches include the University of Ghana (UG), The University of Professional Studies, Accra (UPSA), University of Mines and Technology (UMaT), University of Education, Winneba (UEW), Central University (CU), and Heritage Christian College (HCC). In total, over 600 individuals have participated in the retreat.

Therefore, this study assessed through interviews and focus group discussions, ways in which the leadership retreat has served as a spiritually formative experience for those who have had the opportunity of participating in it.

Statement of Purpose

The purpose of the project was first to assess the leadership retreat in terms of its effectiveness as a spiritually formative approach for emerging adult Christians in campus churches in Ghana. Second, feedback from the study served as the basis for reviewing or

²² Adele Ahlberg Calhoun, *Spiritual Disciplines Handbook: Practices that Transform us* (Downers Grove: IVP Books, 2005), 67.

revising the processes, procedures, and products of the program, going forward. Third, results from the study provided an empirical foundation for strengthening the program to offer maximum benefit to future participants. Finally, the outcome of the study served as a resource for practicing campus ministers in Ghana. Additionally, results from the study served as a warrant for recommendations to theological training institutions in Ghana in relation to appropriate reviews and adjustments that needed to be effected to the curriculum, philosophy, and orientation for ministry training.

Significance of the Project

This project proved useful and relevant particularly to the Churches of Christ in Ghana in a number of ways. First, it added to the unimpressive literature on the Churches of Christ in Ghana, in general, and the campus churches, in particular. Information available on the Churches of Christ in Ghana, compared to other jurisdictions, is extremely unsatisfactory, and so this project has contributed to bridging the shortfall. Second, findings from this project proved useful to practitioners of campus ministry in Ghana in relation to knowledge acquisition and transfer. Campus ministers have empirical data on the efficacy or otherwise of retreat as a spiritual formation and transformation tool. Finally, this project served as a basis for reviewing and revising the leadership retreat. This means that future retreats will be an improved and enhanced version of the past because of this project.

Basic Assumptions

The planning and execution of this project was founded on some basic assumptions. First, there was a broad-based consensus among emerging adult members of the Churches of Christ about the palpable deficit in spiritual formation and transformation among this community in Ghana. Therefore, there was an urgent need to stem or reverse the trend. Second, I assumed that spiritual formation and transformation are essential qualities needed

in spiritual leadership, and that without spiritual formation and transformation spiritual leaders may only be taking a walk. The mission of God through the church was in jeopardy due to a lack of formation and transformation in church leadership. Third, I assumed that spiritual formation and transformation are the sole prerogative of the Holy Spirit with human cooperation. The leadership retreat was only a tool in the hands of the Holy Spirit to bring about formation and transformation in the lives of participants. Fourth, I assumed that the sample size for this study was large enough to make projections and extrapolations on the spiritual formative value of the leadership retreat. Finally, I took for granted in this study that spiritual formation and transformation is asynchronous, that it is not uniform. It is individualized.

Definitions

Leadership Retreat. This is a week-long biannual program organized by the Church of Christ campus ministry at the University of Cape Coast. Beginning during the 2011/2012 academic year, the program was originally aimed to offer deeper theological training for individuals appointed by the congregation to serve in leadership roles. However, over time and with positive participant feedback, it was agreed that invitation be extended to leaders of other campus churches in the country. Since then, the leadership retreat has been a biannual gathering of male and female servant leaders of campus churches affiliated with Churches of Christ in Ghana. The leadership retreat is a period of rest, study, worship, fellowship, and conversation aimed at equipping these emerging leaders with relevant spiritual leadership wisdom and deepening their levels of spirituality which in our view is lacking in the present generation of leaders.

Spiritual Formation. Spiritual formation is defined differently by various authors based on confessional biases and theological orientation. Nonetheless, in the context of this

project, we construe spiritual formation as encompassing all the divine processes and human activities engaged in by disciples of Christ with the ultimate aim of reclaiming our divine nature and becoming more fully conformed and united with Christ in relation to life maturity and calling. In other words, spiritual formation is a reference to all the processes and activities Christians engage in with a view towards transformation, becoming more like Christ in our choices, decisions, worldview, values, and interests. The processes and activities include those controlled by the Holy Spirit and the spiritual disciplines as utilized by individuals as tools towards formation and transformation.

Campus Churches. This is a reference to congregations affiliated with the Churches of Christ in Ghana that are located on campuses of both private and public tertiary institutions, comprising predominantly university students.

Delimitations

This project was delimited to evaluating the spiritual formation dimension of the leadership retreat. As the name suggests, there is a leadership formation aspect to the retreat. However, given the focus of the project, we restricted ourselves to evaluating the spiritual formative value of the retreat. Clearly, this affected the extent of generalizability of the findings and conclusions.

Limitations

I anticipated two limitations in this project. The first was the extent of the mindfulness on the part of participants. By mindfulness, I am referring to the capacity of participants to keep accurate track of the changes and shifts occasioned by their participation in the leadership retreat. The second was the ability of participants to fully articulate their spiritual formative and transformative experiences. Although part of the inclusion criteria for participants was expressiveness, given that the faith tradition of the Churches of Christ does

not encourage a lot of self-expressions especially for women, I anticipated some lack of eloquence from participants. Participants could struggle to find the language or vocabulary to communicate their experience of spiritual formation.

Conclusion

This chapter established the foundation for this project. It outlined certain contextual peculiarities of the population being studied. It indicated the problem addressed and the intended purpose this study sought to address and achieve. Some relevant terms were also defined. Certain potential limitations and delimitations were highlighted and discussed. In light of this foundation, the next chapter reviewed relevant literature and entered into conversation with other authors and scholars interested in the subject-matter under consideration.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW: RETREATS, CHRISTIAN SPIRITUALITY, SPIRITUAL FORMATION, AND TRANSFORMATION

This chapter enters into conversation with and discuss the thoughts and ideas of individuals who have either written theoretically or researched empirically the concepts or topics similar to the one this study explores. We pursue areas of both convergence and divergence. This chapter also allows the opportunity to track changes which may have occurred in this area both in theory and practice. By reviewing literature, we interact with the past as a means of setting the stage for the present with hope and anticipation for the future in relation to spirituality, spiritual formation, and transformation, using retreats as an approach to achieving these spiritual goals.

Retreat as a Means of Formation

Retreat is utilized at different spheres for different purposes. Beyond their relevance for Christian spirituality, retreats are of interest to practitioners in the tourism industry. Retreat is a tourism product, specifically, in the religious tourism sector.²³ In the industry of religious tourism, spiritual retreat is categorized as a “Personal Quest Need.”²⁴ Spiritual retreats are utilized by both Oriental religions (Buddhism and Hinduism) and the Eastern and Western traditions of the Christian Church. Additionally, secular methods of wellness (health and spa industry) are integrated into the retreat as part or whole.

In spite of the variety of contexts of its application, a retreat follows a fairly predictable form and function. It varies mostly in relation to length and purpose. Regardless

23. Chelsea Gill, Jan Packer, and Roy Ballantyne, “Spiritual Retreats as a Restorative Destination: Design Factors Facilitating Restorative Outcomes,” *Annals of Tourism Research* 79 (August 8, 2019): 102761, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.annals.2019.102761>, 1.

24. *Ibid.*, 1.

of the context of utilization, the retreat involves some form of voluntary dislocation. From the perspective of spiritual tourism, a retreat is a place that allows time for reflection, rejuvenation, regaining good health, and/or spiritual renewal and re-evaluation.²⁵ According to Gill, Packer, and Ballantyne, the means to this end is a conducive retreat venue, time for private contemplation, access to healthy meals, and the company of like-minded retreatants in community.

In the context of spiritual tourism, the physical environment is essential. To achieve the purpose of happiness, learning, training and reflection, personal transformation and development, and restoration, Gill, Packer, and Ballantyne suggest that physical space plays an important role.²⁶ Even though this type of tourism claims to be spiritual, there appears to be minimal appeal to anything supernatural. Overtly, there seems to be no room or dependence on the divine for the success of this type of retreat. The intended goal is highly dependent on the “simplicity and quietness of the retreat.”²⁷

Spiritual tourism can be described as self-directed and self-centered. This is affirmed by experts in the field who indicate that practices associated with spiritual tourism are undergirded by humanistic psychological ideas and not necessarily by theological belief systems.”²⁸ Thus, spiritual tourism and the retreats associated with it are geared toward the pursuit of happiness, self-improvement, and wellness and rather than holiness and union with Christ. As Alex Norman describes it, spiritual tourism and its attendant practices are “a

25. Gill, Packer, and Ballantyne, “Spiritual Retreats, 1.

26. Ibid., 1

27. Ibid., 1

28. Alex Norman and Jennifer J. Pokorny, “Meditation Retreats: Spiritual Tourism Well-Being Interventions,” *Tourism Management Perspectives* 24 (2017), 202. Accessed on December 13, 2023.

product of the confluence of these social forces coincident with the secularization of Western societies, which, among other things, forced religious expression and activity into the non-work or leisure sphere.”²⁹

Consequently, this type of retreat is more anthropocentric and pragmatic.³⁰ It is anthropocentric because the retreats are driven by a desire for personal flourishing and subjective wellbeing, and pragmatic because it is utilized for the psychological and existential benefits it offers irrespective of the religious status of patrons. This retreat is oriented more toward commerce than Jesus.

This is significantly different from explicitly Christian retreats and by extension the one this project seeks to evaluate. Our retreat is Christian in foundation and orientation. The purpose from the inception has been to promote spiritual formation and transformation. All the practices are intended to help participants become more like Christ. Becoming more like Christ is not always a happy occasion. It demands a constant movement away from self-satisfaction and self-indulgences. Transformation demands that we die to self, sin, and society (Rom. 6:3–4, 1 John 2:15–17). Christian retreats are theocentric. God’s word and God’s will are at the heart of all practices. Holiness is the goal.

Christian retreats follow a similar form and function as the tradition of spiritual guidance in which one person functions as a guide, mentor, or a companion to another person

29. Alex Norman, “The varieties of the Spiritual Tourist Experience,” *Literature & Aesthetics* 22 (2012), 20–37, cited by Alex Norman and Jennifer J. Pokorny, “Meditation Retreats: Spiritual Tourism Well-Being Interventions,” *Tourism Management Perspectives* 24 (2017), 201–207.

30. Benno van den Toren, “African Neo-Pentecostalism in the Face of Secularization: Problems and Possibilities,” *Is Africa Incurably Religious: Secularization and Discipleship in Africa*, ed. Benno van den Toren, Joseph Bosco Bangura, and Richard E. Seed. Kindle ed (1517 Media, Fortress Press, 2020), 150. In his article, he used these terms to characterize the effect of secularization on the practice of Christian religion in Africa. He argued that, even though the Christian faith is theocentric resisting the utilitarian use of its practices, African Traditional Religions (ATR) are the opposite. That, ATRs are anthropocentric and pragmatic, making them susceptible to secularization. I applied them here because I saw some parallels between how retreat I used in spiritual tourism and how religion is utilized in ATRs.

or group.³¹ This approach to spirituality is patterned after early monastic culture in the Egyptian desert. Retreats are credited as heralding the democratization of spirituality where people who led retreats or functioned as spiritual guides were not ordained priests of the Catholic Church. The ability to lead retreats and act as spiritual guides are considered gifts of God inspired and bestowed by the Holy Spirit.

Unlike spiritual tourism, Jenkins observes that Christian retreats provide the spiritual ambiance where prayer, mystical encounter, and individual transformation are experienced.³² Although a Christian retreat is a withdrawal of a sort, it does not necessarily include voluntary physical dislocation. It could also be a reference to the withdrawal of an attitude, state of mind, or a common posture of operation.³³ What is of import is the purpose or rationale for the withdrawal.

In the Christian perspective, retreat suggests a withdrawal from the familiar everyday working environment to a different place with the express intention of seeking God and resting in his presence through prayer and reflection.³⁴ Thus, in Christian retreat, the critical ingredient is not necessarily the special surroundings, but rather the inward journey towards knowing God through Christ by the empowerment of the Holy Spirit.

31. Benno van den Toren, "African Neo-Pentecostalism in the Face of Secularization: Problems and Possibilities," 202.

32. Hugh Peter Jenkins, "A Study of the Origins, Development and Contemporary Manifestations of Christian Retreats" (Master's Thesis. University of South Africa, 2006), 13.

33. *Ibid.*, 17.

34. Cheslyn Jones, Geoffrey Wainwright, and Edward J. Yarnold, *The Study of Spirituality* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986), 579.

According to Ruth Haley Barton, Christian spiritual retreat “is an *extended time apart* for the purpose of being with God and giving God our full and undivided attention.”³⁵ Barton opines that from a military perspective, retreat may conjure a defeatist imagery: a military tactical move that is resorted to when defeat is imminent and casualties are swelling up. However, to shake off the pejorative connotation to the concept, she proposes the terminology--*strategic withdrawal*--where wisdom dictates that we withdraw for good reasons, a time where we pull back from the battle of life in order to re-strategize and avert catastrophic defeat.³⁶

For Barton, such strategic withdrawal affords Christians the time and space to: (1) rest and learn what we must (2) relinquish in order to fully to be still and at ease so that we can experience the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit (3) with rhythms that (4) replenish our bodies, minds, and souls. Then we practice (5) recognizing and (6) responding to the presence of God through discernment, and (7) then recalibrate based on what we discern God to be saying to our souls. As a result, we ~~will~~ experience ourselves being drawn to (8) reengage our lives in community with others from a place of rest such that we can cultivate regular patterns of (9) returning and (10) resting.

Consequently, in Barton’s view, retreats as a method of Christian spirituality functions to provide ten Rs which enhances spiritual growth: rest, relinquishment, time to replenish, rhythms of life, space for divine recognition, wisdom to respond, peace to recalibrate, power to reengage, capacity to return or bounce back, and the humility to rest again when the need arises. As one who organizes and leads retreats, rest is not a benefit I

35. Ruth Haley Barton, *Invitation to Retreat: The Gift and Necessity of Time Away with God* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2018), 3.

36. *Ibid.*, 10.

derive from retreats. However, feedback I have received from participants echoes Barton's sentiments. Even for emerging adults, life can be chaotic, overwhelming, and even depressing sometimes. Yet, they look forward to the retreat because it affords them the time and place where they can close the door on their chaotic individual worlds and take in new breaths, new perspectives, empowerment, rejuvenation, and re-direction.

Christian Spirituality

Christian spirituality is construed in myriad ways. Confessional and generational dynamics influence the understanding and practice of Christian spirituality. Different faith traditions subscribe to varying perspectives and practices concerning spirituality. For instance, Catholics and Evangelicals differ in their understanding both theologically and practically in relation to spirituality. Furthermore, the era in which one lives influences one's imaginations about spirituality. For example, contemporary conceptions, expectations, and experiences of spirituality are markedly distinct from those of the early church, the medieval period, and the time of the Reformation. Since this study is not a comparative one, we shall limit ourselves to common Christian construal of Christian spirituality.

Lexically, the idea of spirituality is derived from the Latin noun, *spiritualitas*, and the Greek, *pneuma*. The adjectival form, *pneumatikos*, features prominently in the New Testament Pauline corpus. Its usage in this context is not merely contrasting spirit and spiritual with physical or material. Rather, it addresses everything—including attitude, behavior, emotions, choices, and decisions—that is contrary to the Spirit of God.³⁷

Glen Scorgie served as general editor for the *Dictionary of Christian Spirituality*. Offering an overview of Christian spirituality, he conceives of Christian spirituality as

37. Philip Sheldrake, *Spirituality: A Brief History*, 2nd ed. (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2013), 15.

essentially “about living *all of life*--not just some esoteric portion of it--before God, through Christ, in the transforming and empowering presence of the Holy Spirit.”³⁸ Thus, Christian spirituality is about a way of life, a culture curated under the auspices of the Holy Spirit. This culture is characterized by a growing imitation of Christ and participation in the larger mission of God unearthed through Christ Jesus.

According to Holmes, Christian spirituality involves the capacity to receive God into human lives. Human beings are also naturally spiritual because we are created with an inherent attraction towards God. Exemplified by the life in the Garden of Eden, humankind thrived mostly because of the unmediated and unfettered relationship they enjoyed with God (Gen. 3:8–10). Just as in magnetism, humankind and the divine are like-poles. Holmes opines, “We are ‘unfinished’ humans until we consent to that power of the Spirit and are drawn into a wholeness of being.”³⁹

However, the spiritual mutuality between God and humankind was significantly disrupted by sin. The relationship between God and humankind is not only one between an infinite being and finite beings, it is also one between an All-Holy God and a now sinful human race.⁴⁰ Thus, sin successfully ruptured the relationship between the Creator and his creation. The gulf occasioned in terms of the nature of humankind before and after the fall would require grace to bridge. Therefore, to help humankind recover and restore their spiritual identity and desire, God entered human history in the person of Christ Jesus.

38. Glen G. Scorgie, “Overview of Christian Spirituality,” *Dictionary of Christian Spirituality: An Analytical Introduction*. Kindle ed (Grand Rapids, Zondervan, 2011), 26.

39. Urban T. Holmes, III, *A History of Christian Spirituality: An Analytical Introduction* (New York: Morehouse, 2002), 18–19.

40. Jones, Wainwright, and Yarnold, *The Study of Spirituality*, 13.

God's self-giving act of grace demonstrated in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus exemplifies the value God places on the recovery of human spirituality. God spared any expense to ensure that despite the gravity of sin, his people would not lose the connection and relationship with him. The price for sin (Heb. 10:4) and God's lack of hesitance to provide the eternal panacea for it speaks volumes about the premium God places on the spirituality of his people.

Christian spirituality is essentially about the lived experience. Scorgie observes that "It is about living all *of life*--not just some esoteric portion of it--before God, through Christ, in the transforming and empowering presence of the Holy Spirit."⁴¹ Australian educationalist and theologian, Neil Tucker, ties the historical emergence of Christian Spirituality to the life, ministry, death, resurrection, ascension, and the Parousia of Jesus Christ.⁴² While many authors go as far back as the Old Testament to source the roots of Christian spirituality, Tucker limits himself to the New Testament. He acknowledges, however, that the roots of the New Testament are steeped in the deep wells of the Judaic traditions and worship of the God of Israel.

Nonetheless, for Tucker the history of Christian Spirituality began with the disciples and the early church and continued through the Early Church Fathers, and the Desert Fathers of Egypt and the Middle East. It progressed into the Western traditions, interfacing with syncretistic Roman and Greek Philosophies, cultural, and political practices. Tucker posits further that for over 1800 years, several other traditions of Christian Spirituality have emerged from within the global Christian community: English, French, German, Russian,

41. Glen G. Scorgie, "Overview of Christian Spirituality," 27.

42. Neil Tucker, "The History of Christian Spirituality: The Place of Prayer," *ResearchGate* (April 2021), accessed December 13, 2023. <https://doi.org/10.13140/RG.2.2.13557.91366>, 2.

Catholic, Anglican, Protestant, Puritan, Orthodox, evangelical, ecumenical, and indigenous traditions.⁴³

This development has resulted not only in diversity in relation to a deeper understanding and practice of Christian spirituality, but it has also occasioned multiple theological formulations and beliefs about the same. Just as there are differences in theological issues such as gender roles, the nature of the divinity of Jesus, the Trinity, and so on, there is no agreed upon theological position amongst Christians in relation to spirituality.

Similar to different kinds of retreats, there are various approaches and disparate types of spirituality. Sheldrake has posited four major types of Christian spirituality that, although not unique to Christianity, share some practical features with other religions. In reference to type, Sheldrake points to a “distinctive style of wisdom and practice with shared characteristics.”⁴⁴ He is reticent about referring to them as typologies because to him they are helpful for interpretational purposes, rather than descriptive purposes. His four types are (1) ascetical-monastic, (2) the mystical, (3) the active-practical, and (4) the prophetic-critical. These are not discrete categories. According to Sheldrake, they overlap to some extent.

These types of spirituality function to “foster self-transcendence via a movement from what they see as the ‘inauthentic’ towards what is ‘authentic.’”⁴⁵ It is unclear what Sheldrake means by “self-transcendence”; however, these types function as a means of identifying where or the context within which transformation occurs, how or the specific practices and

43. Neil Tucker, “The History of Christian Spirituality, 3–4.

44. Philip Sheldrake, *Spirituality*, 17.

45. *Ibid.*, 17.

disciplines which engender transformation, and what are the benchmarks, telos, or ultimate purpose of transformation.

Consequently, in the case of the ascetic-monastic type of Christian spirituality, the where of transformation has to do with special places such as the wilderness, a monastery, a retreat center, by the ocean, and so on. As the type's name suggests, the "how" of transformation relates to practices of self-denial, practices of austerity, and abstention from whatever is perceived as carnal, profane, or worldly pleasures. The ultimate purpose or telos of this type is freedom from, desensitization to, and less dependence on material existence is the means to eternal life.

The "where" of the mystical type concerns a desire for an immediacy of connection to the presence of God often through contemplative practices like meditation. This type does not necessarily demand voluntary dislocation or movement away from a familiar environment. The "how" of the mystical type relates to intuitive knowledge of God beyond syllogistic reasoning and analysis. The telos of this type is spiritual illumination and sense of connection to the depth of existence.

The context for the third type, active-practical, is the mundane everyday life. A retreat is not necessary. What is of essence for spiritual growth is believed to be within reach, and emphasis is placed on locating God in the chaos of everyday human existence. The assumption behind this type suggests that spirituality is accessible to everyone, rather than an esoteric few. The ultimate goal for this category is to cultivate spiritual growth amidst of ordinary circumstances, experiences, commitments, and service to humankind.

The final type is the prophetic-critical. The context for this type goes beyond mundane practical services offered to others. Rather, there is an overt focus on social transformation and social justice which appears to be more about advocacy. Historically this

type seems to be the most appropriated of the four, even though it may have been mainly popularized around the twentieth century in response to the increase of political activism and participation.

From the foregoing, I submit that the leadership retreat may fall within a continuum of the first and second types: the ascetic-monastic and the mystical. It is like the first type because of the movement away from familiar location to a new place. The intention is to isolate from distractions, disruptions, and temptation for an immersion into the presence of God. It is akin to the second type in that attendees are encouraged to pay attention to hearing God's voice or communication. There is an express desire to sharpen spiritual perception and improve the spiritual awareness and intuition of participants.

Juxtaposing African Spirituality with Christian Spirituality

Given that this project is situated in an African context, it is a reasonable expectation that I explore an African theoretical framework to serve as a baseline for this study. My response is that while there is some value in African spirituality, the goal of Christian spirituality may not be same as African spirituality. As a continent with diverse cultural and spiritual expressions, beliefs, and, values, it is unreasonable to anticipate a unitive spiritual aspiration that is representative of all Africans.

These spiritual aspirations are mostly indigenous, often appearing differently from Christian doctrine and belief through unique expressions of the religious worldview of African people. Magesa explains that "African spirituality is founded on its own values from which life yields meaning for the people."⁴⁶ Magesa further asserts that "African spirituality

46. Laurenti Magesa, *What Is Not Sacred? African Spirituality* (Nairobi, Kenya: Acton Publishers, 2014), 40. This book offers some critical insights into African spirituality in terms of its philosophical, religious, and cultural underpinnings and expressions.

does not hold as its primary objective the achievement of a specific goal among other goals, such as piety, meekness, or fear of God. If there is a goal in the perception of African spirituality, it is to totally experience the ‘good life’ and to completely avoid the ‘bad life.’”⁴⁷

Furthermore, when writing on the relationship between African Neo-Pentecostalism and secularization, Benno van den Toren offers a deeper appreciation of some of the peculiarities of African spirituality in relation to Judo-Christian spirituality. He compares the Christian faith to African Traditional Religions in terms of their telos and notes that Christian faith or spirituality by orientation is theocentric. This means that the focus of Christian spirituality is becoming more like God in actions, thoughts, emotions, and more so in the utilization of resources.

African Traditional Religion or spirituality, on the other hand, is by nature anthropocentric and pragmatic. Van den Toren explains, “They are anthropocentric in the sense that religious practices are focused on the flourishing of the human being or, rather less individualistically, of the clan. They are pragmatic in the sense that religious practices are used in view of what they are intended to achieve: protection, healing, or blessings... Neo-Pentecostalism generally puts great emphasis on prosperity and power.”⁴⁸

Clearly, there are some fundamental differences between African spirituality and Christian spirituality. The values and telos are diametrically different. While Christian spirituality is inclined toward transformation as a means of participation in the mission of God, African spirituality appears to be focused on something different. Therefore, even though I am writing from an African context, I am doing so from a Christian frame of

47. Laurenti Magesa, *What Is Not Sacred?* 56.

48. Benno van den Toren, *African Neo-Pentecostalism*, 150-153.

reference. There is an apparent incongruity between the tenets of African spirituality and what we seek to achieve with the leadership retreat. Consequently, we will proceed with the assumption that the spiritual framework for this study is uniquely Christian.

Christian Spiritual Formation and Transformation

There is a dynamic relationship between Christian spirituality, Christian spiritual formation, and transformation. Christian Spiritual formation is the process or the means to Christian spirituality, while transformation is the end product of Christian spirituality and formation. Christian spiritual formation and spiritual transformation are similar to the concepts of independent and dependent variables in experimental research. In an experimental research design, the independent variable is the cause, the variable that is intentionally manipulated with the view to observe the effect of the manipulation. The dependent variable, on the other hand, is the effect. The changes occasioned by the manipulation of the independent variable are observed on the dependent variable. Thus, towards the spiritual aspirational goal of sanctification (1 Thess. 4:3–6), spiritual formation is the independent variable. It encompasses all traditional approaches in the history of Scripture and the church that are used to improve spirituality and maturity among God’s covenant people.

These approaches include all the spiritual disciplines of engagement and abstinence such as fasting, solitude, silence, simplicity, submission, worship, service, celebration, prayers, Bible study, guidance, confession, and so on.⁴⁹ According to Richard Foster, these disciplines function to open the human heart and spirit up to the Spirit of God. They allow

49. In his book: *Celebration of Disciplines: The Path to Spiritual Growth* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1988), Richard J. Foster presents a detailed account of how spiritual disciplines have been used historically as a means of stirring spiritual growth.

adherents to place themselves before God, fully available for his transforming power.⁵⁰ It is through these disciplines that the physical and spiritual treatments or manipulations which are prerequisites to spiritual maturation are triggered.

The dependent variable is spiritual transformation. When Christian spiritual formation is successful, it manifests as spiritual transformation. We observe significant shifts in the affection, thinking, and behavior of individuals who experience some disciplines. Such people begin to exhibit values, beliefs, and, worldviews diametrically opposed to the dominant worldly culture (1 John 2:15–17). Their affection, attitude, and behavior do not conform to the pattern of the world (Romans 12:1–3). They cultivate an alternate culture; significantly different from what prevails. They begin to shine as lights in a dark and perverse world (Phil. 2:15)

Christian Spiritual Formation: The Process of Becoming

The idea of formation conjures an image of craftsmanship in which one ~~who~~ is able to produce from a raw material, a value-added version. A craft person skillfully adds value to a raw material such that the value and quality become significantly more than the raw state. A relatable example is a potter. A potter basically collects dirt; which is formless, shapeless, and may not have any value in and of itself. The potter proceeds to treat, manipulate, or influence the dirt with skill, knowledge, and insight such that something valuable, usable, or productive emerges.

According to Howard, spiritual formation is similar to the work of a potter. It is concerned with shaping, molding, influencing, unearthing, and even excavating a spiritual

50. Richard J. Foster, *Celebration of Discipline*, 5–6.

potential into a completed actual.⁵¹ Spiritual formation specifically concerns the Christian's relationship with God and a resemblance, cultivation, and imitation of his nature over time. Alex Tang prefers the journey/pilgrimage metaphor. He imagines Christian formation as a journey from a place of not so much spirituality to a destination of deeper and intimate union with God through Christ Jesus empowered and sustained by the Holy Spirit.⁵²

Others conceptualize Christian spiritual formation as a series of stages although this idea lacks broad-based acceptance. John Calvin is a critic of the stage theory. Based on his theology of justification-regeneration, he is of the opinion that a new Christian convert's spiritual formation does not proceed in a sequence. For Calvin, Christian spiritual formation does not proceed from a stage of immaturity to one of maturity or perfection. Rather, it is a matter of discovery, a situation of matured or perfected beings discovering their real identity.⁵³ In Calvinism, sanctification is a journey of discovering the content of what it means to be adopted by God and for him, and the entire journey towards this discovery is purely determined by divine grace.

The preferred Pauline imagery or metaphor for Christian spiritual formation comes from the world of human personal grooming, and his imagery or metaphor represents a wardrobe update. For the apostle, a transition from one culture to another (Eph. 4:17–5:20; Col. 3:12–17), from a place of mortality to vivacity (Rom. 6:1–14) demands an audit of one's wardrobe to reflect the new culture and state. Someone raised from death occasioned by sin

51. Evan Howard, *Brazos Introduction to Christian Spirituality*, (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2008), 268.

52. Alex Tang, "The Process of Spiritual Formation," *Kairos Spiritual Formation Ministries*, February 15, 2014, accessed 2024, www.kairos2.com.

53. John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1960), 686-87. Cited in Alex Tang, "The Process of Spiritual Formation."

into newness of life facilitated by the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus cannot and should not be seen draped in a burial shroud. A wardrobe change is necessary in order to reflect the new reality. It is reasonable to expect that this wardrobe reshuffle may not be instantaneous. It may not proceed in stages, but it will definitely be a process.

The process and stages orientation to spiritual formation serves as good segue way to discuss whether or not one's spiritual formation and transformation proceeds in stages. Even though Alex Tang opines that the stage orientation to spiritual formation may be influenced by contemporary psychological stage theories, evidence from church history suggests otherwise.⁵⁴ Influenced by Grecian Philosophy, Origen (c. 185–251), one of the early church fathers, applied platonic ideas like purification, illumination, and contemplative union to his framework of the Fall and the reconnection of the soul to God. Augustine developed Origen's idea into a seven-step sequence to the spiritual life: (1) animation of the body, (2) sense, (3) art or abilities of the soul, (4) virtue of purification, (5) tranquility or remaining purified, (6) ingress or seeking the vision of God, and (7) contemplation of God. Over time, with further enhancement by latter theologians, this model was admitted into Church tradition.⁵⁵

Since then, contemporary theories of spiritual formation have adopted the stage approach. Indeed, according to Johnson, in the last century spiritual formation has been typically approached from a psychological perspective rather a theological one.⁵⁶ The ideas are adapted mainly from the discipline of Developmental and Psychodynamic theories in

54. Alex Tang, "The Process of Spiritual Formation, 2–3.

55. Julie Canlis, *Calvin's Ladder: A Spiritual Theology of Ascent and Descent* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 2010), 26–42.

56. Susanne Johnson, *Christian Spiritual Formation in the Church and Classroom* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1989), 105.

psychology. Thus, the process of spiritual formation is conceptualized as the process of a person's maturation from birth to death or from infancy to adulthood. Three stage theories are prominent in the discipline of spiritual formation: psychosocial theories, integrated theories, and systems theory.

Psychosocial theories of spiritual formation posit that significant events in the lives of people not only shape their personality but also influence how they are formed spiritually. There are categories to this theory: Structural and Functional theories. Structural theories insist that spiritual formation proceeds in stages while functional theories hold that spiritual formation occurs with the resolution of crises. The integrated theories are eclectic, combining the properties of the structural and functional theories.⁵⁷

Some of the notable proponents of the structural theories include Jean Piaget (1969), James Fowler (1995), and Lawrence Kohlberg (1981). Piaget produced a scheme for understanding human cognitive development, and Kohlberg worked on human moral development. Fowler attended to human faith development or spiritual formation although the presuppositions for his work are not distinctly Christian. Some of the prominent theorists in the Functional arena include Erik Erikson (1997), Robert Coles (1990), and Daniel J. Levinson (1978). Unlike structural theorists, the stages that functional theorists submit are not deterministic; instead, they are only descriptive, more processional and not progressional.

The integrationist theorists include John Westerhoff ([1976] 2000), Craig Dykstra (1981), David G. Benner (2004), and Les L. Steele (1998). John Westerhoff, arguably the most prominent among them, indicates that spiritual formation occurs in a continuum with different "styles," proceeding from "experienced faith," to "affiliative faith," to "searching

57. Alex Tang, "The Process of Spiritual Formation, 4.

faith,” and curtailing at “owned faith.”⁵⁸ He isolates enculturation as a significant factor in spiritual formation.

Does spiritual formation occur in stages? I am inclined to answer in the negative. I believe one of the principles that governs human growth and development also applies to human spiritual formation and transformation. Developmental psychologists affirm that human growth and development is asynchronous. In other words, a human’s growth and development is an individualized process. All individuals grow and develop in their own way and time and at their own pace. No two infants born on the same day will meet every developmental milestone simultaneously. I believe this is also true for spiritual formation and transformation. Spiritual formation and transformation are neither linear nor mechanical. Rather, they are sophisticated and fluid. People are formed at the behest of the Holy Spirit, and the Holy Spirit scarcely follows human stages. This study will take this into account when analyzing data from participants. Individuals will be assessed without attempting to compare them or cram all of them into a predetermined frame or mold.

An Integrated Perspective to the Process of Becoming

Having established that spiritual formation or transformation does not occur in crystalized stages, I concur with Susanne Johnson’s assertion that spiritual formation does not have the same properties or qualities as the scientific predictability of stage sequences.⁵⁹ Les Steele affirms further that formation does not emerge in discernably defined stages; it is processional, rather than progressive.⁶⁰

58. John Westerhoff, *Will Children Have Faith?* (Harrisburg: Morehouse, 2000), 87–103.

59. Susanne Johnson, *Christian Spiritual Formation*, 111.

60. Les L. Steele, *On the Way: A Practical Theology of Christian Formation* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1990), 117.

Three theories purport to explain the process of becoming spiritually formed or transformed: Loder's Logic of Transformation model, Shults and Sandage's Intensification model, and Dallas Willard's Renovation of Heart model. James E. Loder is a Reformed theologian, psychologist, and educator. According to Loder, a structuralist, transformation is an ordered process. The first-order change is behaviorally inclined, mainly behaviors are intended as defense mechanisms to reduce anxiety. This seeming transformation is limited to the person's immediate context. Consequently, first-order behaviors are referred to as functional transformation or the initial phase of spiritual formation. At this phase, overt behaviors are neither internalized nor deeply held. In a Christian context, a person in this phase may be putting up such behaviors to accelerate the pace of assimilation, acceptance, and the experience of a sense of belonging. By itself, first-order change is transient.

Second-order change or systemic transformation is more sophisticated and involves the cultivation of novel ways of knowing and relating to a person's perception of reality. It demands significant levels of self-identity redefinition and meaning-making. In religious parlance, systemic transformation can be construed as a new revelation similar to convictional knowing, and it is perceived as a transformation of the human heart, as one which only the Holy Spirit can occasion (Rom. 8:12–17).⁶¹ According to Loder, "convictional knowing is the process by which the Holy Spirit transforms all transformations of the human spirit."⁶² Convictional knowing may be comparable to Donald Gelpi's idea of "transvaluation."⁶³

61. James E. Loder, *The Logic of the Spirit: Human Development in Theological Perspective* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1998), 93–122.

62. *Ibid.*, 93.

63. Transvaluation is discussed close to the end of this chapter. Basically, it is a reference to a Holy Spirit enabled situation where one is able to develop a deeper, far-reaching understanding of sin not based on

In Loder's model, the human being comprises four dimensions: self, world, void, and the Holy. A person's lived experience or perception of reality is the world. This "world" forms the basis of a person's relationships. A negation or distortion of this imaginary world is the "void," and according to this model, a void is the source of human fears. Whenever this void invades or threatens to invade a person's "world," it induces an intrapsychic conflict and anxiety. The "self" then attempts to establish some homeostasis in the person due to the destabilizing effects of the conflict. The word "Holy" alludes to a supernatural presence or transcendence and acts as the panacea to the void. Thus, the "logic of transformation" refers to the way the "self" resolves conflict and anxiety which is occasioned by the void. Therefore, logic of transformation is basically a mechanism for resolving intrapsychic conflict and anxiety through the "Holy" with the goal of achieving a new homeostasis and world.⁶⁴

The second model: Intensification model is credited to theologian F. LeRon Shults and psychologist Steven J. Sandage and is an expansion of Loder's model. Shults and Sandage posit that human faith formation is a function of a dynamic interaction between intensity, intentionality, and intimacy in relationships.⁶⁵ The model leverages on relationships as a Christian virtue which argues that relational intensity and relational intimacy provide a

reinforcement-punishment relationship, but more so, its implications for divine-human relationship. Donald L. Gelpi, *Committed Worship: A Sacramental Theology for Converting Christians*, 2 Vols. (Minneapolis: Liturgical Press, 1993), 52.

64. James E. Loder, *The Transforming Moment*. 2nd ed. (Colorado Springs: Helmers and Howard, 1989), 35–44.

65. F. LeRon Shults and Steven J. Sandage, *Transforming Spirituality: Integrating Theology and Psychology* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2006), 29.

formidable foundation for human flourishing, such that relational intensity and intimacy can result in what they term as “redemptive intimacy,” a deepening relationship with God.⁶⁶

Shults and Sandage define spiritual transformation as “a process of profound, qualitative change in the self in relationship to the sacred.”⁶⁷ This model assumes that spiritual formation and transformation are not an individual pursuit and that transformation does not occur in isolation from other spiritual seekers. Rather, spiritual formation and transformation act as a communal venture, and interaction with other spiritual sojourners is critical. Unlike the logic of transformation model that is oriented toward the person-in-formation and cognitive processing, the intensification model is inclined towards the person-in-community and relationships. The second model holds that spiritual formation and transformation are socially constructed. In the first two models, the divine role in the formation and transformation process seems to be implied.

The third model is the “Renovation of Heart” model attributed to Dallas Willard, a theologian and a philosopher. Willard defines spiritual formation as a “Spirit-driven process of forming the inner world of the human self in such a way that it becomes like the inner being of Christ himself.”⁶⁸ For him, spiritual formation is occasioned as each critical dimension of the human being transforms to Christ-likeness under the auspices of a regenerate will interacting with constant supply of grace from God. Such transformation is

66. F. LeRon Shults and Steven J. Sandage, *Transforming Spirituality*, 89.

67. *Ibid.*, 163.

68. Dallas Willard, *Renovation of the Heart: Putting on the Character of Christ* (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 2002), 22.

not caused by sheer human effort and cannot be achieved by putting pressure on the will (heart, spirit) alone.⁶⁹

Like the other theorists, Willard makes some assumptions about human beings. For him, human nature comprises six “dimensions”: (1) Thought (images, concepts, judgements, inferences, (2) Feeling, (3) Choice (will, decision, character), (4) Body (action, interaction with the physical world), (5) Social context (personal and structural relations to others), and (6) Soul (the factor that integrates all the other dimensions to constitute one’s life). In this model, the mind is characterized by thought and feeling. The will is associated with the heart and spirit. The soul connects all the other dimensions. In this theory, the most significant means of spiritual formation and transformation occurs through the disciplines of studying scripture together with the practice of other spiritual disciplines. Willard draws a parallel between kingdom living and intentional strides at embodying the life of Christ.

Evan Howard echoes Willard’s views and like Willard, Howard conceptualizes spiritual formation as behavior modification influenced by or patterned after the life of Jesus Christ. Howard uses the language of reorientation and habituation.⁷⁰ Reorientation is characterized by the integration of the burden of life which motivates human emotions. It influences the worldviews that inform human opinions and evaluations as well as the choice of lifestyles which shape human habits and actions. Reorientation is occasioned when a shift or inclination moves more toward “*the things that are above*” and away from the “*things that are on earth*” (Col. 3:1–2), towards the “*new self,*” and away from the “*old self*” (Col.

69. Dallas Willard, *Renovation of the Heart*, 41–42.

70. Evan B. Howard, *Brazos Introduction to Christian Spirituality*, 269.

3:9–10). When spiritual formation succeeds, one’s thought patterns provide indicators. The cognition of a spiritually formed person is not dominated by the world’s lures, but by heavenly realities.

Rehabilitation is concerned with certain patterns of habits, conduct, and behavior as well as the cultivation of new habits, conduct, and practices. It is a shift from past culture towards a new one. The apostle Paul describes it as “*the way you also once followed*” (Col. 3:7), usually a reference to the pre-conversion way of life. Pagan habits are mostly sinful. However, when a pagan becomes a Christian, new wholesome habits are expected. The focus of spiritual formation is to help Christian converts develop and maintain new habits consistent with Christian ethical standards.

Howard indicates that the process of becoming formed and transformed into Christlikeness involves the following processes: (1) envisioning and revisioning the goal of spiritual formation; (2) developing a resilient commitment to the pursuit of growth; (3) participating in a healthy nurturing community that prioritizes God-ward re-orientation and rehabilitation; (4) developing the honesty for personal assessment in identifying areas of deformation, disorientation, and wrong habituation; (5) disciplined selection of spiritual disciplines, practices, rules of life, relationships, and experiences that promote God-ward reorientation and rehabilitation; (6) attending to the nuances of one’s own context, evaluating and revising initial choices and decisions; (7) diligent implementation of growth strategies; and (8) continued assessment and revision of the ongoing process.⁷¹ Howard does not indicate whether these steps are processional or progressional.

71. Evan B. Howard, *Brazos Introduction to Christian Spirituality*, 282.

These theories and assumptions notwithstanding, a broad-based consensus argues that the Holy Spirit acts as the primary means of spiritual formation and transformation. The Spirit initiates, instigates, and orchestrates experiences that stir or reinforce reorientation and rehabilitation as the Spirit stimulates new patterns of action. The Spirit offers a supernatural perspective to life that influences the choices and decisions of those in the process of becoming. Donald Gelpi describes such spiritual provision as “transvaluation.”⁷²

Transvaluation refers to the Spirit’s enabling of God’s covenant people to perceive the far-reaching implications of overcoming sin. They avoid sin not because of the potential for punishment and recrimination but because of the effect of sin on their relationship with God.

Thus, transvaluation explains the voluntary cultivation of holiness, justice, and righteousness as an expression and demonstration of human appreciation of God’s sanctifying work through Christ Jesus. However, spiritual formation and transformation are not the work of the Spirit only. Spiritual formation and transformation require a human response. The individual must voluntarily respond to the initiative of the Holy Spirit. The horse must choose to drink when it comes face to face with over-flowing stream of formation and transformation. One must yield volitionally to the Spirit’s work.

Conclusion

This chapter focused on a thematic review of literature in the areas of retreats, Christian spiritual formation, and transformation. The similarities and differences among Christian spiritual retreats and religious retreats practiced in the tourism industry are apparent. While Christian spiritual retreats are spirit-led and God-centered, religious retreats are self-directed and self-centered. Religious retreats are focused on the pursuit of happiness,

72. Donald L. Gelpi, *Committed Worship*, 52.

personal development, and wellness. Christian spiritual retreats ultimately focus on holiness and righteousness, with a mystical union and encounter with God as their aim.

Additionally, this chapter engaged some of the theories which purport to explain the process of becoming spiritually formed and transformed. Although the theories are helpful in understanding in human terms the process of formation and transformation, we ended on the note that spiritual formation and transformation are essentially a Holy Spirit process, that requires a human response or cooperation. It is the Holy Spirit that initiates and orchestrates the processes and situations essential to spiritual formation and transformation. This being said, we also agreed that spiritual formation and transformation demands a human response. Targets of God's formation and transformation must choose to cooperate with the Spirit of God.

The next chapter considers the biblical and theological foundation for this project. We will attempt to delineate a biblical and theological basis for the necessity of spiritual formation and transformation. What do we find in the tradition of scripture and in the history of Christian theological thought that establishes a locus for this project?

CHAPTER THREE

BIBLICAL AND THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATION

The theological and biblical foundation of spiritual formation is connected to the creation narrative in Genesis. According to Genesis, humankind is created in the image and likeness of God (Gen. 1:26–27). However, with the Fall of humankind through sin in Genesis 3, humankind contaminated their original spiritual nature, the nature of being created in the image and likeness of God. Thus, it became necessary to restore mankind’s lost nature by restoring them to their original relationship with the triune God. The Dutch-American theologian and minister, Anthony Hoekema, identifies two aspects of the restorative process: a functional aspect and a structural aspect. The functional aspect places humankind in a three-pronged relationship with the triune God, with others, and with nature. The structural dimension has to do with the movement from the ‘original image’ to the ‘perverted image’ after the Fall, and ultimately, from the ‘renewed image’ to the ‘perfected image’ at the consummation of God’s scheme of redemption.⁷³ There was the need to reclaim the Edenic condition of peace between the creator and his creation.

Consequently, theologically, the birthplace of spiritual formation begins with “God’s making humans in the *imago Dei*, followed by Christ’s redeeming work on the cross as the ultimate expression of love for fallen humanity, and the Holy Spirit’s ongoing empowerment to live a godly life.”⁷⁴ Evidently, from the beginning of time, God’s intention has been for humankind to conform to his image. Whenever this intention is threatened, he has stopped at nothing to ensure that this aspiration is realized. Thus, Jesus’ ministry and the Holy Spirit are

73. Anthony Hoekema, *Created in God’s Image* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1986), 75-96

74. Diane J. Chandler, *Christian Spiritual Formation: An Integrated Approach for Personal and Relational Wholeness*. (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2014), Kindle.

concerted towards the attainment of spiritual formation and transformation of humankind. Clearly, contrary to some theological schools of thought, spiritual formation is not an alien addition to God's scheme of redemption. Rather, it is a critical feature of the triune God's ministry to humanity.

Thus, one way of framing the problem this study sets out to explore is to determine what a biblically balanced and theologically healthy ministry looks like. The Churches of Christ in Ghana pursue a theology or philosophy of ministry that focuses mostly on conversion. Leonard Allen, a Historical Theologian and scholar within the Churches of Christ, has observed that Churches of Christ share with Evangelicals "a strong view of Scripture's authority, the centrality of Christ's death for our sins, and strong impulse for evangelism and service."⁷⁵ We operate with the assumption that biblical knowledge by itself results in spiritual formation and transformation. In our faith tradition, the model ministry is an evangelistic one. We esteem the one who is able to convert large numbers into the Christian faith. We celebrate quantity, numbers we can count.⁷⁶ Overtime, it has become apparent that God cannot count on the numbers we convert. This is the missionary legacy bequeathed to the Churches of Christ in Ghana.

Although, the emphasis of ministry among the Churches of Christ in other jurisdictions have shifted with time, the same cannot be said for the community in Ghana. We still cling on to the ancient paths even though we find no rest for our souls. Robert Richardson, a notable figure in Churches of Christ history, observed that our approach to ministry has the effect of snuffing out spiritual vitality and dabbling in doctrinal formalism

75. Leonard Allen, *In the Great Stream*, 46.

76. James W. Thompson, *Pastoral Ministry According to Paul: A Biblical Vision*. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2006), 8.

which undercuts the full restoration of pure Christian faith.⁷⁷ Although the theological and historical bases for the ministry orientation of the Churches of Christ is beyond the scope of this study, the foregoing creates a sense of urgency for the pursuit of a more biblically and theologically integrated centering to ministry. The spiritual deficiencies that are palpable across our congregations are symptomatic of the challenges associated with our orientation to ministry. Akin to that of Evangelicals, our approach to ministry is characterized by biblicism, crucicentrism, conversionism, and activism.⁷⁸

Chandler has noted that while these characteristics of Evangelical ministry are valuable, they have significant limitations. For instance, biblicism may result in an information orientation to Scripture rather than a transformational orientation. Crucicentrism may devolve into sentimentalizing and trivializing the cross, elevating Christology and soteriology over pneumatology, and emphasizing salvation over creation. Conversionism may prioritize justification over sanctification. Finally, unbridled activism may promote rote rationality which undercuts the divine expectation of the renewal of minds (Rom. 12:1–2).⁷⁹ In view of the above, this chapter explores wholesome theological and biblical telos of ministry, one that integrates the necessity of sanctification, discipleship, formation, and transformation in the kingdom of God.

The leadership retreat emerged as a response to the palpable dearth in spiritual progress among members of the church in Ghana. For these emerging adults, the disparity

77. Leonard Allen and Danny Gray Swick, *Participating in God's Life: Two Crossroads for Churches of Christ* (Orange: New Leaf Books, 2001), 40.

78. David W. Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain: A History from the 1730s to the 1980s* (London: Unwin Hyman, 1989), 2–17.

79. Diane J. Chandler, "Life in the Spirit: Spiritual Formation in Theological Perspective." *Pneuma* 33.2 (2011): 284–285. Accessed on January 24, 2023.

between who we claim to be and the lives we live are too glaring to ignore. We do not struggle to find evidence. The honest ones among us could present their own lives as prima facie evidence. We recognized that we could not expect different outcomes from our inherited approach to ministry. We needed to explore other ways of doing ministry which prioritized formation and transformation over biblicism, crucicentrism, conversion, and activism, as important they are. As things were, we were not being prepared to participate in God's life and mission. We were miles away from being like Christ and sharing in the character of God. The content, activities, and processes at the retreat are all based on the belief that the ultimate telos of ministry is transformation and participation in the divine life.

Ministry as Preparation for Participation in God's Life and Mission

A critical study of the scriptures affirms that the telos of ministry is the formation and transformation of God's people. Gorman puts it this way: "Spirit-enabled transformative participation in the life and character of God revealed in the crucified and resurrected Messiah Jesus."⁸⁰ The most pervasive biblical images, metaphors, and traditions about ministry corroborate this truth. God's intention for his diverse interactions and interventions into human affairs has been for the explicit purpose of transforming human life and character to mirror that of the divine. It is only through such transformation that humanity can participate and partner with God both in life and mission.

Formation for Divine Ministry (Exodus 19:5–6)

Rooted in the Old Testament is the fact that God's covenant with Israel was meant, among other things, for formation and transformation of the covenant community. Israel's

80. Micheal J. Gorman, *Becoming the Gospel: Paul, Participation, and Mission* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 2015), 4.

redemption from Egypt and their eventual encampment at Sinai was part of a process of turning them into a people formed into the life and character of God. Speaking through Moses, YHWH told the people, “*Now, therefore, if you obey my voice and keep my covenant, you shall be my treasured possession out of all the peoples. Indeed, the whole earth is mine, but you shall be for me a priestly kingdom and a holy nation*” (Exod. 19:5–6).

The above passage speaks of Israel’s position of privilege (*treasured possession*), their responsibility (*become a kingdom of priests*), and their character (*a holy nation*).⁸¹ Therefore, the telos of God’s interaction and involvement with Israel, his treasured possession, is to form and transform them into priestly kings with a consecrated character which mirrors God’s own character, the only way Israel can participate in his life and mission. God’s commitment to his formation and transformation of Israel is constant, and his disciplinary actions are for this purpose. Even if it means reducing them to one (Exod. 32:10), he will have a community that bears not only his name, but his character. In pastoral parlance, God will continue “culling” his flock in favor of those who are responsive and productive.⁸² He is interested in a formed and transformed remnant.

In the well-known Great Commission (Matthew 20:18–20), Jesus clearly articulates that the people’s conversion to Christianity is not his only focus. He also desires them to unlearn their former ways of life in favor of his new way of living in the kingdom of God. Thus, disciple-making or Christian ministry represents much more than numerical growth. In my considered view, the focus should be directed towards spiritual growth and helping

81. Victor P. Hamilton, *Handbook on the Pentateuch*, 2nd ed (Grand Rapids: Baker Academics, 2005), 185.

82. Timothy S. Laniak, *Shepherds After My Own Heart: Pastoral Traditions and Leadership in the Bible* (Leicester: Apollos, 2006), 92.

converts learn “to obey everything that I have commanded you.” As Williard so poignantly puts it, Jesus calls us “not to do what he did, but to be as he was, permeated with love. Then the doing of what he did and said becomes the natural expression of who we are in Him.”⁸³

Discerning a Telos of Ministry

Churches of Christ in Ghana assume that ministry is mostly about evangelism and conversion. The public comments of some of our community’s leading figures affirm this reality. Beyond these, any variation is at best perceived as an innocent deviation and at worse judged as apostasy. The apostle Paul’s words and ministry are often quoted as the basis for this orientation. Consequently, the rest of this chapter explores the ministry of Jesus and some of the writings of Paul to discern a telos of ministry. It will become evident that there is more to ministry than evangelism and conversion.

The Ministry of Jesus

Becoming was the telos of Jesus’ ministry. He focused his vision and practice of ministry toward helping people cultivate the alternative culture of God’s kingdom. A content analysis of Jesus’s famous Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5–7) would affirm this notion. Often described as the Constitution of the Kingdom of Heaven, Jesus intended to construct a new pattern of thinking and behaving in the alternative community of God.⁸⁴ In Jesus’ vision ~~was that~~ those who encountered the kingdom did not only have to tell others about it, but more so to live in a manner consistent with the culture of the kingdom. The sermon

83. Dallas Willard, *Divine Conspiracy: Rediscovering our Hidden Life in God* (San Francisco: HarperOne, 2009), 204.

84. Tjaart Van der Walt, *Die Messias Het Gekom!: 'n Gids in Die Evangelies Vir Toegewyde Bybel-Studente* (Potchefstroom: Potchefstroomse Teologiese Publikasies, 2006), 185.

represented aspirational values, identity, and a lifestyle which differed from the dominant culture. It was to be the foundation of formation.

Thus, in Matthew and the other synoptics, wholesome discipleship is demonstrated in terms of doing the will of God, defined by Jesus as the defining and distinctive mark of the covenant community: “Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect” (Matthew 5:48). As Viljoen argues, Jesus’ intention was not only to convert people, but also to build a community characterized by righteousness.⁸⁵ Practical theologian, Thomas Oden, is right to assert that “If ministry cannot be clearly established as the continuation of Jesus’ own intention and practice, we lose its central theological premise.”⁸⁶ Consequently, Jesus’ own emphasis provides evidence that formation and transformation are critical dimensions of ministry. If converts into Christianity were not formed and transformed, participating in the life and character of God would be a mirage, the death of Christ would be of no consequence or significance, and the Christian witness would be weak. Next, we probe Paul’s vision of ministry.

Paul’s Vision of Ministry in Philippians

The apostle Paul’s writings are controversial in relation to a theology or telos of ministry. They form the basis for a variety of ministry orientations. For instance, for those evangelistically inclined, he is their model. Paul is the inspiration for those who conceptualize ministry as therapy, and he is the pacesetter for the church growth movement (1 Cor. 3:6). However, it has recently emerged that the pervasive theme in Pauline theology is

85. Francois P. Viljoen, “Righteousness and Identity Formation in the Sermon on the Mount,” *HTS Theologiese Studies / Theological Studies* 69, no. 1 (January 14, 2013): 1–10, <https://doi.org/10.4102/hts.v69i1.1300>, 2-3.

86. Thomas Oden, *Pastoral Theology: Essentials of Ministry* (San Francisco: HarperOne, 1983), 59-60.

pastoral. His writings offer insights into the biblical vision of ministry. James Thompson asserts persuasively that “The center of Paul’s thought is a theology of transformation which provides the basis for Paul’s pastoral theology.”⁸⁷

In his book, *Pastoral Ministry According to Paul: A Biblical Vision*, Thompson shows that beyond the polemical diatribes against false prophets and false teachings in many of his epistles, Paul’s theology is mostly ministry focused, and his ministry ambition is “community formation.”⁸⁸ This telos was intricately woven into the prevalent themes in most of his correspondence with the communities he served. Evidence of this goal is represented by the fact that he hinged the failure or otherwise of his ministry only at the eschaton, that is when he can boast or when he realizes that he has labored in vain (Rom. 15:15–17; 1 Cor. 3:10–15; 2 Cor. 1:12–14; Gal. 2:2; cf. 4:11; Phil. 2:16–18; 1 Thess. 2:19–20). Unlike the Churches of Christ in Ghana, Paul was not content with converting people and teaching the right doctrine. His ministry’s aspiration was the formation and transformation of the entire community of faith. Formation and transformation were the yardstick by which he judged his ministry success. To be sure, let’s explore some of the formational and transformational themes in his letters.

Blameless at His Coming: Paul’s Ministry Telos in Philippians

“Do all things without murmuring and arguing, so that you may be blameless and innocent, children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, in which you shine like stars in the world” (Phil. 2:14–15).

87. James W. Thompson, *Pastoral Ministry According to Paul*, 19. A critical mass of this section will be adapted from Dr. Thompson. Even though Dr. Thompson was my professor for Advanced Introduction to New Testament during my M.Div. studies at Abilene Christian University, these ideas are fairly new to me.

88. *Ibid.*, 20.

Contrary to the jury's verdict that Paul's epistles are evangelistically focused, passages such as the above suggest otherwise. He was more concerned about the spiritual and moral condition of his community at the coming of Christ. A rhetorical analysis of the epistles reveals Paul's deep pastoral intentions for his beloved community. He established his pastoral vision from the beginning of the epistle (1:1-11) with the assertion that God intended to bring to completion his salvific work among them. This salvific work did not end with their conversion. Rather, God's work began with conversion and was consummated with transformation. According to Paul, a critical part of God's work among them is '*enabling you both to will and to work for his good pleasure*' (Phil. 2:13).

In light of what Paul writes in his epistle to the church at Rome in terms of the tension between 'willing and doing,' (Rom. 7:18-25), we cannot assume that '*to will and to work for his good pleasure*' comes naturally to all converts. It requires intentional investment of time and pastoral care. Thus, this statement offers some insight into Paul's ministry telos. His teaching, preaching, and interactions with this community were all focused on helping them develop the spiritual wherewithal '*to will and to work for his good pleasure.*'"

He proceeds in 1:12-26 to present his own internal formation which shapes the foundation of his conduct even under precarious circumstances. Thompson points out that the focus of this pericope is neither the adversities Paul faces nor his appreciation of eschatology. The focus is on his conviction and certainty in spite of the volatility surrounding his personal circumstances.⁸⁹ In 1:27-30, Paul demands of his community that their lifestyles be fitting and in accord with the gospel of Jesus Christ. In a call for transformation, he tells them to '*Only, live your life in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ...*' (Phil. 1:27). Finally, in the

89. James W. Thompson, *Pastoral Ministry According to Paul*, 45.

concluding section of Philippians, Paul enjoins the community to operationalize the transformed existence (4:4–8) of which he is a model (4:9–20). He writes:

Finally, beloved, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is pleasing, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence and if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. Keep on doing the things that you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, and the God of peace will be with you (Phil. 4:8–9).

Evidently, Paul’s ministry was aimed at transformation. Transformation formed the basis of his pastoral work. His intent was that through the empowering Spirit of God these Christians would cultivate a life characterized by these noble values. He desired their hearts and minds to be saturated by these ideals, and he wanted their moral choices to be influenced by these virtues.

Paul’s Vision of Ministry in Romans

Scarcely would anyone associate the book of Romans with ministry. Traditionally characterized as the compendium of Paul’s theology,⁹⁰ the book of Romans is considered more as fodder for systematic theologians rather than practical theologians. Johnson describes the book of Romans as “unmistakably scholastic, with an air of detachment that challenges the simplistic identification of purpose and meaning.”⁹¹ Powell considers Romans as “the single most influential book of the Bible for development of Christian doctrine and theology.”⁹² The major themes associated with Romans include: ‘Righteousness of God,’ ‘Justification by Faith,’ ‘Obedience of Faith,’ ‘Universal Availability of Salvation,’ ‘Death

90. In my Advanced Introduction to New Testament class at ACU, this is my recollection of how Dr. Thompson described the book of Romans.

91. Luke Timothy Johnson, *The Writings of the New Testament*. 3rd. ed. (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2010), 303.

92. Mark Allan Powell, *Introducing the New Testament: A Historical, Literary, and Theological Survey* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academics, 2009), 255.

and Resurrection,’ ‘God and Israel,’ and so on.⁹³ Rarely are traces of a vision of ministry picked up in Romans’ intricate theological and legal argumentation.

Contrary to the general assumptions about Romans, Thompson perceptively isolates pastoral theology as germanely interwoven into the epistle’s theological fabric. Themes like ‘Justification by Grace through Faith,’ he opines, provides a watershed of pastoral theology and it speaks to God’s readiness and willingness to embrace and forgive those who pursue a relationship with him through Jesus Christ by faith. Thus, the inability of readers of Romans to discern a pastoral vision is their fault, not his. The ministry telos of Romans is deeply embedded in the structure of the letter from the beginning to the end (1:1–17; 15:14–16:27). Paul connects his ministry with the eventual formation and transformation of Gentiles.

His ministry ambition which also informed his theology was a change in culture by the community he so diligently served. In 15:18, Paul states, “*For I will not venture to speak of anything except what Christ has accomplished through me to win obedience from the Gentiles, by word and deed.*” He was not only interested in sharing the gospel with them, but he also believed that the internalization of the message by his community was an essential part of his ministry. Indeed, for him, the only legitimate claim to any achievement was not in their conversion, but their transformation. This was the telos of his ministry.

In 12:1–15:13, we find a fitting climax to Paul’s entire enterprise in the book of Romans. The telos of all the previous heavy theological treatise leads up the statement of his pastoral intent. To him, the most appropriate response to everything God shows us in human history, the nation of Israel, and the promised Messiah is a transformed existence. God ministers to humanity so that humanity can “*present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy*

93. Mark Allan Powell, *Introducing the New Testament*, 262–7.

and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Do not to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds, so that you may discern what the will of God – what is good and acceptable and perfect” (12:1–2). Paul’s vision for his community is that they will be so formed in Christ such that they will not conform but will be transformed. Apparently, Paul did not teach and preach to merely convert them. His ultimate goal was for these converts to transition from their previous way of life to a new way of living. He immediately identifies the new way of life with a new orientation towards the self (12:3). A transformed life is other-centered, not self-centered. This reorientation of self toward others serves as the foundation for self-control.

It is evident from the foregoing that the book of Romans affirms Paul’s telos of ministry as formation and transformation. There is a perceptible intersection between the presentation of his mission (1:5; 15:15–20) and his pastoral goals. His goal is to prepare his Gentile community and present them as acceptable and sanctified by the Holy Spirit at the appearing of Christ (15:16) and that the people he ministered to would be transformed into the image of the Son of God. I concur with Thompson who observes, “Ministry is not done in isolation, and the goal of the pastor is not only the well-being of the individual. The goal of ministry is to ensure that individuals discover the resources for transformation within the community and that corporate well-being is the goal of the pastor.”⁹⁴

Paul’s Vision of Ministry in Galatians

Paul’s letter to the Galatians has been rightly described as “intense and combative” (Gal. 3:1).⁹⁵ Galatians is locus classicus of a polemic. One might even discern an apologetic

94. James W. Thompson, *Pastoral Ministry According to Paul*, 118.

95. Mark Allan Powell, *Introducing the New Testament*, 307.

dimension to the letter. In the letter Paul vehemently opposes a group of people who were beguiling the Christians with misrepresentations of some basic tenets of the Christian faith. The Galatians did not seem to offer any resistance to the contrary doctrine that was introduced to them. Paul appeared simultaneously disappointed and furious, and he was not charitable with his words. He went as far as describing the covenant community as fools: “*You foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you? It was before your eyes that Jesus Christ was publicly exhibited as crucified!*” (Gal. 3:1).

At face value, one might recognize Paul as defending the Christian against the onslaught from the Judaizers. This observation is correct; however, the begging question asks the following: What is Paul’s goal in his response? What is his response supposed to achieve? Is he only interested in preserving doctrinal integrity of the Christian faith, or is there something more? Since false doctrine poses a danger to spiritual formation and transformation, Thompson indicates that the apostle Paul responded to the issues in this way in order to avert the threat that false doctrines portend to transformation.⁹⁶ The apostle feared that the new formula of doctrine being forced down the throat of these recent converts from paganism might derail, disrupt, and distort his vision of formation and transformation for them.

Paul was afraid the function of a new doctrinal formulation would diminish the dependence of the community on the transformative power and activity of the Spirit of God among them. His fears can be discerned from his words: “*The only thing I want to learn from you is this: Did you receive the Spirit by doing the works of the law or by believing what you heard? Are you so foolish? Having started with the Spirit, are you now ending with the flesh?*”

96. James W. Thompson, *Pastoral Ministry According to Paul*, 62.

Did you experience so much for nothing? – if it really was for nothing” (Gal. 3:2–4). His constant contrast between the Spirit and the flesh, believing and doing are extremely instructive.

Admittedly, there is a lot before and behind the text that we are not privy to. However, if the principle; “the line of defense of reveals the line of attacks anything to go by,” we may surmise that Paul’s combative and intense words were meant to defend the means of Christian transformation over the right formulation of doctrine, as important as right doctrine is. Thus, in the epistle to the Galatians, I am convinced that Paul most dreaded the danger the false teachings posed to his ministry vision of formation and transformation. The Judaizers offered a formula which elevated human action and performance as a means of spiritual formation and transformation over Paul’s teaching about God’s provision through the empowering Spirit of God.

Paul was combative because the telos of his ministry to the Galatians was in jeopardy. Since morality is not legislated, no legal regime has ever succeeded in transforming any society. Human transformation is the preserve and prerogative of the Spirit of God (Rom. 8). Any doctrinal formulation which purports otherwise is a usurpation of the Spirit of God’s privileged position and must be vehemently opposed. The gospel represents not only the power of God unto salvation to those who believe but also the power of God unto transformation for those who trust and obey. The apostle needed to make that truth abundantly clear because this truth was the motivation for his life and ministry.

Pauline Images as Indicative of His Telos of Ministry

Paul's use of images and metaphors in his letters assist in discerning his telos of ministry.⁹⁷ Through the images and metaphors, it becomes evident the apostle was interested in the spiritual growth and development of his people. In 1Thess. 2:11, Paul imagines his role as that of a loving father responsible for instructing, training, and disciplining his offsprings into a life worthy of God. In other words, as a father, Paul had the duty of spiritually socializing his family into the norms and values of God's family (Deut. 6:4–9). He wrote, *“As you know, we dealt each one of you like a father with his children, urging and encouraging you and pleading that you lead a life worthy of God, who calls you into his own kingdom and glory”* (1 Thess. 2:11–12). As a father figure, Paul was invested in the formation and transformation of the new Christians in Thessalonica. Fathers do not only tell their children what they should believe, they also teach and model for them how to live.

Paul uses the same image in his first letter to the church at Corinth. In 1 Cor. 4:14–21, the apostle says:

“I am not writing this to make you ashamed, but to admonish you as my beloved children. For though you might have ten thousand guardians in Christ, you do not have many fathers. Indeed, in Christ Jesus I became your father through the gospel. I appeal to you, then, be imitators of me. For this reason, I sent you Timothy, who is my beloved and faithful child in the Lord, to remind you of my ways in Christ Jesus, as I teach them every church. But some of you, thinking that I am not coming to you, have become arrogant. But I will come to you soon, if the Lord wills, and I will find out not the talk of these arrogant people but their power. For the kingdom of God depends not on talk but on power. What would you prefer? Am I to come to you with a stick, or with love in a spirit of gentleness?”

One cannot miss the copious familial imagery and metaphors in this passage. The Corinthians were his “beloved children,” and he was their “father through the gospel.”

97. Jonathan W. Lo, “Pastoral Theology in the Letters of Paul: The Basis for Paul's Pastoral Responsibility.” Hill Road (2014), 5.

Consequently, it was his place to admonish them and serve as their primary model for social learning. Paul presented himself as a model worthy of imitation. He threatened to use his legitimate power as a father in disciplining them, using corporeal punishment. Such paternal functions and expectations were normal in both Jewish and Greco-Roman cultures. The necessity of a pater in the community of mostly Gentile Christians was even more significant given the moral baggage these new Christians carried over into Christianity. Thus, by employing the paternal self-characterization, Paul declared his vision of ministry to this community.

In antiquity, the paternal imagery or metaphor was associated with transformation. Therefore, by applying the paternal imagery to himself, Paul indicates that his mission among this Christian community is to form and transform them from a state of “immaturity, ignorance, irrationality into responsible adulthood.”⁹⁸ Just like every father, Paul was not content to see his children perpetually garbed in bibs. He desired to eventually see his children adorn themselves in aprons, ready to function in the kitchen of the spiritual life.⁹⁹ He wanted to see his community fully equipped to participate in the mission, life, and character of God. His vision of ministry with the church at Corinth as with the rest of the congregations he founded focused on formation and transformation. His writings, visits, and the way he related with them were not only geared toward maintaining their status as converts but more so on growing and maturing into Christ.

98. Trevor J. Burke, “Mother, Father, Infant, Orphan, Brother: Paul’s Variegated Pastoral Strategy Towards his Thessalonian Church Family.” *Paul as Pastor* (Bloomsbury: T&T Clark, 2018), 133.

99. I am indebted to Chris McCurly, former pulpit minister at Oldham Lane Church of Christ in Abilene, Texas for the bib and apron images.

To complete the parental imagery, Paul also imagined himself as a mother, specifically, a nurturing mother. In 1 Thess. 2:7–8, Paul indicates that he tempered his legitimate apostolic demands of the church at Thessalonica because of the maternal instincts and affection he felt for the church. Just as a mother so easily sacrifices the gratification of her legitimate needs for the good of her children, Paul was willing to do same for the community. He went beyond the sharing of gospel to investing and sharing himself with the church. Burke remarks:

That Paul should employ female imagery is (in one sense) fitting, because mothers in the ancient world were responsible for nurturing and weaning neonates... In all this, Paul is no paper apostle who can be confined to the passages of Scripture, but like Jesus (e.g. Mark 10:45; Jn. 1:14), of whom he was a follower, his service and pastoral ministry were essentially incarnational and cruciform in shape, manifested in the sacrificial giving of himself in the service of those to whom he had been called.¹⁰⁰

Further evidence of Paul’s telos of ministry is discernable in many of his other epistles, and they are replete with language relating to maturity and growth. For instance, in Col. 1:28–29, he states that his preaching and teaching is for the explicit purpose of presenting “*everyone mature in Christ*,” adding that, “For this I toil and struggle with all the energy that he powerfully inspires within me.” A similar language appears in Col. 4:12. The word rendered ‘mature’ is a Greek adjective which means, “perfect,” or when in a moral context, “fully developed.”¹⁰¹ Thus, Paul’s ministry was not only about evangelism and conversion; instead, his end goal was focused on the total, wholistic, complete moral and spiritual development of those in the covenant community.

100. Trevor J. Burke, “Mother, Father, Infant, Orphan, Brother.” 130–1.

101. Wesley J. Perschbacher, *The New Analytical Greek Lexicon* (Peabody: Henderickson, 1990), 404.

In 1 Cor. 14:20, Paul writes, “*Brothers and sisters, do not be children in your thinking; rather, be infants in evil, but in your thinking be adults.*” Contextually, Paul was speaking to prudence in the exercise of spiritual gifts in certain social situations. Nonetheless, his growth and maturity motifs are discernable.¹⁰² A similar growth and maturity emphasis may be excavated in his letter to the Ephesians. In Eph. 4:14–15, he states: “We must no longer be children, tossed to and fro and blown about by every wind of doctrine, by people’s trickery, by their craftiness in deceitful scheming. But speaking the truth in love, we must grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ.” Finally, in Galatians Paul utilizes imagery of human gestation to highlight the extent to which he is willing to go for the sake of their formation and transformation in Christ. In Gal, 4:19, he writes, “My little children, for whom I am again in the pain of childbirth until Christ is formed in you.”

Conclusion

This chapter has focused on establishing a theological and biblical basis for spiritual formation and transformation. Contrary to the prevailing ministry orientation among the Churches of Christ in Ghana which is inordinately fixated on evangelism and conversion, we have discerned from the ministry of Jesus and Paul that ministry is more than just evangelizing and converting people into the church. Rather, the ministry of Jesus and Paul are abundantly clear that the aim of their ministry is to form and transform people through the teaching and preaching of the word and through the empowering Holy Spirit so that they can participate in the life, character, and mission of God.

From the teachings of Jesus, particularly in the Sermon on Mount, it is evident that Jesus seeks to elevate and direct those in the kingdom of God to an alternative way of

102. Jonthan W. Lo, “Pastoral Theology in the Letters of Paul, 5.

thinking and living that is diametrically apart from the popular culture. Jesus introduced his hearers to the constitution of the kingdom which demanded of them deeper and higher levels of spirituality. He called those in the kingdom to be perfect just as his Father in heaven is perfect. From the letters of Paul, even those traditionally considered polemics, we can discern from the language, images, and metaphors that his desire and vision of ministry was that his community be transformed and mature in Christ. Therefore, it is abundantly evident that the church has a critical role to play in this aspiration. The church must share in this aspiration.

Indeed, the church in Ghana must become aware that she exists for the specific purpose of spiritual formation and transformation of the community. I concur with Tan when he asserts that the church ought to be preoccupied with spiritual formation. Reasoning from Ephesians 4:12–13, he says that the goal of ministry in the church is to prepare God’s people for the works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ, or to be conformed to the likeness of Christ (Rom. 8:29). He concludes that “Maturing in Christ or becoming like Jesus or spiritual formation in Christ is therefore the ultimate goal of a local church.”¹⁰³

Wilhoit unequivocally agrees with Tan and insists that “Spiritual formation is the task of the church, Period.”¹⁰⁴ He remarks that spiritual formation should neither be perceived as interesting, optional, or trendy by the church, nor as an insignificant category in the job description of the body of Christ. Rather, the church must perceive spiritual formation and

103. Ruth Haley Barton, et al., “Spiritual Formation in the Church,” *Journal of Spiritual Formation and Soul Care* 7, no. 2 (November 2014): 292–311, <https://doi.org/10.1177/193979091400700212>, 293.

104. Jim Wilhoit, *Spiritual Formation as if the Church Mattered* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academics, 2008), 15.

transformation as being at the heart of her whole existence. The church must recognize that she was formed to form.¹⁰⁵ For Diane Chandler, spiritual formation must form the telos of the church's vision and mission. Otherwise, the church becomes more like a social club than the very body of Christ and is at the mercy of various social upheavals leave her immature, impotent, and living below her spiritual potentials and privileges.¹⁰⁶

The leadership retreat is a response and a reaction of campus churches affiliated with the Churches of Christ in Ghana. It is a response to the inertia of the mainstream congregation and to the responsibility owed to members in relation to their formation and transformation. Campus churches recognize the necessity of making formation and transformation the telos of ministry. The challenge is how to get the mainstream congregations to make the shifts needed to accommodate this biblical and theological imperative of the church.

The next chapter provides the methodology for the study, highlighting the processes and procedures to be employed. Additionally, it provides more detailed information about the leadership retreat. Theological and biblical themes which appear in the content of the retreat will be outlined to help readers appreciate what goes into the retreat.

105. Ruth Haley Barton et al., "Spiritual Formation in the Church," *Journal of Spiritual Formation and Soul Care* 7, no. 2 (November 2014): 292–311, <https://doi.org/10.1177/193979091400700212>, 296.

106. *Ibid.*, 296.

CHAPTER FOUR

METHODOLOGY

This project was a program evaluation. It sought to gather, analyze, and interpret data about the biannual leadership retreats in a systematized manner such that a conclusion may be drawn in respect of its spiritual formative value or effect.¹⁰⁷ Based on the results, a case would be made for a shift in the telos of ministry among the Churches of Christ in Ghana, a shift from a theology of ministry that elevates evangelism and conversion over spiritual formation and transformation to one that makes spiritual formation and transformation a legitimate telos of ministry consistent with the telos of ministry in the New Testament.

Research Design

This project was a qualitative study utilizing semi-structured interviews. According to Sensing, interviews provide respondents room to express and describe their circumstances, and to “put words to their interior lives, personal feelings, opinions, and experiences that otherwise are not available to the researcher by observation.”¹⁰⁸ Additionally, interviews are well suited for individualized stories, views, and inclusivity. They also make covert constructs like attitudes, personal feelings, and interpretations more accessible. However, information gleaned from interviews must not be misconstrued as “objective truth.”¹⁰⁹

107. Tim Sensing, *Qualitative Research: A Multi-Methods Approach to Projects for Doctor of Ministry Theses* (Eugene: Wipf & Stock, 2011), 70. Kindle.

108. Sensing, *Qualitative Research*, 102.

109. Nancy T. Ammerman, Jackson W. Carroll, Carl S. Dudley, and William McKinney, *Studying Congregations: A New Handbook*, (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1998), 208.

Population and Sample

Individuals who have participated in the leadership retreat organized by the Church of Christ Campus Ministry at the University of Cape Coast, Ghana, since 2016 formed the population for this project.

A purposive sampling method was used to select participants for the project. Also known as judgment sampling, the purposive sampling technique is utilized when a researcher deliberately chooses participants in a study based on some peculiar qualities, characteristics, and information at their disposal.¹¹⁰ Since the retreat is not open to the generality of members of the campus churches, it was prudent that those who had participated and demonstrated or exhibited behaviors, characteristics, and qualities consistent with the aspirations of the retreat were the study's focus. Beyond their overt characteristics and qualities, some participants are more willing and able than others to articulate and put to words their experiences. Thus, these individuals with the potential to offer rich information pertinent to the study were strategically invited to voluntarily participate in the study. Indeed, purposive sampling is a nonrandom technique which does not rely on a foundation theory, nor is it limited to a certain number of participants. The qualities of individuals within a population who can be purposively sampled include those who are observant, reflective, able, and willing to express and share their knowledge on the subject-matter being investigated or researched.

Although random and probabilistic sampling methods provide a greater safeguard against biases and increases the extent of generalizability of results than nonrandom approaches like purposive sampling, randomization is not always the most practicable and

110. Ma Dolores C. Tongco, "Purposive Sampling as a Tool for Informant Selection." *Ethnobotany Research & Applications*, 5:147–158 (2007), 147. Accessed March 23, 2023.

effective process.¹¹¹ In spite of its susceptibility to biases, purposive sampling is recognized for churning out reliable and robust data.¹¹² Part of its strength as a technique lies in its propensity for intentional bias.¹¹³ Often associated with the social sciences, it also has utility value in the natural sciences. A down side of this technique, however, is the heavy dependence on the assumed competence and reliability of the participants in relation to the information they purport to have. The quality of the study may be compromised if the participants ended up flattering to deceive.

In relation to the sample size, given the potential of interviews to generate tons a great deal of data since interviewees may not be restricted in terms of their responses to the interview questions, a large sample size may generate data which may be overwhelming in terms of analysis. More so, in qualitative research, valuable data is not necessarily a function of the number of participants. We do not need more simply for the sake of more. After all, it is valuable data that contributes to the generation of knowledge, not enormous data.¹¹⁴

Beyond the fact that a small sample size keeps data within manageable limits thereby allowing for deeper levels of analyses and also providing a timeous completion of the project, reality suggests is that not all those who have participated in the retreat are observant, reflective, expressive, and willing to provide the concrete, accurate, and content-rich responses that this study required. By nature, Ghanaians are perceived to be passive and reserved. Thus, even though many people have participated in the retreat, few will be

111. Ma Dolores C. Tongco, "Purposive Sampling as a Tool for Informant Selection.", 154

112. Ibid. 154.

113. Ibid., 154.

114. Patricia Leavy, *Research Design: Quantitative, Qualitative, Mixed Methods, Arts-Based, and Community-Based Participatory Research Approaches* (New York: The Guilford Press, 2018), 78.

comfortable participating in the project. Introspection and self-disclosure are not cultural norms and is a contributing factor to the smaller sample size.

Participants

A total of 15 retreat participants from six campus churches were interviewed for this study. Out of the total participants, eight were females constituting 53%, while seven were males making up 47% of participants. In terms of institutional affiliation, eight of the participants were affiliated with Church of Christ Campus Ministry at the University of Cape Coast (CCCM–UCC), three from the Church of Christ at the University of Ghana (UG, Accra), and 1 each from University of Professional Studies, Accra (UPSA), University of Mines and Technology (UMaT, Tarkwa), University of Education, Winneba (UEW, Winneba), and Central University (CU, Accra) campus churches. The chronological age of participants ranged between 24 to 32 years. The age in Christ of participants, which is a reference to the time since their baptism also ranged between 8 to 17 years. The number of times participants had attended the retreat ranged between as few as twice to as many as 11. Indeed, one of them had attended every retreat since 2016 till date.

Instrumentation

A self-made, semi-structured set of interview questions was used to elicit data from the participants. This meant that specific themes, issues, and predetermined questions were based on the project’s purpose statement and that followed a certain pattern were developed for the interviews. However, there was room for follow-up questions which were predicated or influenced by the interviewees’ responses. Interviews were deemed more appropriate because of their conversational orientation.¹¹⁵ From experience, emerging adults in campus

115. Patricia Leavy, *Research Design*, 139.

churches affiliated with Churches of Christ in Ghana are positively predisposed to conversations; therefore, this method drew on an approach they are already accustomed to.

Data Collection Procedure

Those who participated in the retreat had a WhatsApp page on which they interact and engage among themselves quite frequently.¹¹⁶ This made a majority of the population available in a virtual location. Even though most are still in Ghana, others have travelled outside of Ghana either to further their education or to seek vocational opportunities and prospects. Consequently, I posted information about the nature and benefits of the project on the WhatsApp social media platform.

Volunteers demonstrated their interest by contacting the researcher privately. Subsequently, a new WhatsApp page was created for those who volunteered to participate in the study. Informed Consent Forms (ICF) were sent to them via email. Volunteers indicated their readiness to participate in the study by signing and returning the informed consent form. Upon receipt of the ICF (Appendix A), the participants received individual appointments for the interviews. The interview protocol was comprised of open-ended questions that were adhered to unless a participants response necessitated a follow-up question.

Participants were interviewed in January and February, 2024. The interviews were recorded using an Olympus Digital Voice Recorder VN-7200, were later transcribed by a professional, and subsequently analyzed using the NVivo 14 software. To increase the richness and robustness of the data, a focus group discussion was conducted via Zoom on March 10, 2014, at around 9:30pm GMT. We anticipated that the focus group discussion

116. WhatsApp is a social media platform owned by WhatsApp Incorporated of Mountain View, California. It is a free application available internationally that is used for both talk and text utilizing mobile telephony infrastructure. It came on the market in 2009.

would engender deeper levels of expression and recollection of experiences, attitudes, and emotions as it related to the retreat. Seven out of the 15 participants--five females and two males--were able to join the Zoom call. Difficulties with schedules hindered the rest from participating.

The discussion included cross-breeding and cross-fertilization of ideas and experiences. Demographic differences and similarities stirred meaningful dialogue that resulted in well-baked responses and experiences. The focus group discussion offered views from different angles and perspectives. However, to be fair, focus group discussions have some potential pitfalls. They may inhibit open and honest expression due to reduced levels of confidentiality and privacy, or participants may offer chorus answers due to the fear of standing alone or of one participant hijacking the conversation. There might also be emotional outbursts for which the group may be unprepared. These notwithstanding, effective and efficient moderation and rules of engagement that are clearly stipulated and communicated before the group activity may mitigate against pitfalls.

Data Analysis

The data collected were analyzed thematically. Reflexive thematic analysis (RTA) is considered “easily accessible and theoretically flexible interpretative approach to qualitative data analysis.”¹¹⁷ RTA allows for the identification, categorization, and analysis of patterns or themes in a given qualitative data set. It is considered flexible because it is amenable to varying approaches. Specifically, RTA is capable of utilizing three main continua within

117. Virginia Braun and Victoria Clarke, “Thematic Analysis.” in *APA Handbook of Research Methods in Psychology*, eds. Harris Cooper, et al. (Washington, DC: American Psychological Association, 2012), 57-71.

qualitative research approaches: inductive versus deductive or theory-driven data coding and analysis, experiential versus critical orientation, and an essentialist versus constructionist.

When a researcher chooses the inductive or data-driven approach to data coding and analysis, codes produced reflect directly from the content of the data set and are devoid of a preconceived theory or conceptual frame-work. The deductive approach or ‘theory-driven’, on the other hand, produces codes in relation to a pre-advertised conceptual framework. In such a case, both coding and analysis are analyst-driven rather than content-driven. Codes generated and analysis performed reflect more on an undergirding theoretical framework and not necessarily on the data set under consideration.¹¹⁸

In experiential orientation to data analysis, priority is given to the unique ways participants experienced the phenomenon being investigated, including the meanings they assign to these experiences. Even though thoughts, feelings, and experiences are subjectively recounted, the researcher employing this approach would be expected to defer to the meaning and meaningfulness attributed to the experience by the participant. Conversely, in the critical orientation, a researcher approaches and analyzes data “as if it were constitutive, rather than reflective of participants’ personal state.”¹¹⁹ The intent of the critical approach is to question patterns and themes of meaning from a theoretical understanding that language creates and not merely reflect a given social reality.¹²⁰ In the critical approach, a researcher may attempt to investigate the mechanisms underlying participants’ construction or development of

118. David Byrne, “A Worked Example of Braun and Clarke’s Approach to Reflexive Thematic Analysis,” *Quality and Quantity* 56, no. 3 (2021): 1391–1412, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11135-021-01182-y>, 1396.

119. *Ibid.*, 1396.

120. Gareth Terry, et al., “Thematic Analysis.” In: Carla Willig and Wendy Stainton Rogers, *The Sage Handbook of Qualitative Research in Psychology* (London: Sage, 2017), 17-37.

systems of meaning and in so doing interpret or second-guess the meanings engendered by participants.

In essentialism, a researcher uses a unidirectional appreciation of the correlation between language and communicated experience, such that it is assumed language is a natural reflection of expressed meanings and experiences. Consequently, meanings that are attached to systems in developing these meanings are largely uninterrogated. Those of the constructionist perspective prefer a bidirectional appreciation of the language/experience dichotomy, insisting that language is implied in the social construction and reconstruction of both meaning and experience.

This study proceeded on the basis of an inductive, experiential, and essentialist continua. This means that analysis was data-driven and that codes generated and analyses performed were based directly on a reflection on the content of the data. Furthermore, priority was placed on the unique experiences of participants at the leadership retreat and the subjective meanings, feelings, thoughts they attributed to these experiences. Additionally, this study took for granted the relationship between language and communicated experience and that language is a natural expression of unique meanings and experiences. Thus, no attempts were made to second-guess the participants in the study or superimpose any external interpretation on their thoughts, feelings, and experiences expressed in this study.

Coding was done semantically. This means that codes were identified through explicit or plain, unambiguous meanings of the data. The researcher did not have to engage in mirror-reading or reading-in-between the lines. The researcher did not go or look beyond the

participants' statements. The use of semantic codes is defined as descriptive analysis of the data, and the intent is to present the content of the data as expressed by participants.¹²¹

The NVivo 14 software was used to process and gather emerging themes, patterns, and commonalities based on the interview questions. A six-phase process was employed to facilitate the analysis, identification, and categorization of codes, themes, patterns, and attending to essential aspects of thematic analysis.¹²² While the six phases proceed in a logical sequence, the analysis is not a linear process of moving through the phases. "Rather, the analysis is recursive and iterative, requiring the researcher to move back and forth through the phases as necessary."¹²³ Below is a summary of the six phases of RTA.

Phase One: Familiarization with the Data

This first phase involves the reading and rereading the transcribed data set in its entirety for the express purpose of becoming intimately conversant and familiar with the data. This phase is critical for identifying relevant and appropriate information that correlates with the research questions or whatever the case might be. In the case of audio recordings, familiarization can be done by actively listening to each interview recording. A researcher may take notes as part of the familiarization phase.

Phase Two: Generating Initial Codes

Codes are pithy, shorthand descriptive and sometimes interpretative labels which encapsulate information relevant to the research or interview questions. Codes form the basis

121. David Byrne, "A Worked Example of Braun and Clarke's Approach to Reflexive Thematic Analysis," 1397.

122. Virginia Braun and Victoria Clarke, "Thematic Analysis," 60.

123. David Byrne, "A Worked Example of Braun and Clarke's Approach to Reflexive Thematic Analysis," 1397.

of generating themes and are developed when the researcher attends equitably to the entire data set, identifying aspects of data that is germane to the generation of themes. Codes are technically brief, yet sufficient enough to independently inform underlying similarities among constituent data sets in relation to research questions.

Phase Three: Generating Themes

This phase begins after initial codes have been generated, when attention shifts from interpreting individual data items (codes) within the dataset, to interpreting aggregated meaning and meaningfulness across the dataset. Themes and sub-themes are formed when coded data is reviewed and analyzed to show how varying codes may be combined based on shared meanings. Themes may be distinctive and even contradictory; however, they should cohere to offer a clear idea and picture of data set.

Phase Four: Reviewing Potential Themes

At this phase, the researcher assesses and evaluates potential themes in relation to coded items and entire dataset. Themes which are deemed irrelevant or redundant in terms of their contribution to meaningful interpretation of data or possession of information which addresses research questions are culled. Two levels of review are carried out at this phase. Level one reviews the relationships within data items and codes that inform each theme and sub-theme. Level two review themes in relation to data set. Themes are assessed for their aptness regarding interpretation of data in relation to research questions.

Phase Five: Defining and Naming Themes

The task in phase five offers an in-depth analysis of the thematic framework. Each of the themes and sub-themes are developed in relation to the dataset and the research question(s). Each theme functions to provide a coherent and internally consistent account of the data. Together, all themes function to paint a lucid picture that is congruent with the

content of the dataset and informative in relation to the research question(s). This phase requires deep analysis of underlying data items.

Phase Six: Producing the Report

The final phase of reflexive thematic analysis is the production of the report. Like the other phases, producing the report can be a fluid recursive process. As and/or when codes and themes change and evolve over the course of analysis, so too can the report. Changes along the way are recorded in informal notes and memos. A research journal is kept for this purpose. Thus, phase six is perceived as the completion and final inspection of the report the researcher began at the inception of the research.

Interview Questions

1. How many times have you participated in the leadership retreat?
2. What are your general impressions about the leadership retreat?
3. In what ways has the retreat contributed to your spiritual growth and maturity?
4. What specific activity/biblical truth at the retreat has helped you the most?
5. Would this spiritual progress have been possible with the traditional ministry orientation among the Churches of Christ in Ghana?
6. How can the leadership retreat be improved for future participants?

A Brief History About the Leadership Retreat

During the 2011/2012 academic year, this researcher was selected to lead the Church of Christ campus ministry at the University of Cape Coast. I was a final year B.Sc. Psychology student at the time. Prior to enrolling at UCC, I had graduated from the Swedru International Bible Institute (SIBI) with a diploma in Bible and Ministry.¹²⁴ Thus, I came to this role with some formal training in ministry and spiritual leadership. However, the team I was going to work with comprised individuals with no formal training in ministry and/or leadership. Not only was I older than all of them, there was also gap in knowledge and

¹²⁴. This school is affiliated with Sunset International Bible Institute in Lubbock, Texas. The school was established in Ghana around 2001, and I graduated in July 2006.

experience. I felt at the time that these gaps between the team and I could pose a significant challenge to group cohesion and aspirations.

Consequently, to bridge the knowledge and experience gap, I liaised with the preaching school to organize a three-day retreat for the team in order to introduce them to the biblical and theological basis of spiritual leadership and other essential competencies necessary for success in discharging our responsibilities as leaders of our congregation. The director of the preaching school, Dr. David C. Essuman, and I served as facilitators for the maiden edition. While participants paid for their transportation to and fro, I paid for their meals for the entire period. The preaching school allowed us to use their classrooms, dormitories, and utilities free of charge. My elder sister, Helena Adu-Saforo, cooked for us, and she has continued doing so until now.

My tenure as leader of the congregation ended in 2012 when I graduated. However, the first experience was positive to the extent that even in my absence, the next group of leaders went for the retreat. Between May 2012 and July 2013, I served as a National Service Personnel (NSP) at the Counselling Center at the University of Cape Coast. In August 2013, I gained admission into Abilene Christian University, originally to do graduate work in Counselling Psychology, but ended up in their Master of Divinity program. I returned to Ghana in June 2015 to continue the rest of my studies online so that I could be with my family. In October 2015, I was appointed the first resident minister of the UCC campus church. After assuming duties with the church, the leadership retreat was reintroduced for the same purpose as the initial one: to shore up the biblical and theological knowledge of the young people and continuously form and improve their level of spirituality.

The first retreat after my return was held in August 2016. Like previously, the retreat was limited to leaders of the UCC campus church. The total initial number of participants

were around 20 individuals. However, over time and given the positive reviews that the retreat received, there were suggestions that leaders from other campus churches be invited to participate in the program. Consequently, from an initial participant of about 20 from one institution, the numbers increased to between 70 and 100 participants drawn from about six other sister institutions: University of Ghana (UG), University of Professional Studies, Accra (UPSA), University of Education, Winneba (UEW), University of Mines and Technology, Tarkwa (UMaT), Central University (CU), and Heritage Christian University College (HCUC). All these institutions joined through word-of-mouth invitations offered by previous attendees. We have also received participants with no institutional affiliation.

From a three-day program, the retreat is now a week long. The location remains on the premises of SIBI, and the format was expanded to cater for the additional days. Here is a summary of the main activities of each day. Day one is usually a Saturday. Participants arrive at the venue and settle into their modest accommodations. The accommodations at the preaching school cannot be described as comfortable; however, our participants make do with what we have. After dinner, we gather for our welcome activity that is geared towards breaking the ice and helping participants to feel at ease and at home. The activity is self-introduction; participants take turns to share their names, institutional affiliation, the role they play at their congregation, their relationship status, and whether they are dating or not.

After the self-introduction, anyone who has a question to ask anyone is free to do so. Beyond establishing rapport, the purpose of this activity is to encourage transparency, openness, candor, integrity, accountability, and frank communication as an expression of spirituality and leadership. We also learn both the value of vulnerability and how to laugh at ourselves. The life of the church includes pretention, hypocrisy, duplicity, deception, and lies. Leading by example, I openly disclose things about myself to the participants and encourage

them to do the same. I impress upon them that transformation occurs when we learn to stand in the light and avoid hiding our struggles and spiritual challenges, whatever they might be, and that we must revere God and not any human being such that we may be tempted to lie and hide the truth about who we are and what we are doing. Openness enhances accountability, and accountability promotes transformation.

On day two, which is usually a Sunday, we spend time worshipping with the local church that meets on the campus of the preaching school. Worship affords participants the opportunity to connect with God and the covenant community on the Lord's Day even when they are away from home. Through this worship, these college students and the local community engage in a healthy dialogue, and knowledge-sharing here is certainly an exchange of ideas and experiences.

Day three usually finds us in the classroom. From 8am to 10am, a facilitator leads participants to discuss a predetermined topic, breaking for brunch after the first classroom discussion. We move from the classroom, and, if the weather permits, we gather outdoors and eat together. After brunch, we return to the classroom to finish discussing the topic. Once finished, we break for siesta. At siesta, some sleep, others reconnect with family via their phones, and still others converse with friends. After dinner, we sit in the calm of the evening to digest and free-associate around the topic discussed. Participants ask probing practical and personal questions, mainly "how" questions. After the discussion we sing, pray, and then retire to bed.

Days four to six are no different from the other days except that we add fasting and prayers on Friday, the day of departure. The day we fast and pray is one of the significant days at the retreat. Many of the participants anticipate the day when we stir the Spirit of God by feeding on Him. We abstain from what sustains us physically so that we can be

empowered and strengthened in our inner being. We sing, pray, intercede, and supplicate. We focus intently to hear and see God's mighty hand in the circumstances of our lives. There are countless testimonies of the efficacy of the fasting prayers at the retreat. One remarkable testimony came from a participant who is now studying at Harvard for his PhD. He attributes this blessing to a challenge he threw to God during one of such fasting and prayers at the retreat. Closing and pre-departure formalities follow the fasting and prayers. Once all the announcements are said, the retreat is closed, and participants begin to file out enroute to their various congregations.

Profile of Themes for the Retreat

The express focus of the retreat is to prepare the next generation of spiritual leaders for the church in Ghana. One of the critical shortfalls of the current crop of leaders is the palpable spiritual anemia. There is no Spirit in spiritual leaders among the Churches of Christ in Ghana. Therefore, the retreat is intentional about making formation and transformation the telos of all activities and lessons. Below is a thematic profile which has characterized the retreat over the years:

- The Making of a Leader
- Why Spiritual Leaders Fall
- Spiritual Leadership
- Equipping for Discipleship
- Holiness
- A leader's Spiritual Life
- Ministerial Stress
- Overcoming Musturbation
- Ministry Maturity
- Self-Esteem
- Sexual Harassment
- Anger
- Lust
- Love
- Spiritual Leadership and Emotional Intelligence
- Stages of Faith Development

- Church Administration
- Church Growth
- The Judas Narrative
- Winning the Battle Against Sex
- Leadership and Vulnerability
- Finding Spiritual Renewal Through Greater Awareness of God
- Self-Awareness
- Sermon on the Mount
- Emotional-Spiritual Leadership
- The Spiritual Disciplines
- Forgiveness

Conclusion

This chapter was about the methodological foundation of the project. It recounted the key processes and procedures which were undertaken in relation to this study. The qualitative study utilized semi-structured interviews to collect data from former participants of the retreat. A total of 15 individuals were interviewed. The data was transcribed, and a thematic content analysis was done using the Nvivo software. Also, this chapter offered some further and better more specific particulars about the retreat. In the next chapter, I present the results of the analysis.

CHAPTER FIVE

RESULTS

This chapter presents the findings of the study. The study was a program evaluation which set out to evaluate the spiritual formative value of a biannual retreat organized for leaders of campus churches affiliated with Churches of Christ in Ghana. Results of this study would also provide a frame for interrogating the theological vision and telos of ministry of the Churches of Christ in Ghana. The following interview questions (IQ) guided the study:

IQ1: How many times have you participated in the leadership retreat?

IQ2: What are your general impressions about the leadership retreat?

IQ3: In what ways has the retreat contributed to your spiritual growth and maturity?

IQ4: What specific activity/biblical truths at the retreat has helped you the most?

IQ5: Would this spiritual progress have been possible with our traditional ministry orientation?

IQ6: How can the leadership retreat be improved for future participants?

The findings were categorized under four main themes with eleven sub-themes. The demographic characteristics of participants were presented first, followed by a thematic content analysis structure, a presentation of each theme, sub-theme, and a summary of the findings.

Demographic Characteristics of Participants

This study recruited participants who had previously participated in leadership retreats, and consisted of 15 study participants with eight females and seven males. The average age of participants was 27 years, and the average number of years participants had been in Christ was 11 years. All participants have attended the leadership retreat at least twice, and the majority of the participants are affiliated with the University of Cape Coast.

Table 2: Participant Demographics

Participant ID	Sex	Age	Age in Christ	Number of times	Institution
RP 1	M	26	10	Between 6-7	UG
RP 2	M	29	15	Not less than 4	UCC
RP 3	F	26	8	More than 5	UCC
RP 4	F	31	15	3	UCC
RP 5	F	26	9	2	UEW
RP 6	F	28	8	2	UCC
RP 7	F	29	9	9	UCC
RP 8	M	27	15	10-11 times	UCC
RP 9	F	30	16	6	UCC
RP 10	F	25	12	2-3 times	UG
RP 11	M	26	8	10	UPSA
RP 12	F	25	8	More than 3	CU
RP 13	M	24	10	2	UMaT
RP 14	M	32	17	13	UCC
RP 15	M	26	10	3-4x	UG

Note. The above table indicates the demographic information of each participant in the oral interviews. Each participant was assigned a unique identity code for the sake of maintaining their anonymity.

Thematic Content Analysis Structure

The researcher employed reflexive thematic content analysis to generate four themes and 11 sub-themes based on the research questions and the study objective. A descriptive

thematic coding was used to derive data from the transcripts after several readings. Sorting and coding were completed for all four major themes. The major themes were classified as themes as illustrated in Table 2 below.

General Impressions of Leadership Retreats

This theme elicited the general impressions participants held about the leadership retreats. Study participants expressed their initial perception and evaluation of the retreats using phrases like: *“It’s very educative, transformative and a means to learn more about Christ and leadership role in the church.”* All study participants’ assessment and evaluation of the leadership retreat were positive, as evidenced by the quotes below:

Table 3: Thematic Structure

THEMES	SUB-THEMES	CODES
General impression		GM
Efficacy of retreat as a formative Experience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Activities during Leadership Retreats • Influence of Leadership Retreats on Psycho-social Development • Influence of Leadership Retreats on Spiritual Maturity • Topics of Interest 	ERFE
Advocacy for new Theological Vision	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Opening up Participation of retreats • New resource Personnels • Ways to improve leadership retreat. • Challenges 	ANTV
Evaluating the Telos of the Ministry Among Churches of Christ in Ghana	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Campus church and Spiritual growth • Mainstream church and Spiritual growth • Orientation of Ministry in the mainstream and the campus church 	RTM

Note. Table 2 outlines the 4 major themes and the 11 subthemes.

Figure 1: Word Cloud on Participants' General Impressions about the Leadership Retreat



Note. The word cloud indicates the most frequently used words by participants during the interview for Interview Question 2.

“Generally, it has been a consistent learning platform because every time and the things we are impacted with, so every time I join, there is something new to learn” (RP 11).

“I think it's useful and it's achieving its purpose, and the purpose was training the youth in a Godly way and on the path that is right. And that was the impression I had when I attended for the first and second time” (Rp 5).

“Well, it is educative and informative as it is, it also very fun because it one of the few programs organized by any church of Christ in Ghana that considers fellowship. Initially I wasn't interested because I was very reluctant to take any leadership role in the church especially but after my first time seeing the structure of the lessons, the discussions and time with members of the church who are also members in tertiary schools, and how every student understands the Bible I realized that it was going to be helpful. And the retreat aspect of it is also very important because you are away from the general population of the church and this a very select few who will have the same basics so it's very helpful” (RP 4).

Others shared how these retreats have helped develop their spiritual life and leadership skills, this positive sentiment was shared among participants who have been attending for more than five years, and it's the reason why they come for the retreat every year.

“I think overall, the retreat has been a very good initiative, because the purpose of it is to train leaders. Personally, when I joined, I had just started my leadership service at the University of Ghana Legon, and I needed to develop my leadership skills and the retreat gave me that opportunity to lead a congregation. Apart from leading in the Church, it has helped me to lead in other secular spaces, for example in my educational pursuit, I seek to employ all the things I have learnt at the retreat to lead. We don't only learn about leadership but also spiritual development and that has also contributed to my spiritual development” (RP 15).

“I think to me coming for the retreats was a life changing event. The reason am saying this is that it transformed me from the way I used to be and gave me a new perspective about some of the things I thought. And so, hearing about it gave me the push to always go because it was really transforming me. It taught me a lot of moral values and especially my relationship with people, Christian. So, these were some of the reasons why I always felt like being there, and even up till now I feel like being part of it.” (RP 4)

“So, first of all, the primary objective is spiritual development which helps me in my spiritual development, and I achieve my objective when I go to the retreat” (RP 9).

“I think it provides an environment for me as an individual to reflect on myself and what I have been called to do in Christ which I usually do not think about, but throughout the retreat I am able to process my thoughts and realize that some of the things I go through doesn't just happen by chance but these are means that uses to me the direction I ought to take in terms of my ministry. There is the academic side of it where I have been able to learn a lot about leadership and who a leader should be. I really do not see myself as a leader in the church because, growing up I was reserved and thought leadership was for those who were outspoken, and the retreat gave me the opportunity to help develop myself to be better” (RP 14).

Although the retreat is oriented toward spiritual leadership development in campus churches, some participants shared how these retreats helped them develop psychosocially. They reported that through the retreat they have built relationships with colleagues from other institutions and served as an avenue for fun activities. They indicated below:

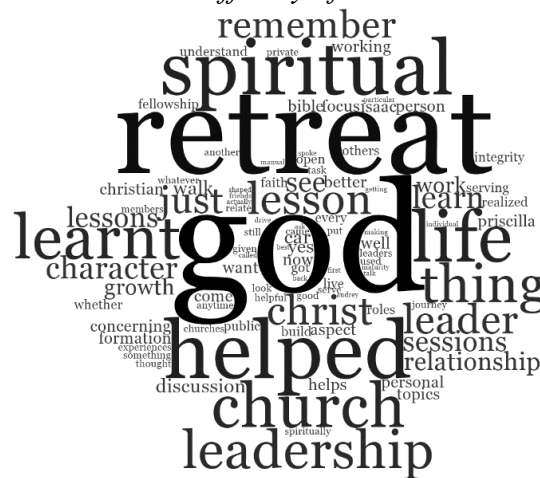
“I think it was a great avenue to learn and to meet people from other campuses who were occupying leadership positions and to get to know new people and to also learn more about the church and the Bible. So, in all it was very educative and fun experience” (RP 6).

“I think it helps build an individual's confidence and spirituality levels. It helps participants to fellowship with members from different campuses” (RP 13).

Efficacy of Retreat as a Formative Experience

This theme consists of four sub-themes and sought to assess the effectiveness of the leadership retreat in relation to spiritual formation and transformation. Participants were asked to share how these retreats had helped them in the process of spiritual maturity and to name activities at the retreat which supported their spiritual growth during leadership retreats, as well as theological themes or topics discussed during the leadership retreats which resulted in a spiritual shift for them.

Figure 2: Word Cloud on the theme Efficacy of Retreat as a Formative



Note. Figure 2 indicates the most frequently used vocabulary when participants were addressing interview question 3.

Activities During Leadership Retreats

This sub-theme evaluated the different aspects of leadership retreats which have had a significant influence on participants. The study participants provided insights into the effects of these activities on their spiritual formation and transformation. The majority of participants conveyed that the open discussion forum facilitated the sharing of difficult questions and provided them with solutions. Additionally, it enhanced their comprehension of various aspects of their lives and reassured them that they were not alone in those situations. Below are some quotes from participants:

“I would say has to do with the insights into questions and answers and then the open discussion breakout session that we have after a discussion where now we look at whatever lessons that has been taught can be applied in our everyday living. So that open forum discussion where we look at how those things that we discuss play a role in the campus ministry that we find ourselves in or out daily living. That sessions really help me because on those sessions I ask questions and the responses I receive from the facilitator helps me to better appreciate delivery during the lecture” (RP 1).

“Yes. It will be the discussions we have after the lectures. In one of those sessions, we asked a question that what keeps your faith or what keeps you going as a Christian? and there were a few answers and for that was important because there are instances where life gets hard, and you need something to keep your faith going and that question stuck with me” (RP 3).

“. . . ok so one other thing is the discussions. When it gets to that aspect, because confidentiality is cherished, we bring out our personal challenges and how to go about solving it. When you hear other people's challenges it helps you when are facing your challenges and because we are all in the same age bracket, we all have the same thinking or ideologies and am able to apply some of them in my life” (RP 9).

According to other participants, the prayer and fasting sessions of the retreats were their favorites because it helped them get closer to God. They narrated as follows:

“. . . with the prayer sessions and times of introspection, it has helped me improve spiritually and after participating in the retreat am able to assess myself and try to see whether they are helping me” (RP 14).

“The group sessions, I learned that I was not the only one struggling and also learnt from the achievements of other and I realized that it was also possible for me to become more like Christ. So, I think those sessions and fasting, and prayers also contributed to that” (RP 2).

Other participants also shared that the non-teaching aspects of the retreat such as the socialization part where they get to meet young people from other campuses enhanced their social development. They indicated that:

“A part from the non-teaching activities would be the socialization part. There are a lot of people who enjoyed that part a lot” (RP 8).

“I loved the singing part because it's part of us” (RP 3).

“I have made friends from different campus churches and am able to get access to different opportunities” (RP 13).

Influence of Leadership Retreats on Psycho-social Development

On this sub-theme, participants shared how these retreats have influenced their life and enhanced their psychosocial development. The following are some of the sentiments they expressed concerning the sub-theme:

“I think it helps build an individual’s confidence. For instance, my confidence when it comes to interactions and speaking in public” (RP 13).

“Well like I said, the fellowship part helped me develop good relationships with people who are members of the Lord's church. The journey to salvation is individual and God is going to judge his church but then having people you can talk to when your faith is shaken is very helpful” (RP 3).

“It helped me open a little more because I was very closed as well. I really got from the retreat, to allow myself to be open enough to make new friends and have people talk to me and trust me, because valuable friends who come to me for counsel thanks to the retreat. That's a very positive impact that it has had on me” (RP 8).

“It gives us the recognition that what we are doing matters, and you hear about what Christ has done in the life of people and it encourages you to do more” (RP 5).

The Influence of Retreat on Spiritual Maturity

The purpose of the leadership retreat is to facilitate spiritual leadership development, spiritual formation, and transformation. Consequently, this study aims to evaluate the extent to which these retreats influenced the spiritual development of the participants, as they articulate the diverse ways in which the retreats have enhanced their maturity in Christ.

Participant RP 1 narrated how the retreat has helped in his spiritual life and as a leader on campus:

“For me, the retreat has always served as a mirror to me for every period that I have participated at retreat, it becomes a daunting task on me to now look at how am going to help myself advance spiritually. For my spiritual formation, what the retreat does for me is that, It serves as a mirror for me to know whether I am on track because a lot of the times I serve and then I feel that maybe am struggling with a particular issue or I have a particular characteristics which is not good that I could work on, I tend to overlook it but whenever I go for the retreat it points these things out to me and it gives me that spirit of self-reflection for me to now reflect soberly on the topics and areas that we discussed and for me to now look at those areas that I might falter and then work at it. So, the retreat helps me to become a better version of myself, it helps

me to analyze and assess my spiritual journey and growth as young Christian, and it helps me to also see whether holistically I am achieving spiritual growth as a young Christian” (RP 1).

Similar sentiment was expressed by other participants, relating to how the retreat had influenced their spiritual development in terms of overcoming their fears and anger issues.

They narrated below:

“I was watching pornography. Truth be told that it was out of this retreat that I was to come out this. Am grateful for that. And all the time wherever I pass I use this opportunity to talk to people about that, but those are some of the things that we learnt. Whatever I learn I put it into my action, some people will be like, 'why don't you get angry', and it's because of some of the things I learnt at the retreat. maturity demands that when someone offends me, I need to try and understand why the person did that. So, the retreat has helped me to manage my anger” (RP 11).

“. . . during the leadership retreat, I've been able to contact resource persons regarding the weaknesses that I have” (RP 13).

“One of the segments on emotional intelligence has helped in terms of my spiritual growth as well. This has helped me to learn how to relate and understand people and also to know why they behave how they do and some of the reasons which accounts to certain character traits. I think whatever relationship I have with God should reflect on the way I relate to people, so it helps me particularly this lesson” (RP 14).

“I have learnt how to build on the strengths that I have and how to overcome fears which could hinder my progress in Christ” (RP 13).

Topics of Interest

During the leadership retreats, various topics are discussed. On this sub-theme, study participants shared which of these treated topics greatly influenced their lives as evident in the quotes below:

“. . . topics related to spiritual formation, spiritual maturity, and growth as a young leader and for me those topics always speak to me, and over the years I have seen him always being on a list covering topics related to that and usually part the retreats overview” (RP 1).

“Yes. I think spiritual leadership is one of the lessons I remember. There is a difference between being a spiritual leader and a leader in the secular space and I think that lesson impacted my journey very well. Then, there was this lesson that was delivered by Dr. Tawiah that had to do with the Christian perspective of the world view and that was also an interesting topic that impacted my life very much” (RP 15).

“I remember a particular topic we treated, and it was concerning church growth. At first, I used to think the numbers represented the growth of the church but at the retreat I understood that the numbers didn't necessarily mean growth but the attitude of the people in the church constituted the growth” (RP 4).

“The teaching on Judas, that even in leadership it's possible to have Judas among the leadership that may be affecting the entire church negatively.” (RP 8).

Advocacy for a New Theological Vision

This theme sought to identify new ways to improve leadership retreats. Study participants shared various ways to help improve the leadership retreats by opening participation to others beyond the campus churches. Additionally, new resource personnel were deemed essential to improving the retreat experience. They anticipate that these resources persons will bring on board fresh theological ideas and visions. Participants also identified challenges faced by the organization of these retreats.

Figure 3: Word Cloud on the theme *Advocacy for a new Theological Vision*



Note. Figure 3 shows the most frequently occurring words when participants were responding to Interview Question 4.

Opening Participation of Retreats

Participants expressed the need to expand the leadership retreat to include senior high school students. This, they argued, would enhance their readiness for leadership roles as they transition into tertiary education. Additionally, the participants suggested that the retreats

should be extended to local churches to foster a sense of community among the younger generation. Below are some narrations:

“I think having a version of it for senior high school in Ghana will help students shape and prepare their minds so that when such young people enter our universities and they are in level 100, they’re already exposed to the dynamisms of leadership retreat that are provided for young people who wish leaders or leaders of a campus ministry. In that way, they are already fine-tuned, and their minds are already trained in a way that they can even man up and pick up leadership positions in several campus ministries in Ghana. I think these areas are things I would want to see happening” (RP 1).

“It can be improved if we can level it down to our local church inviting the young to also participate in the retreat because in the local churches you will not really get people to discuss certain issues with and extending an invitation to the local church will be a gift and if great help. Also, more campus ministries should be encouraged to participate in the retreats” (RP 12).

Other participants asserted that they wished the leadership retreat were extended to the local churches for the youth and other church leaders to also benefit. Also, the leadership retreat should be made available to all youth members and not only the youth leaders in order to build the body of Christ, as they expressed below:

“I think elderly people should be encouraged to participate and not limited to only students or schools so add up to knowledge apart from the resource personnels invited to lead talks. That is what I think can be done” (RP 13).

“I think in the minds of most people it's leadership and I keep getting a lot of information from others that they are not leaders especially the Legon students, I don't know how they market it to them, they feel like because they are not leaders, they can't come so maybe we can talk to leaders in the various campuses that is not related to leaders and that's one way we can increase the membership and with the effectiveness” (RP 8).

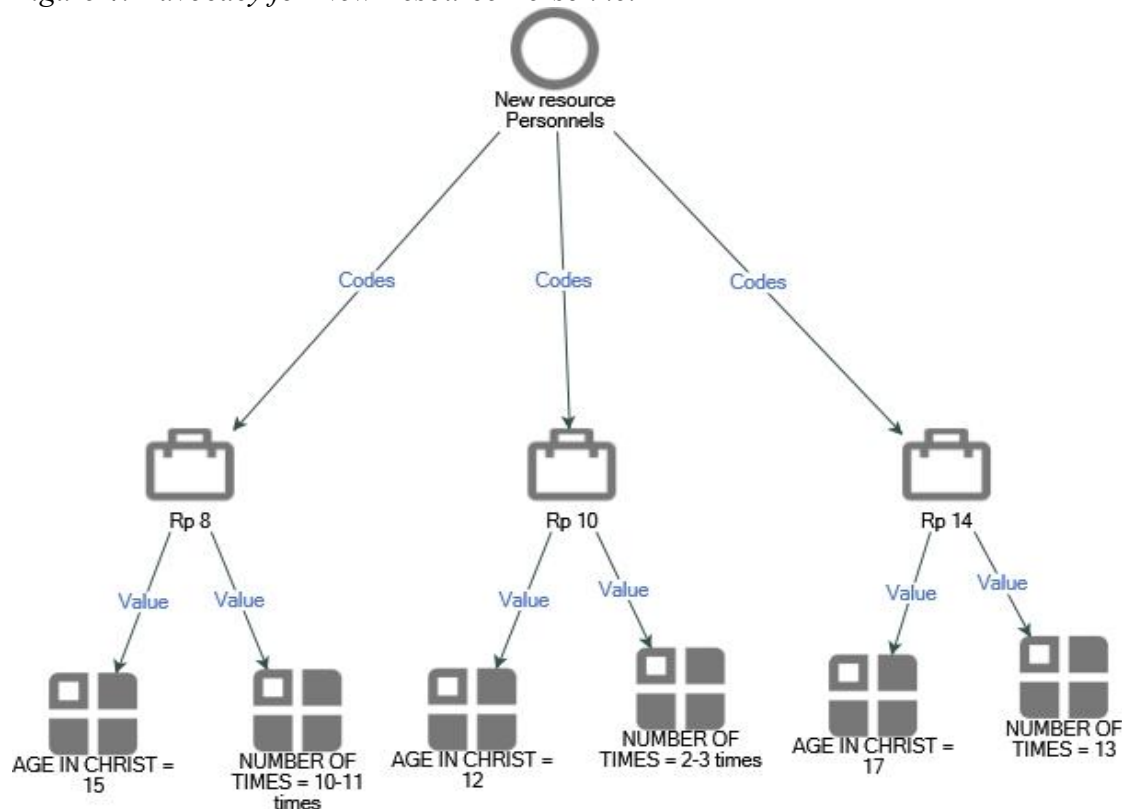
“For me, I think we need a structure to allow more people to participate, I think that will help” (RP 9).

New Resource Personnel

This sub-theme emerged from participants who have attended the retreat more than twice. They suggested that a change in the resources personnel would help advocate for a

new theological vision. They indicated further that opportunity should be given to the alumni to share their story of how the retreat has impacted their lives and spiritual maturity. The diagram below shows participants who advocated for the addition of new resource personnel for the leadership retreats.

Figure 4: Advocacy for New Resource Personnel



Note. This diagram shows the map of participants for the sub-theme new personnel for the leadership retreat.

Participants expressed these sentiments in the quotes below:

“I think over the years the resource person has been the same so if we can have some form of reshuffling so that there will be new faces to join you in the delivery especially for example the church administration, I think we can use brother Eghan. If I am somebody, I has been coming over the years, I may not be enjoying what he teaches because it's almost the same thing, but if we can bring somebody else, I think the last session it was (Name) who did it and that is fine and topics that have treated before we can get somebody to bring a different perspective to it” (RP 8).

“I think the Alumni really need a retreat where we can come and share our experiences and remind ourselves of what we've learnt in school and so on. If we are

able to that everybody will make plans to be there. We need the retreat; we need to come back to God and pour our hearts out.” (RP 10)

“For future participants, I think we should try to have those who have benefited from the retreat to be around to tell their story of how the retreat has transformed them so that participants will understand and take seriously what they are doing” (RP 14).

Ways to Improve the Leadership Retreat.

Study participants offered suggestions on how the leadership retreat could be improved for future participants as a way of ensuring the continuous growth and development of the Churches of Christ in Ghana. Below are some of the suggestions:

“Well, am thinking that as part of the retreat we should now look at making certificate of participation available for participants. This is because looking at the content of the lessons that are taught during the retreat it equals lessons that people pay for seminars in some of the preaching schools so I believe that if we are able to bring that on board where we provide certificate for participants it's going to give people that recognition that they have gone through a model that have thoroughly handled by a qualified moderator and therefore can put that on paper for future reference”(RP 1).

“I will speak on the matter of attendance and reach. It looks like it is targeted to only people in the universities. We should let people know that when they go back to their mother churches, they can speak to youth leaders and organize like a youth leaders’ program and that will be a program for the youth” (RP 11).

Retreat participant 14 stated that education on the retreat should be intensified as most participants come without understanding the purpose of the program and unprepared for the teaching therefore no impact is made:

“What I've realized is that most who attend for the first time don't go with the mindset of being transformed and usually come unprepared, so we should try and speak with those who have had experiences to try and share before the main program is actually organized. I would say sustainability should be encouraged in other to strengthen the cord among school” (RP 14).

“I will speak on the matter of attendance and reach. It looks like it is targeted to only people in the universities. We should let people know that when they go back to their mother churches, they can speak to youth leaders and organize like a youth leaders’ program and that will be a program for the youth” (RP 11).

While others opined that since there is a lot of digitization, there should be an online version of the retreat for those participants outside the country and unable to partake in person. Below is a narration:

“First of all, I think the committee and the organizers are doing a great job, but I think for improvement, it's difficult to come up with something because the organizers are doing well. I was going to talk about the online so that people who cannot travel to Swedru could also participate in the program, but I think they are doing well but if we could have like a YouTube live and a zoom where people could ask questions, that will be great” (RP 15).

Challenges

Study participants identified some challenges they faced pertaining to the leadership retreat. They indicated that the variation in the academic timetables of tertiary institutions hinders many potential participants from partaking in the leadership retreats. Below are some of the thoughts of participants regarding the above subject matter:

“Because it is usually within the vacation period, some people ones they go home, they will not be allowed to come for the retreat. If it could organize in a period where some of these people would participate, I think that will help going forward” (RP 8).

“Maybe the only challenge is the difference in vacation dates. It sometimes makes it difficult for a couple of campuses to come. So, if it happens twice a year, they are able to come for the first year and then miss out on the second because of the changes in academic calendar especially after the covid” (RP 2).

“But I know some universities do not have a representation and for those universities that are small in size, I think we can still reach out to them so that we can still get them on board” (RP 9).

Evaluating the Telos of the Ministry Among Churches of Christ in Ghana

Part of the purpose of this study was to evaluate the current telos of ministry among the Churches of Christ in Ghana in light of participants' experience at the leadership retreat. Given the formation and transformation they experienced at the leadership retreat, they were asked to juxtapose it with their experiences at their various local congregations and imagine whether the transformation they are recounting would have been possible given the telos of

ministry at the local congregation. This theme evaluated the relative difference in ministry telos between campus ministries and local congregations with the view to advocating for a new telos of ministry which valued spiritual formation and transformation as a valid telos of ministry for a New Testament church.

Figure 5: Word Cloud on the theme *Evaluating the Telos of the Ministry Among Churches of Christ in Ghana.*



Note. This word cloud shows the most frequently occurring words used by participants in responding to Interview Question 5.

Campus Church and Spiritual Growth

Study participants shared how they have grown spiritually at the retreats as compared to their experience in their local church context. Most participants indicated that their spiritual growth wouldn't have been possible in the local church as expressed below.

“I don't think so. Maybe some aspects may have been touched on because some of the things they teach in our campus churches, its kind relate to what learn at the retreat but not all of them” (RP 9).

“I think one will be the fellowship that we share and the fact that we are able to get like-minded people from other campuses to share their opinions on various things that are affecting the campus ministries and the local congregation in general. It changed my perception on leadership, all these while what I have experienced is the leadership at our local assembly and the preacher was more or less like the overseer and what he says is what people have to follow. But when we came there, we had a discussion on spiritual leadership and it changed my perception about leadership especially when we addressed as servants, it puts in shape that you are nothing but a servant people

and once you seek the interest the best interest of the people over and above your personal interest” (RP 8).

“. . . in the retreat the word of God is taught very practical to me. This is what we ought to do, but it doesn't end there, it taught me how to go about it as well. It taught me how to live a holy life, how to move away from what I don't want to be, how continue to stay in the light” (RP 7).

“I joined the campus church, and I didn't really understand why they did certain things in a way like, why do we not speak in tongues, why we do not tithe. And like, nobody had ever sat us down to explain, give us biblical explanations until I joined the campus church, and we went for evangelism. It was as if I knew Jesus again. It was a whole new world and that was where I got to know why we don't do the things we do. The campus churches for some reasons I feel like it's more of the youth because you go to some churches not even one youth even a song, it's always the elderly because they are probably holier and more upright than the youth but what happens when they are no more there, what will happen in the church? So, the campus churches do really with the youth. I remember a conference we went to UCC, that was also amazing and mind opening” (RP 6).

Other participants also opined that the topic treated during the retreats and campus church services are youth-related as compared to those taught in their local church. Additionally, the campus churches increase their understanding on the doctrines of the church more than the local churches as they narrated.

“The way the retreat and a few other evangelisms, programs held on campus you would be forced to take a leadership role and you will begin to enjoy it but I wouldn't have enjoyed this because even in the local church if I were going for evangelism, it was because my mother was going or my father was going, but once I began to understand certain things, I enjoyed being there” (RP 14).

“For campus, when it comes to the women's fellowship, on our program, every semester there is something about there is something about dating, relationship and sex before marriage, we are always talking about it. So, if the person is doing it then it's intentional, is not like the person doesn't know and is not as of the person is not willing to provide help to whoever that is be struggling. We help one another to be able to stand in the light, but here is not the same, it's like we are looking for somebody who is sinning to crucify the person. We are not willing to help, we don't even talk about the issues like topics that we will discuss and give examples and somebody's talking, we don't do this, and it makes it difficult” (RP 10).

“I believe that with the retreat, everyone came with a purpose and it's quite different the mother church where people go to church just for going sake, but once you are at the retreat, there's an intentionality to growth” (RP 11).

Mainstream Church and Spiritual Growth

Study participants also shared their view on the mainstream church and their potential or lack of same for spiritual growth. They indicated that they could not have grown spiritually in the mainstream church because of the telos of ministry prevalent which influences their educational programs and topics that are treated. Even their worship services were perceived to be different not in form but in function from campus churches. Below are some of the sentiments expressed:

“No. It sometimes makes it difficult blending in. Sometimes I don't understand why they do certain things today, like even with discipleship, they will just come and teach discipleship. For years we have been studying discipleship, but we are not being disciples” (RP 10).

“No, I don't think so, Because, I would have been one of the members if not for the retreat. The way the retreat and a few other programs were held, you would be forced to take a leadership role and you will begin to enjoy it but I wouldn't have enjoyed this because even in the local church if I were going for evangelism, it was because my mother was going or my father was going, but once I began to understand certain things, i enjoyed being there” (RP 3).

“Not at all. Actually, I joined the campus church, and I didn't really understand why they did certain things in a way like, why do we not speak in tongues, why we do not tithe. And like, nobody had ever sat us down to explain, give us biblical explanations until I joined the campus church, and we went for evangelism” (RP 6).

“Honestly no, I don't think it would have been possible. Even if it where it will take maybe a particular program organized for Christian youth and youth leadership. Mostly in the local church they do not tailor their message to the Christian youth or the young one in general. There is this general that if you are you are living a life that is not holy and basically everyone is fornicating and that is seen as the most serious sin than any other. But hardly does it touch on transforming yourself, understanding what it is to be called a Christian youth and being called out. Those teachings hardly come from the local churches, so it wouldn't have been possible” (RP 7).

Orientation of Ministry in the Mainstream and the Campus Church

This sub-theme assessed the orientation of ministry in the mainstream and the campus church. Study participants were asked if their spiritual progress would have been possible with our traditional ministry orientation which captured in three concepts: evangelism,

benevolence and edification. Among the Churches of Christ in Ghana, this tripod of themes is believed to represent the biblical mission of the church. Most participants asserted that it wouldn't have been possible due to the nature of the mainstream services. They shared in the quotes below:

“Perhaps it may be possible but with the retreat it has become more effective so even if it could have happened in the mainstream, I don't think it will as effective as it was at the retreat. In the mainstream there are diverse people, and the focus is sometimes generalized but when we have the retreats, the focus is specific, and it becomes more effective than the mainstream. In the mainstream, the only prospect I saw was to be a preacher but at the retreat it gave me the opportunity to know myself better and to identify my calling. The retreat taught me that I don't have to necessarily be a preacher with a congregation but try and get closer to people and be able to impact them in a meaningful way, and I think it would have been very difficult to do this in the main congregation” (RP 14).

“I think even if it will be possible in the mainstream church, it would have taken a longer time. Growing up I had issues with the way the members were being taught because we were much focused on doctrinal issues, baptism, instrumental music, and the fact that the churches does not pay tithe, and the lessons that were supposed to help us connect to God were lacking in the congregation and If I didn't get the opportunity to participate in some of these retreat, I wouldn't have gotten some of these lessons and i think it's a big problem in most of the congregation in Ghana. So, without some of these opportunities given to the youth especially to the youth where we address issues regarding sexual temptations and all that are given to them it will be very difficult for the churches in Ghana to achieve this level of spirituality” (RP 15).

Other participants shared that their spiritual progress would not have been possible in the mainstream church context:

“With our local churches. I cannot speak for all but in my local church the youth are not many so when it happens like that, they give a general lecture on every Christian living. Attention is not given as to how to nurture your skills and talents but with the retreat it's purposely for the youth and the lessons are structured in such that it will contribute to your growth as a youth. It's tailored to our needs” (RP 4).

“No. It sometimes makes it difficult blending in. Sometimes I don't understand why they do certain things today, like even with discipleship, they will just come and teach discipleship. For years we have been studying discipleship, but we are being disciplined. Unlike campus where we if you are struggling you have mediator, it's not the same thing in the local church. People are doing certain things that ordinarily they may not do but because they are struggling, we are not also willing to get to know what their problem is whether we can help or not” (RP 10).

“No because some of our congregation so not give us the opportunity to voice our challenges because people easily become judgmental” (RP 11).

“. . . ok, with the local church because there are people in those positions, you might not get the chance to, for example, I cannot be called to be a women's leader in the local church because there are older women who are more qualified for that but on campus you get the chase then we practice and get the chance” (RP 5).

Focused Group Discussion

General Impression

A seven-member focused group discussion was conducted to deepen and enhance the conversations around the leadership retreats. For the first time, participants in the study met on Zoom to share their experiences in relation to the influence of the leadership retreat on their spiritual formation and transformation. The hope was that the focus group discussion would stimulate deeper levels of expression and recollection of experiences, attitudes, and emotions related to the retreat. It emerged that the group was homogenous. Consequently, sentiments expressed during the individual interviews did not differ in any significance from those expressed in the FGD. The themes which emerged from the interviews were quite similar to those in the FGD. The general impressions about the leadership retreats in the FGD did not differ from those expressed in the individual interviews. Below are some thoughts expressed during the FGD.

“. . . for me, I think we all have our reasons for going for leadership positions as young people when we are on campus, but I feel that the leadership retreat helped to give us the right orientation and attitude. It seeks to make us spiritually minded and prepare us for the leadership task ahead, so for me, lessons like the making of a leader really helped me. I came to realize that it's not all about me. I remember back in the days before you came in, we used to elect leaders and I realized it was more of a political nature. You had to make sure you impress people who would vote you into power but when you came in with leadership retreat, you realize that it wasn't about us but about Christ, and I think it gave us a good spiritual mindset for the task ahead.” (FGD, I)

“For me the leadership retreat has lived its words, meaning that for me I have always referred to it as the engine room where draw away from social activities to reflect. Looking at it from the formative angle, it has always been a place of reflection

looking at what I can learn, unlearn, and relearn as a young leader and try to build myself up. So that is what I will say in a general comment” (FGD, Y)

“. . . Ok so I think that the retreat is a good way to equip or remind those picking up leadership positions what they are actually expected to do and what is expected of them to go about it. So that's my view on that” (FGD, A1)

Same sentiment was shared among A2 and P who believed the leadership retreat is for reflection on life and to be transformed to what God wants them to become. Below are some expressions from participants:

“For me, this retreat goes beyond preparing for leadership. For me it transformed me personally and I wouldn't talk about it preparing me to take up leadership position, but it transformed my life personally” (FDG, A2)

“Just like A1 said, the retreat has always been like a retreat for me. A time to go back to God, to listen, pray and learn, so it actually means a retreat for me, to stop, get back and watch your steps again and that has been the retreat for me” (FGD, P)

Efficacy of Retreat as a Formative Experience

The efficacy of the leadership retreat was assessed through questions such as topics that influenced the lives of participants and the way the retreats contributed to their spiritual formation and transformation. Most participants pointed out some topics as being the starting point in the shift in their spiritual lives. Some alluded to topics on sexual purity, holiness, character studies on Judas and so on.

Retreat Contribution to Spiritual Maturity

“One thing that I remember you always said was that you should always remember that you are not always working for God but to also walk with God, praying and studying His Word and that is one thing that has really helped me so anytime I am doing something for God, I ask myself whether I am just working for him or am still with Him. So that's one thing that really helped me over at the retreat concerning my walk with God and in the leadership roles aspect” (FGD, P).

“So there is another thing that I really relate to and it's about walking closely with God in the spiritual more than the physical, having a personal relationship with God and not just being a people's person, letting everyone know that you are spiritual and come to church every Sunday, and always serving in the house of God but it's about me, and also when nobody is watching, how do I live my life, how do I put things in

place, how does God see me for who I am and not what others see me for who I am in the church in the capacity of the position being given” (FGD, A1).

From the discussion, study participants shared some of the topics treated during the leadership retreats that have kept them going in their physical and spiritual lives as indicated below:

“For me, I think the lesson about character helped me and I learnt that we have to be people of integrity and we are to be one in both our public life and private life. It seeks to make us spiritually minded and prepare us for the leadership task ahead, so for me, lessons like the making of a leader really helped me. I came to realize that it's not all about me. I remember back in the days before you came in, we used to elect leaders and I realized it was more of a political nature” (FGD, I).

“The second thing for me would be one lesson would one lesson that Dr. Twumasi handled the class during the retreat when he spoke about the prodigal son and the belly jellyfish that he tried to paint a picture out of it for me about pride” (FGD, A1).

Advocate for new Theological Vision.

During the focused group discussion segment of the study, participants indicated that the leadership retreat could be a means by which new theological ways of thinking about God, the church, the mission of the church, and ministry could be introduced. Through their experience at the retreat, those would share and advocate for the same in their mainstream churches. Thoughtful and conscientious engagement of new resource personnel were identified by participants as a means of improving the positive effects and accessibility to the retreats. Participants **Y** and **A1** shared similar sentiments that the retreats should be extended to all youths and even in the mainstream churches as they expressed below:

“I think the congregation should be open to these seminars and say they have had an experience with the discussions or topics. I think we should do same; certification should be something we should you have. I don't people who are far away should be exempted because they might not be able to converge at a venue or particular place. I think that in the making of the retreat, if we are expanding, we should be able to look at affiliates and try to open branches somewhere, because typical, Accra” (FGD, Y).

Other participants suggested that an virtual editions of the leadership retreats should be added in order to benefit participants who are not able to join in person. As the indicated below:

“Going forward, I think the retreat should extend not just to the campus ministry but to the local congregations and to reach out to those who are far and can't attend, there is zoom, WhatsApp call that can also be used to join. After that we can create evaluation as well, to see how well we are doing and what needs to be done going forward” (FGD, A2).

“I know we do Facebook live but I think we can look at it well so that the experience online will be of a better standard, we could mic you up, provide some carousel so that it will look more engaging even when watching from away. It could also whet the appetite of viewers to plan and participate in the in-person sessions for fellowship” (FGD, Y).

Conclusion

This chapter presents the findings of the study which explores the spiritual value of the leadership retreat for campus Church of Christ leaders in Ghana, focusing on four main themes, namely the general impression of the retreats, efficacy of retreat as a formative experience, advocacy for a new theological vision, and evaluating the telos of the ministry among Churches of Christ in Ghana. This study involved 15 participants, who attended the retreat twice or more. Findings from the thematic analysis revealed that most participants found the retreat to be educative, transformative, and a means to learn about Christ and leadership roles in the church.

The leadership retreat also significantly influenced participants' psycho-social development, i.e., confidence, relationships, and spiritual maturity. Participants emphasized the importance of spiritual formation, spiritual maturity, and growth as young spiritual leaders; themes they wished would be an integral part of the church's educational programs. Participants suggested improving retreats by extending participation beyond campus churches, encouraging local churches, and extending them to senior high school students.

This study also emphasized the need for inclusive ministry orientations and telos of ministry, highlighting the importance of retreats as a means for spiritual formation and transformation.

CHAPTER SIX
FINDINGS, DISCUSSION, IMPLICATIONS OF DATA, RECOMMENDATIONS, AND
CONCLUSIONS

According to Greg Oden, the bane of Christianity is the superficiality which has become characteristic of many who claim allegiance to the Christian faith. He came to this conclusion based on what he describes as “the incongruity between the numbers of people who profess faith in Jesus Christ and the lack of impact on the moral and spiritual climate of our times.”¹²⁵ One of the reasons Oden assigns to this unfortunate reality of the church is the dearth of investment “in spiritual growth practices.”¹²⁶

Oden’s observations about the Christian church are similar to John Franklin Tamakloe’s observations about the Churches of Christ in Ghana. As noted in chapter one, the Churches of Christ in Ghana elevate doctrinal correctness over sanctification. We study for information more than reformation and transformation. We are externally focused, often telling others what they are doing wrong while neglecting to interrogate our own inner motives and values. Consequently, over time the incongruities between what we teach and how we live surface through sexual scandals, financial malfeasance, and so on.

When diagnosing the problem several years prior to this study, Tamakloe attributed the situation to our tendency to focus on “issues, rather than the gospel.” Tamakloe described the condition of the Churches of Christ in Ghana this way:

Everything has been mechanized, patterns and form have taken the place of spirituality. Greed, envy, pettiness, and lack of Christian courtesy and charity etc., are things we are now contending with because our brethren have misplaced their trust and loyalty. Our faith is more in the “Institution” than in the “Institutor.” Those things

125. Greg Ogden, *Transforming Discipleship: Making Disciples a Few at a Time* (Downers Grove: IVP Books, 2016), 22-3.

126. *Ibid.*, 26.

that may be aptly described as the ‘fruits of the Spirit’ are non-existent in the lives of our members.¹²⁷

Although Tamakloe does not use the term superficial, it appears to be implicit. From his description the inconsistencies and incongruities are too glaring for comfort. Some remedial steps needed to be taken. A new theological paradigm beyond what was bequeathed by the missionaries needs to be explored. It is from this milieu that the leadership retreats were initiated as a desperate attempt by the younger generation to stem the tide of spiritual anemia within the community. The devastating effects caused by the absence of spiritual growth in the previous generation impelled the leadership retreat as a response to a new generation’s hunger and thirst for a deeper and genuine spiritual formation and transformation.

The current study focused on evaluating the biannual leadership retreats in terms of their spiritual formative and transformative value. The theology and telos of ministry which the Churches of Christ in Ghana have historically adopted and utilized were interrogated in light of the evaluation’s outcome. In this final chapter, I present and discuss the findings of the study. Additionally, I explore the implications of the findings for ministry among the Churches of Christ in Ghana. I will offer recommendations for future studies and express concluding thoughts concerning the entire study to end the discussion. We shall start with interview question two because interview question one concerned the number of times a participant attended the retreat.

127. Sam Shewmaker, *Africans Claiming Africa: Living the Vision*, 117.

Discussion of Findings

Interview Question 2

What are your general impressions about the leadership retreats?

The results of the data analysis in chapter five demonstrate that in relation to the first interview question, all participants' assessment and evaluation of the leadership retreats were positive. Participants described the retreats as educative, transformative, impactful, and a means by which emerging adults learn about Christ and leadership roles in the church. Others described the retreat as a "life changing event because it offered them spiritual perspectives to life and living it. Beyond the benefits, participants indicated that the retreats also helped them develop relevant psychosocial skills through their engagement and interaction with peers from other campuses.

Evidently, almost all participants chose not to offer any detail about the events and processes which resulted in the growth and transformation they alluded to. The reason for the absence of a vivid recount of the processes and events which occasioned the transformation may not be far-fetched. Fundamentally, spiritual formation and transformation are the gracious works of God. Although some human effort is required, human effort can hardly account for spiritual formation and transformation. As Howard affirms, "growth into the image of God, is not simply a matter of human effort. God initiates, and we respond. Christian spiritual formation is a response to the gracious work of God."¹²⁸ God's work in the life of humankind through the Holy Spirit is hardly traceable.

¹²⁸ Evan Howard, Brazos Introduction to Christian Spirituality, 269.

Interview Question 3

In what ways have the retreats contributed to your spiritual growth and maturity?

Regarding the above question, the data analysis indicated that the structure, the activities, and the content of the retreats, and, of course, the power of the Holy Spirit interact to instigate and orchestrate the participants' spiritual growth and maturity. According to a majority of participants, the open, honest, and transparent discussion of relevant issues that thwart the spiritual growth of emerging adults and the insightful responses offered by resource persons play a critical role the growth and maturation process. Spiritual exercises like fasting and prayers, the topics and issues discussed, and the communal spirit engendered at the retreat all contribute to the growth and maturation participants experience. The vulnerability exemplified by the convener of the retreat and promoted at the retreat are essential ingredients in the growth process. From the literature, two theories of formation and transformation appear to be at play: Shults and Sandage's intensification model, and Evan Howard's model of reorientation and rehabilitation.

The intensification model posits that faith formation, spiritual formation, and transformation are a function of the dynamic interaction between intensity, intentionality, and intimacy of relationship. This model asserts that relational intensity, intentionality, and intimacy can result in redemptive intimacy. For this model, spiritual formation and transformation are communally inclined rather than individualistic pursuits. In responding to the question about the contribution of the retreat to their spiritual growth and maturity, a majority of the respondents pointed to the contributions of their fellow spiritual seekers. They identified open, honest, and transparent discussion of relevant issues as the key ingredients in the spiritual shifts they identified in themselves. This lends credence to the possibility that indeed spiritual formation and transformation are socially constructed and that formation and

transformation are a function of a person-in-community. God uses the covenant community to spiritually form and transform.

Even though spiritual formation and transformation are the prerogative of the Holy Spirit of God, setting in place a working structure, content, and activities cannot not be over-emphasized. Howard is correct to assert that spiritual formation and transformation as a process requires series of acts and attitudes that function in tandem to integrate context, agents, aims, and means of formation.¹²⁹ He proceeds to offer some suggestions regarding how processes at any spiritual formation and transformation approach could enhance the desired outcome.

Howard indicates that: (1) When a formative process has a clear vision, the clarity helps in attainment of the desired outcome. So, for instance, the leadership retreats are explicitly focused on spiritual formation and transformation for the purposes of spiritual leadership. Such clarity of purpose gives direction and intentionality to the activities at the retreat.

(2) There must be a strong determination not to truncate the growth process. Continuity and consistency are critical to spiritual growth. Thus, for the leadership retreats, the fact that it has been sustained since 2011 until now and is organized to meet twice a year has contributed to its positive influence on the spiritual growth of participants.

(3) A nurturing and supportive community is essential to spiritual formation and transformation. One of the strong points of the leadership retreat is the sense of community, fellowship, and camaraderie which have been engendered over the years. Many of the positive strides participants have made are attributable to the encouragement and

¹²⁹. Evan Howard, *Brazos Introduction to Christian Spirituality*, 282.

accountability available to participants through the community and to the team spirit that is palpable at the retreat. Beyond the fact that most emerging adults are positively predisposed to relationships, the convener of the retreats leads through building relationships. Therefore, the quality of relationships developed at the retreats promote spiritual formation and transformation.

(4) Identification of problem areas. Since the leadership retreats are targeted for emerging adults, issues pertinent to their spiritual growth and maturity have been painstakingly identified, such that all the topics, issues, and activities engaged in at the retreats are relevant to our target audience.

(5) Given the accuracy of our appreciation and identification of our target audience, we are able to select the most appropriate spiritual disciplines, activities, topics, and issues which effectively meet the formative and transformative needs of our audience.

(6) Paying careful attention to contextual variables which impinge on the spiritual formation and transformative needs of audience also enhances the growth and maturity of participants at the retreat. The shared-experience of the convener and the participants allow him a unique insight into the psychology, sociology, and pneumatology of the target audience.

(7) Implementation and (8) Experimentation conclude Howard's list of process items which encourage and stimulate success in spiritual formative and transformative endeavors like the leadership retreats. The researcher believes that the leadership retreat has been deemed effective because it mostly adheres to this eight-step process as enumerated by Howard.

Interview Question 4

What specific activity/biblical truth (s) at the retreat has helped you the most?

The data analysis regarding this question demonstrated that participants identified topics relating to spiritual formation, spiritual maturity, spiritual growth, church growth, and a character study on Judas as some of the topics that made a difference in their spiritual formation and transformation. Evidently, given the longevity of the retreat and scope of topics which have been a part of the experience, the list appears inadequate. However, it may also be simply a function of primacy and recency effect; participants may have forgotten earlier topics but were able to recollect the most recent topics. Furthermore, it may well be that as discussed in relation to the previous question, it is the open, honest, transparent, and communal discussions which occur after the classrooms sessions which made the difference for many of them. Consequently, they remember the practical discussions and not necessarily the intellectual or logical presentations.

In my experience, emerging adults value relationships over pristine theological formulations. Their cravings in life focus more on genuine relationships than facts and figures. They demonstrate an insatiable quest for community. According to Graham Johnston, this occurs because as products of postmodernity, they are still recovering from the empty promises of the notion of individualism. Also, as targets of the digital revolution, emerging adults are still reeling under the vestiges of loneliness that their unbridled consumption of technology bequeathed them. Additionally, most emerging adults are products of broken homes. They have been deceived by politicians, disappointed by the church, and defrauded by community leaders.¹³⁰ Consequently, emerging adults demonstrate an enhanced quest for

130. Graham Johnston, *Preaching to a Postmodern World: A Guide to Reaching Twenty-First-Century Listeners* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2004), 54-6.

meaningful relationships. Thus, simply being together and discussing issues of common interest and concern is extremely valuable to them. It “helps them know that they are not alone in their common struggles and longings.”¹³¹

Being part of the retreat community is spiritually validating. Their fears subside, and their longings are satisfied, thus creating a fertile environment in their hearts for growth and self-improvement. As long as they believe those around them are authentic and trustworthy, they become spiritually energized to overcome and amend the mistakes they have committed in their quest to overcome feelings of loneliness and abandonment. In my opinion, respondents were not able to enumerate many of the topics which may have influenced their spiritual growth and maturing because, given their stage of life, the genuine relationships they found at the retreat provided the foundation upon which every other spiritual formation and transformation occurred. Therefore, it is not unusual that they tend to remember the communal activities and rather than the specific topics.

Writing in *Relational Spirituality: A Psychological-Theological Paradigm for Transformation*, Todd and Elizabeth Hall affirm the positive correlation between communal relationships and spiritual formation and transformation. They posit that one of the implications of being created in the image and likeness of God is that human beings possess an innate relational nature. This creates a natural propensity towards relationships and makes relationships necessary not only for the survival and sustenance of the human species, but more so for conformity to the nature of Christ. They stated that, “The core of this nature is found in the centrality of *personal relationships* with God and other human beings which are

131. Graham Johnston, *Preaching to a Postmodern World*, 55.

necessary for human flourishing, and for growing into the image of Christ which makes us more fully human.”¹³²

Communal relationships promote spiritual transformation in the sense that they allow for the formation of loving relationships in which each individual serves as a loving presence for their neighbor by being God’s representative in the neighbor’s life and circumstances. At its core, spiritual formation and transformation is essentially about learning to love and relate as God does through Christ Jesus with power from the Holy Spirit. According to Hall and Hall, the capacity of a Christian community to enhance formation and transformation exemplified by the leadership retreat is the result of four essential characteristics: spiritual, relational, intentional, and authoritative.¹³³

Christian communal relationships like those created at the retreat engender spiritual formation and transformation because it is a spiritual community. The explicit goal of most spiritual communities is not just to encourage social interaction but to glorify God by focusing on stirring and steering members towards spiritual transformation among the members and/or conformity to the likeness of Christ. Thus, spiritual transformation becomes the norm of the community in which each member is influenced. Each member conscientiously functions as an enabler towards the goal of the community. This is so typical of the leadership retreat. The convener of the retreat makes it a point to remind participants about the goal of the group, which is to develop and become the next generation of spiritual leaders for the Churches of Christ in Ghana. Therefore, it behooves each individual

132. Todd W. Hall and M. Elizabeth Lewis Hall, *Relational Spirituality: A Psychological-Theological Paradigm for Transformation* (Westmont: InterVarsity Press, 2021), 49.

133. *Ibid.*, 264.

participant to become a means of grace towards the attainment of that lofty spiritual goal.

Thus, the explicit purpose of the retreat community is spiritual.

Beyond being spiritual, another quality which imbues Christian communities with the capacity to be formative and transformative is that they are relational at the core. At the retreat we are deliberate about creating an atmosphere where healthy relationships may be formed. All the programs, resources persons, seating arrangements, eating preparation, and leisure activities are structured to encourage the cultivation of strong social bonds and cohesion among participants. These relationships become conduits through which spiritual formation and transformation are initiated and eventually actualized.

Beyond the spiritual and relational growth, Christian communities stimulate spiritual formation and transformation because they are intentional. Since the goal is to glorify God by becoming more like Christ, every activity is focused, directed, and strategic. Nothing is accidental. For instance, topics at the retreat are chosen intentionally, resources persons are selected punctiliously, and the environment is curated deliberately. Given the diversity of cultural, social, economic, tribal, and spiritual backgrounds present, participants are advised to be intentional about their attitudes, behaviors, and even language. Such intentionality becomes instructive to participants. Nothing is taking for granted. This enhances transparency, openness, the willingness to be vulnerable, and the desire for accountability. These features are critical to spiritual formation and transformation.

Finally, Christian communities facilitate spiritual formation and transformation because they are authoritative. A community is deemed authoritative when: (1) it treats others as ends in themselves, rather than a mean to an end; (2) it is warm and nurturing; (3) it establishes clear limits and expectations; (4) it is intergenerational; (5) it reflects and transmits a shared understanding of what it means to be a good person; and (6) it is

philosophically oriented towards the equal dignity of all persons and to the principle of love of neighbor.¹³⁴ Clearly, the leadership retreat has been formative and transformative for participants because beyond being spiritual, relational, and intentional, it is also authoritative. We forcefully convey and affirm the value and dignity of each participant, irrespective of gender, socioeconomic, ethnic, and academic circumstance. The community must be warm and nurturing to enjoy the patronage of these extremely mobile emerging adults. Expectations of all participants and resources are clearly stipulated and communicated. There is little or no ambiguity regarding the purpose of the retreat, and as Christians, we submit to the idea that love for neighbor is the second greatest of God's commandments. Consequently, all these interact to give the retreat the influence over participants.

Interview Question 5

Would this spiritual progress have been possible with our traditional ministry orientation?

The data analysis relating to this question indicates that the overwhelming majority of participants answered in the negative. This means that given the ministry orientation of their local congregations, the majority of participants did not believe that the formation and transformation they received through the leadership retreat would be possible in their various local congregations. The reasons they noted in their responses were mainly concerned with the telos or theology of ministry pursued in the various local congregations. As noted in chapter one, among the Churches of Christ in Ghana, we are limited to evangelism, edification, and benevolence as our telos or theology of ministry. These three are often

134. The Commission on Children at Risk, "Hardwired to Connect: The New Scientific Case for Authoritative Communities," in *Authoritative Communities: The Scientific Case for Nurturing the Whole Child*, ed. Kathleen Kovner Kline (New York: Springer, 2008), 9.

referred as the mission of the church, the three core, principal pillars that undergird programs and activities of the church.

They represent the holy trinity of activities which was once for all time delivered to the church in Ghana. Against these, there must be no rival theological focus. To pursue any other is to risk being labelled a heretic or an apostate. We are expected to maintain these missionary legacies irrespective of contextual variables. These three are often presented as eternal truths which must be preserved, protected, and defended at all times. They are essentials which we must all agree upon to be saved. They are presumed to be set in life-or-death conditions: believe it to live, reject it and die.

Consequently, as is the case of all dogmatic propositions, we have failed to critically interrogate them. Most congregations are indoctrinated to take it for granted to the extent that even when contextual and demographic peculiarities require the exploration for a context-appropriate or relevant telos or theology of ministry, we are cowed into aborting the attempt. Surely, 66 years into the establishment of the Churches of Christ in Ghana is long enough for the missionary legacy to be reviewed. However, given the current social, political, economic, cultural, and religious milieu the church is immersed in, the theological focus of the community appears to be out of touch with the reality of the members. Our theological vision seems not to be in sync with the spiritual hunger and yearnings of the community.

Two reasons may account for the seeming lack of adaptability in our theology to ongoing cultural and societal changes: (1) our theological ancestry, and (2) Our attitude toward change. Let us explore these two issues a bit more because it illuminates our understanding of the Churches of Christ in Ghana. In their book, *Participating in God's Life: Two Crossroads for Churches of Christ*, Leonard Allen and Danny Swick offer a detailed discussion of the theological and philosophical traditions and foundations which undergird

the operating hermeneutic and theological vision of the Churches of Christ. Relying on a 1857 debate between Robert Richardson and Tolbert Fanning,¹³⁵ they trace it to Alexander Campbell. Campbell was heavily influenced by the philosophical theories of John Locke, a prominent philosopher of the British Enlightenment.

John Locke postulated that the human mind at birth was *tabular rasa*, a blank slate, and the knowledge the mind acquired emerged from the environment through sensory stimulations via the five senses. He argued that since God and spiritual things cannot be contemplated or comprehended by the five senses, humankind is entirely limited to the Bible for any knowledge or connection with the divine. Thus, according to this philosophy, the Bible and the five senses represent the sole pathway into the human soul.¹³⁶ The philosophy was also known as sensualistic (from the senses), materialism (dependent on material things), and, more pejoratively, as dirt philosophy.

The effects of this philosophy, when coalesced with such a theological vision, becomes spiritually debilitating. Due to its capitulation to the senses and the material, it distorts the nature of faith and truncates its proper development. It elevates facts, bestows the words of the Bible with exaggerated efficacy, and inordinately ties faith to material things. In practice, this philosophy cannot move beyond facts and arguments to an authentic, organic, intimate relationship and communion with God. When utilized, this philosophy cannot move past the “letter” of Scripture to the “Spirit,” or else it makes the letter the only means of

135. Robert Richardson was an associate editor of the *Millennial Harbinger* in Bethany, West Virginia. It was a religious magazine founded by Alexander Campbell in 1830. He used it as a tool to advocate for the reforms that he believed would usher in the millennium. Tolbert Fanning, on the other hand, was the founding editor of the *Gospel Advocate* in Nashville, Tennessee. The debate was occasioned in 1857 when Fanning responded to a series of articles published by Richardson titled “The Misinterpretation of Scripture.” Allen and Swick, *Participating in God’s Life*, 37–82.

136. *Ibid.*, 42–3

connecting with the Spirit. This philosophy's sole tool for resolving spiritual conflicts depends on lexical analysis, syllogistic propositions, and argumentation.¹³⁷

The net effect of this theological philosophy as it pertains to the Churches of Christ in Ghana is that of doctrinal formalism, the elevation of orthodoxy over orthopraxy, stale spiritual vitality, sterile spirituality, and the absence of and alienation from the Divine life. As a consequence of this theological legacy and vision, the Churches of Christ in Ghana seem to be out of step with the fluid movement and operation of the Spirit of God in relation to his mission in our various contexts.

The second reason which accounts for our seeming lack of adaptability to God's ongoing mission is our attitude toward change. Culturally, Ghana is a high-respect society. We are socialized to honor and respect visitors and elders. These cultural values, albeit desirable and commendable, have the unintended consequence of rendering us slavish to the past and neurotic about change. Our respect of elders and visitors, in this case, missionaries, make us reticent about auditing some of the theological traditions bequeathed to us even after 66 years. The theological trilogy of evangelism, edification, and benevolence are monuments of our past which have assumed God-like status. Even though this theological vision needs revising in the face of emerging spiritual needs, our allegiance to our past has created a debilitating inertia.

Additionally, our theological vision limits us to the words in Scripture without the unfolding mission and vision of God revealed through Scripture. Our historical inability to envision and tap into God's vision affects our capacity for engaging in and managing adaptive change. As McFayden asserts, "vision is a key factor in how congregations embrace

137. Allen and Swick, *Participating in God's Life*, 46.

change, move beyond the intense pain of loss, and discover their capacity to hope.”¹³⁸ Our unhealthy appendage to the past makes us oblivious to God’s vision for us in the present. If we could tap into God’s vision, we would realize as a community that spiritual formation and transformation are not deviations, but an integral art of God’s scheme of redemption.

If hope is the anchor of the soul, then vision makes the pains associated with change worthwhile. Congregations which lack vision are likely to catastrophize in periods of change because they are complacent and satisfied with the status quo. They idolize the past, are nostalgic in the present, and are totally disconnected from God’s progressive work and mission in the world. Vision serves as the anesthesia that makes the pain associated with change bearable. A theological vision not based on dirt philosophy but anchored in the mission of God, unfolding through Christ, and empowered by the Spirit of God is tune with God’s transformative work among his people.

The vision of the anticipated future of the congregation provides the endurance and stamina necessary to dreg through the mud of pain and wade through the flood waters of grief towards the communally imagined desirable future. Given the shared vision, the entire congregation becomes convinced that “the sufferings of this present times are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us” (Romans 8:18, NASB). Without vision, a congregation does not only flounder, but also becomes vulnerable to the pains concomitant with change.

Even though spiritual formation and transformation may not be part of the telos or theology of ministry bequeathed to us by the American missionaries, the Churches of Christ in Ghana must come to terms with the fact that it is part of God’s purpose and mission for the

138. Kenneth J. McFayden, *Strategic Leadership for a Change: Facing our Losses, Finding our Future* (Herndon: Alban Institute, 2009), 67.

New Testament Church. As demonstrated in the biblical and theological section of this study, spiritual formation and transformation are a central theological theme and telos that runs through almost all the New Testament canon. The advocacy for a new theological vision by participants in response to interview Question 5 may be as a result of a realization by the new generation of a gap between the spiritual needs and aspirations of the church and the telos and focus of the old ministry vision.

Interview Question 6

How can the leadership retreat be improved for future participants?

The purpose of this final question is to elicit practical suggestions from former participants regarding ways the retreat could be improved based on their previous experience. The expectation was that based on the participants' experience, they would share some weaknesses and challenges they identified and would suggest ways by which those challenges might be rectified. In the final analysis, participants suggested the following:

1. That certificates be presented to participants in view of the quality of the retreat's content.
2. That participation should be opened up to include those beyond the campus churches. This would expand the reach of retreat, thereby increasing its impact.
3. That education and information about the retreat be increased and enhanced so that those who attend would come adequately prepared for the experience. Furthermore, that the enhanced education and information would rope in other youth workers in the various congregations.
4. That digital platforms like YouTube, Live and Zoom should be used in the future to provide for those who cannot participate in person. The digital approach would enhance and increase the penetration of retreat.
5. That the challenge posed by differences in the academic calenda of the various universities may be streamlined or synchronized so that scheduling would not rule out any campus church from participating in the retreat.

Implications of Findings for Ministry Among Churches of Christ in Ghana

The evaluation of participants in this study's leadership retreat established that the retreat has been spiritually formative and transformative for them. This positive verdict on the

leadership retreat should inform how ministry is conceptualized and practiced going forward. First, the findings from this study indicate that emerging adults, who form a significant majority in many congregations of the Churches of Christ in Ghana, possess a deep yearning for spiritual formation and transformation. Despite the moral lapses and the ravaging effects of the culture in which they are immersed, emerging adults affiliated with the Churches of Christ in Ghana demonstrate a palpable, burning desire for God.

They desperately seek spirituality. Many of their addictions may be desperate attempts to compensate for the void created by the distance which exists between them and God. Consequently, the church in Ghana must begin to revise their notes about emerging adults, begin to see beyond the false appearances that emerging adults often display, and discover their deep yearning and groaning for God in their lives. Such a realization may stir the church to be realistically concerned about the spiritual needs of this demography in order to conscientiously meet their spiritual needs.

Second, findings from this study demand the Churches of Christ in Ghana to interrogate and audit our theology of ministry. It has become abundantly clear that even though the prevailing theology of ministry which resolves around evangelism, edification, and benevolence is valuable, it appears inadequate to meet the spiritual needs of emerging adults. Many of them expressed a sense of bewilderment, disillusionment, and abandonment as a result of the unquestioned dependence and utilization of those mantras even when they do not meet their peculiar spiritual needs. Like a gifted child in a regular classroom, these emerging adults present a disposition of indifference, boredom, and undesirable social behaviors not because they are rude but because the curriculum does not meet their unique needs.

Third, the Churches of Christ in Ghana must come to terms with the reality that spiritual formation and transformation are legitimate telos of ministry which is consistent with the teachings of the New Testament. In the biblical and theological foundations section of this study, it becomes evident that in almost all the books in the New Testament canon, the basis of all the deep and intricate theological argumentation are there for the purposes of formation and transformation. When all an emerging adult receives from Bible studies is information but not transformation, the Bible becomes nothing more than a newspaper because that is all that a newspaper has to offer—information.

The Churches of Christ in Ghana must desist henceforth from measuring ministry success by the number of converts. We must begin to commit ourselves to the higher standard of forming and transforming converts into the nature of Christ. The apostle Paul affirms that *“For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brother”* (Rom. 8:29). Clearly, the Church of Christ is intended to be a family of individuals conformed to the image of Christ. Thus, without pursuing formation and transformation, Christ may be orphaned because God cannot be the firstborn of a family of untransformed people. Consequently, Churches of Christ in Ghana must accept that the church was formed to form, and that formation and transformation is part of God’s purpose and mandate for the church.

Finally, a critical assignment derived from this study for the Churches of Christ in Ghana is to revise the curriculum of the preaching schools affiliated with the community in Ghana. Part of the reason Churches of Christ in Ghana relegate spiritual formation and transformation to the background or discount and discredit its relevance is that the subject of spiritual formation and transformation does not feature in the curriculum of many of the training institutions which train ministers and leaders for the Churches of Christ in Ghana.

Consequently, many preachers who serve the various congregations have neither the necessary training nor the tools necessary to equip them for spiritual formation and transformation.

Therefore, one way of reversing or addressing the situation is for the training institutions to begin incorporating the discipline of spiritual formation and transformation into their curriculum. This assures that from the onset those clothed with the responsibility of ensuring the spiritual growth of the church are neither ignorant nor oblivious of the need for spiritual formation and transformation. Once leaders of the various congregations have themselves encountered and even experienced spiritual formation and transformation, they would appreciate the value firsthand, thereby assuring that they would share what they have been given.

Recommendations for Future Studies

This study focused on evaluating a biannual leadership retreat for leaders of campus churches affiliated with the Churches of Christ for its spiritual formative and transformative value. This study utilized a qualitative research approach with a sample size of 15 participants. Future studies might increase the sample size and utilize a quantitative approach to discover whether the results would be any different. Additionally, for some participants in this current study, considerable time had elapsed since the last time they participated in the retreat. Consequently, they may have forgotten about their experiences or, because of the time interval, their recollection of events and experiences may not be as sharp as could be. Therefore, a future study might choose a population that has had a more recent retreat. It would be interesting to see the difference the time between retreat experiences makes.

Conclusion

This chapter reported and discussed the findings of the study. It emerged that participants in the study were impressed with their experiences at the leadership retreat. A majority of participants affirmed that the retreat had contributed positively to their spiritual formation and transformation. Others identified the open, honest, and transparent discussions, the fasting and prayers, the socialization, and the genuine relationships engendered at the retreat as factors which contributed to their spiritual growth and maturity. They also mentioned the content of educational programs at the retreat as playing a significant role in their spiritual formation and transformation.

Most participants expressed doubt that the spiritual formation and transformation they experienced could have been possible at their local congregations. They pointed out that the telos of ministry which forms the foundation of the retreat is different from that taught at their local congregations. Consequently, many advocated a revision in both the theology and telos of ministry to incorporate the need for spiritual formation and transformation. When suggesting ways of improving the retreat, a significant number of participants suggested that participants should be extended to those outside of the campus church fraternity, efforts should be invested to synchronize the academic calendars of the various universities so that clashes in schedules could be avoided, certificates should be presented to participants because the content of the retreat is comparable to many paid seminars, and, finally, technology should be utilized to cater for both non-tertiary and those who cannot attend in person due to availability constraints. Participants opined that the use of digital platforms will increase penetration of the retreat.

APPENDIX A
INFORMATION AND CONSENT FORM

Evaluative Assessment of Leadership Retreat as a Spiritually Formative Experience for
Leaders of Campus Churches Affiliated with Churches of Christ in Ghana

Introduction:

You are invited to participate in a research study that is seeking to evaluate the biannual leadership retreat organized by the Church of Christ Campus Ministry – University of Cape Coast. The study seeks to understand the extent to which the retreat is a spiritually formative experience for emerging adult Christians in campus churches in Ghana. This study is being conducted by Frank Obeng Essien, a graduate student in the Hazelip School of Theology at Lipscomb University.

The study is being supervised by Drs. Carlus Gupton and Greg Anderson, both faculty members in the Hazelip School of Theology. You were selected as a possible participant in this research because you have participated in the retreat a number of times. Apart from your participation, you also show strong capacity and willingness to express your thoughts on your experiences. Please read this form and ask questions before you agree to be in the study.

Background Information:

The purpose of this study is to evaluate the leadership retreats in terms of its contribution to the spiritual formation and transformation of participants. Approximately 15 people are expected to participate in this research.

Procedures:

If you decided to participate, you will be asked to first, grant an oral interview responding to some questions about your experience as a participant in the leadership retreat and its effects on your spiritual formation and transformation. Secondly, you will be asked to

be part of a focus group with other participants to share experiences from the retreat. The individual interviews are expected to take about 30 minutes while the focus group discussion may take up to an hour. The individual interviews will be done either in person or on the phone, depending which one works better for the participant. The focus group interviews will be done over zoom at a time agreed upon by all participants.

Risks and Benefits:

The study has minimal risks. First, there might be some questions that might make you uncomfortable during the process of recalling or retelling past experiences and situations as part of the interview process. You are free to stop answering at any time during the study. In relation to benefits, there is no direct benefit to you as a participant.

Confidentiality:

All information linked to you will be shared only with the research team. Information that is linked to you will be stored on a password protected computer. All identifiable data will be destroyed after the data analysis is complete.

Generally, confidentiality in a focused group context cannot be guaranteed. It depends on the commitment of all the members of the group to keep in confidence discussions of the group. It is a responsibility shared by the entire group. Nonetheless, to avoid any information from the group's discussion getting into wrong hands, the recorded zoom session of the group will be stored on a password protected computer accessible only by the researcher. Additionally, data obtained will be reported using aggregates to protect the identities of individuals in the group.

Voluntary Participation:

Participation in this research study is voluntary. You are free to stop participating at any time. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with the leadership retreat or the researcher.

Contacts and Questions:

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me, Frank Obeng Essien, at +233-548-234133 or fessien@mail.lipscomb.edu. You may ask questions now or later and my faculty advisor, Dr. Carlus Gupton (cwgupton@lipscomb.edu), will be happy to answer them. If you have other questions or concerns regarding the study and would like to talk to someone other than myself or my faculty advisor, you may contact Dr. Justin Briggs, Chair of the Lipscomb University Institutional Review Board at jgbriggs@lipscomb.edu.

You may keep a copy of this form for your records.

Statement of Consent:

You are making a decision whether or not to participate. Your signature indicates that you have read this information and your questions have been answered. Even after signing this form, please know that you may withdraw from the study at any time.

I consent to participate in the study and be audiotaped and/or videotaped as part of the data collection procedure of this study, as the situation may require (see Media Form attached).

Signature of Participant _____
Date

Signature of Researcher _____
Date



APPENDIX B

IRB RESEARCH STUDY MULTIMEDIA RELEASE

To be completed by the researcher			
Principal			
Investigator:	Frank Obeng Essien		
Research Study:	Evaluative Assessment of Leadership Retreats as Spiritually Formative Experiences for Leaders of Campus Churches Affiliated With Churches of Christ in Ghana		
Type of Release (check all that apply):	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Audio	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Video	<input type="checkbox"/> Photo

To be completed by the research participant

Name of

Participant: _____

In consideration for participating in the research study referenced above, I hereby grant to Lipscomb University ("Lipscomb"), and those acting pursuant to its authority, a non-exclusive, perpetual, worldwide, irrevocable license to record, use, reproduce, exhibit and distribute my presentation, likeness, voice, name and/or identity on a video, audio, photographic, digital, electronic, Internet or other medium without restrictions or limitations (the "Recordings") for the following purposes and uses (*please initial and check all of the following that apply*):

initials	Recording Purpose
_____	The Recordings can be used for scientific publications.
_____	The Recordings can be used for scientific conferences or meetings.
_____	The Recordings can be used for educational purposes.
_____	The Recordings can be used for public presentations to non-scientific groups.
_____	The Recordings can be used on television or the audio portion can be used on radio.
_____	The Recordings can be posted on a Lipscomb website.
_____	The Recordings can be used for reports/presentations to any research funding agencies.

I hereby agree to defend, hold harmless, indemnify, release and forever discharge Lipscomb and its trustees, officers, agents, representatives and employees from and against any and all liability, claims, actions, causes of actions and damages (including reasonable attorneys' fees) of any kind whatsoever in law and in equity, both past and present and whether known or unknown, arising out of or related to (a) the use of my name, likeness, identity, voice, photographic image, video graphic image and voice, and the Recordings, and (b) any personal, intellectual property (including copyright), proprietary or other rights that I

may have in connection with any use of the Recordings. To the extent required, I hereby grant and assign to Lipscomb all copyright in the Recordings and any video, audio, photographic, digital, electronic or other medium utilized in connection therewith. I hereby acknowledge and agree that Lipscomb shall have exclusive ownership of the copyright and other proprietary and property rights in the Recordings. **I acknowledge and understand that my name will not be used in any publication.**

I have read and understood this Multimedia Release, am at least eighteen (18) years of age and fully competent, and execute the same as my own free will.

Signature: _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____

If the participant is under the age of eighteen (18), the undersigned parent/guardian of the participant agrees to the terms of this Multimedia Release on behalf of the above-named participant:

Parent/Guardian

Signature: _____ Date: _____

APPENDIX C

IRB RESEARCH APPROVAL LETTER



Institutional Review Board

Status of Research Review

Date: June 15, 2023

Title of Project: EVALUATIVE ASSESSMENT OF LEADERSHIP RETREAT AS A SPIRITUALLY FORMATIVE EXPERIENCE FOR LEADERS OF CAMPUS CHURCHES AFFILIATED WITH CHURCHES OF CHRIST IN GHANA

Principal Investigator(s) and Co-Investigator(s): Frank Essien

- Research approved.
- Conditional approval. (*See comments.*)
- Committee requests further information before a decision can be made.
- This proposal has been denied.

The IRB has met and reviewed your project proposal, and its decision is marked above. Please review the appropriate text below for further information on the decision that was rendered regarding your proposal:

Research approved: If your protocol has been approved, please note that your project has IRB approval from the date of approval for a period of one year and you are free to proceed with data collection.

Conditional approval: If conditional approval is granted, you are allowed to proceed with data collection provided that the required modifications (see comments) are in place. Within 30 days of your receipt of conditional approval, you will need to submit a revised *Research Proposal Form* (i.e., one that documents the required modifications) with the *Request for Amendment to Approved Research* box checked on the first page.

Committee requests further information: Please see the comments and use them to guide required modifications, then re-submit your request.

This proposal has been denied: See the comments for an explanation of why your proposal has been denied.

If an approved study continues unchanged for longer than one year, you will need to submit another *Research Proposal Form* with the *Project Continuation* box checked on the first page. If an approved study continues for more than one year and there are changes to the research design or data that is collected, you will need to submit another *Research Proposal Form* with the *Request for Amendment to Approved Research* box checked on the first page. The IRB reserves the right to observe, review and evaluate this study and its procedures at any time.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Justin Briggs".

Justin Gregory Briggs, Ph.D., LMFT
Chair, Lipscomb University Institutional Review Board

Comments: Only those with letters of cooperation can participate in recruiting subjects.

APPENDIX D

HUMAN SUBJECT RESEARCH CERTIFICATE



Completion Date 22-Jun-2022
Expiration Date 21-Jun-2025
Record ID 49243309

This is to certify that:

Frank Essien

Has completed the following CITI Program course:

Human Subjects Research
(Curriculum Group)
Faculty, Staff, & Students - Human Subjects Research
(Course Learner Group)
1 - Basic
(Stage)

Not valid for renewal of certification through CME.

Under requirements set by:

Lipscomb University



Verify at www.citiprogram.org/verify?wf4bdd892-90ff-4946-adc7-64209620f840-49243309

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Allen, Leonard, and Swick, Danny Gray. *Participating in God's Life: Two Crossroads for Churches of Christ*. Orange: New Leaf Books, 2001.
- Allen, Leonard. *In the Great Stream: Imagining Churches of Christ in the Christian Tradition*. Abilene: ACU Press, 2021.
- Ammerman, Nancy T., Jackson W. Carl S. Carroll, Dudley, and William McKinney. *Studying Congregations: A New Handbook*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1998.
- Arnett, Jeffrey. "Emerging Adulthood: A Theory of Development from the Late Teens through the Twenties." *American Psychologist* 55, no. 5 (May 2000): 469.
- Asare, Fredrick Boadu. "A History of Churches of Christ in Ghana: 1958-2008." Master's thesis, Abilene Christian University, 2013.
- Barna Group. *The State of Discipleship: Research Conducted among Christian Adults, Church Leaders, Exemplar Discipleship Ministries and Christian Educators*. Ventura: Barna, 2015.
- Barton, Ruth H. *Invitation to Retreat: The Gift and Necessity of Time Away with God*. Downers Grove: IVP Books, 2018.
- Barton, Ruth H., Diana J. Chandler, Siang-Yang Tan, Judy Ten Elshof, and James C. Wilhoit. "Spiritual Formation in the Church." *Journal of Spiritual Formation and Soul Care* 7, no. 2 (November 2014): 292–311.
- Bebbington, David W. *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain: A History from the 1730s to the 1980s*. London: Unwin Hyman, 1989.
- Braun, Virginia, and Clarke, Victoria. "Thematic Analysis." In *APA Handbook of Research Methods in Psychology*, edited by Harris Cooper, et al. Washington, DC: American Psychological Association, 2012.
- Braun, Virginia. "Using Thematic Content Analysis in Psychology." *Qualitative Research in Psychology* 3, no. 2 (2006).
- Bryne, David. "A Worked Example of Braun and Clarke's Approach to Reflexive Thematic Analysis." *Quality & Quantity* 56, no. 3 (June 26, 2021): 1391-1412.
- Burke, Trevor J. "Mother, Father, Infant, Orphan, Brother: Paul's Variegated Pastoral Strategy Towards His Thessalonian Church Family." In *Paul as Pastor*. Bloomsbury: T&T Clark, 2018.
- Calhoun, Adele. *Spiritual Disciplines Handbook: Practices That Transform Us*. Downers Grove: IVP Books, 2005.

- Calvin, John. *Institutes of the Christian Religion*. Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1960.
- Canlis, Julie. *Calvin's Ladder: A Spiritual Theology of Ascent and Descent*. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 2010.
- Chandler, Diane J. "Life in the Spirit: Spiritual Formation in Theological Perspective." *Pneuma* 33, no. 2 (2011): 284–85.
- Chandler, Diane J. *Christian Spiritual Formation: An Integrated Approach for Personal and Relational Wholeness*. Kindle. Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2014.
- Chisholm, Thomas O. "O to be Like Thee," in *Sacred Selections for the Church* no. 255, by Mrs. L. E. Sweeny Kirkpatrick, 1924.
- Essien, Frank Obeng. "An Exploratory Study of Campus Ministries Affiliated With Churches of Christ in Ghana." Master's thesis, Abilene Christian University, 2016.
- Foster, Richard J. *Celebration of Discipline: The Path to Spiritual Growth*. San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1988.
- Gelphi, Doland L. *Committed Worship: A Sacramental Theology for Converting Christians*. Vol. 2. Minneapolis: Liturgical Press, 1993.
- Ghana Tertiary Education Commission. "Accredited Institutions." *GTEC*. Last modified 2022. Accessed August 23, 2023. <https://gtec.edu.gh/accredited-institutions>.
- Gill, Chelsea, Jan Packer, and Roy Balantyne. "Spiritual Retreats as a Restorative Destination: Design Factors Facilitating Restorative Outcomes." *Annals of Tourism Research* 79 (August 8, 2019). doi.org/10.1016/j.annals.2019.102761.
- Gorman, Michael J. *Becoming the Gospel: Paul, Participation and Mission*. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 2015.
- Hall, Todd W. and M. Elizabeth Lewis Hall. *Relational Spirituality: A Psychological-Theological Paradigm for Transformation*. Westmont: InterVarsity Press, 2021.
- Hamilton, Victor P. *Handbook on the Pentateuch*. 2nd ed. Grand Rapids: Baker Academics, 2005.
- Hedges, Brian G. *Christ Formed in You: The Power of the Gospel for Personal Change*. Wapwallopen: Shepherd Press, 2010.
- Hoekema, Anthony. *Created in God's Image*. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1986.
- Holmes, Urban T., III. *A History of Christian Spirituality: An Analytical Introduction*. New York: Morehouse, 2002.

- Howard, Evan B. *The Brazos Introduction to Christian Spirituality*. Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2008.
- Jenkins, Hugh Peter. "A Study of the Origins, Development, and Contemporary Manifestations of Christian Retreats." Master's thesis, University of South Africa, 2006.
- Johnson, Luke Timothy. *The Writings of the New Testament*. 3rd ed. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2010.
- Johnson, Susanne. *Christian Spiritual Formation in the Church and Classroom*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1989.
- Johnston, Graham. *Preaching to a Postmodern World: A Guide to Reaching Twenty-First-Century Listeners*. Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2004.
- Jones, Cheslyn, Geoffrey Wainwright, and Edward J. Yarnold. *The Study of Spirituality*. Oxford: Oxford Press, 1986.
- Kroger, Jane, and James Marcia. "The Identity Statuses: Origins, Meanings, and Interpretations." In *Handbook of Identity Theory and Research*, 31–53, 2011. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-4419-7988-9_2.
- Laniak, Timothy S. *Shepherds After My Own Heart: Pastoral Traditions and Leadership in the Bible*. Leicester: Apollos, 2006.
- Leavy, Patricia. *Research Design: Quantitative, Qualitative, Mixed Methods, Arts-Based, and Community-Based Participatory Research Approaches*. New York: Guilford Press, 2018.
- Lo, Jonathan W. "Pastoral Theology in the Letters of Paul: The Basis for Paul's Pastoral Responsibility." Hill Road, 2014.
- Loder, James E. *The Logic of the Spirit: Human Development in Theological Perspective*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1998.
- Loder, James E. *The Transforming Moment*, 2nd ed. Colorado Springs: Helmers and Howard, 1989.
- Magesa, Laurenti. *What Is Not Sacred? African Spirituality*. Nairobi: Acton Publishers, 2014.
- McFayden, Kenneth J. *Strategic Leadership for a Change: Facing Our Losses, Finding Our Future*. Herndon: Alban Institute, 2009.
- Norman, Alex. "The Varieties of the Spiritual Tourist Experience." *Literature and Aesthetics* 22 (2012): 20-37.
- Norman, Alex and Jennifer J. Pokorny. "Meditation Retreats: Spiritual Tourism Well-Being Interventions." *Tourism Management Perspectives* 24 (2017): 201-7.

- Northcutt, Kay. *Kindling Desire for God: Preaching as Spiritual Direction*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2009. Kindle.
- Oden, Thomas. *Pastoral Theology: Essentials of Ministry*. San Francisco: HarperOne, 1983.
- Ogden, Greg. *Transforming Discipleship: Making Disciples a Few at a Time*. Downers Grove: IVP Books, 2016.
- Perschbacher, Wesley J. *The New Analytical Greek Lexicon*. Peabody: Hendrickson, 1990.
- Powell, Mark Allan. *Introducing the New Testament: A Historical, Literary, and Theological Survey*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academics, 2009.
- Rotberg, Robert. *State Failure and State Weakness in a Time of Terror*. Cambridge: World Peace Foundation, 2003.
- Scorgie, Glen G. *Dictionary of Christian Spirituality: An Analytical Introduction*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2011. Kindle.
- Sensing, Tim. *Qualitative Research: A Multi-Methods Approach to Projects for Doctor of Ministry Theses*. Eugene: Wipf & Stock, 2011.
- Setran, David, and Chris Kiesling. *Spiritual Formation in Emerging Adulthood: A Practical Theology for College and Young Adult Ministry*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academics, 2013.
- Sheldrake, Philip. *Spirituality: A Brief History*. 2nd ed. Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2013.
- Shewmaker, Sam. *Africans Claiming Africa: Living the Vision*. Fullerton: Drumbeat Publications, 1999.
- Shults, F. Leon, and Steven J. Sandage. *Transforming Spirituality: Integrating Theology and Psychology*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academics, 2006.
- Smith, Christian. *Lost in Transition: The Dark Side of Emerging Adulthood*. New York: Oxford Press, 2011.
- Steele, Les L. *On the Way: A Practical Theology of Christian Formation*. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1990.
- Tang, Alex. "The Process of Spiritual Formation." *Kairos Spiritual Formation Ministries*, February 15, 2014. www.kairos2.com.
- Terry, Gareth, Nikki Hayfield, Victoria Clarke, and Virginia Braun. "Thematic Analysis." In *The Sage Handbook of Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 17-37. London: Sage, 2017.

- The Commission on Children at Risk. "Hardwired to Connect: The New Scientific Case for Authoritative Communities." In *Authoritative Communities: The Scientific Case for Nurturing the Whole Child*, edited by Kathleen Kovner Kline, 3-16. New York: Springer, 2008.
- Thompson, James W. *Pastoral Ministry According to Paul: A Biblical Vision*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academics, 2006. Kindle.
- Tongco, Ma Dolores C. "Purposive Sampling as a Tool for Informant Selection." *Ethnobotany Research & Applications* 5 (2007): 147-58.
- Tordzro, Collins. "Ghana Is a Failed State by Dr. Nyaho-Tamakloe." *Myjoyonline*, Multimedia, November 16, 2022, accessed December 12, 2022, www.myjoyonline.com.
- Tucker, Neil. "The History of Christian Spirituality: The Place of Prayer." 2006. ResearchGate, April 2021. Assessed December 13, 2023 <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/350835676>.
- van den Torren, Benno. "African Neo-Pentecostalism in the Face of Secularization: Problems and Possibilities," in *Is Africa Incurably Religious: Secularization and Discipleship in Africa*, edited by Benno van den Toren, Joseph Bosco Bangura, and Richard E. Seed. 1517 Media, Fortress Press, 2020: 107-129. Kindle.
- van der Walt, Tjaart. *Die Messias Het Gekom!: 'n Gids in Die Evangelies Vir Toegewyde Bybel-Studente*. Potchefstroom: Potchefstroomse Teologiese Publikasies, 2006.
- Viljoen, Francois P. "Righteousness and Identity Formation in the Sermon on the Mount." *HTS Teologiese Studies/Theological Studies* 69, no. 1 (January 14, 2013): 1-10.
- Westerhoff, John. *Will Children Have Faith?* Harrisburg: Morehouse, 2000.
- Wilhoit, Jim. *Spiritual Formation as If the Church Mattered*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academics, 2008.
- Willard, Dallas, and Don Simpson. *Revolution of Character: Discovering Christ's Pattern for Spiritual Transformation*. Kindle. Colorado Springs: NavPress, 2020.
- Willard, Dallas. *Divine Conspiracy: Rediscovering Our Hidden Life in God*. San Francisco: HarperOne, 2009.
- Willard, Dallas. *Renovation of the Heart: Putting on the Character of Christ*. Colorado Springs: NavPress, 2002.