

Seminar #1 (11/21/20) Grace and your Calling

- **Amazing** Grace: How does the spiritual life start? What is spiritual formation? Why is grace “amazing”? And how do we regain and stay amazed by grace all our lives?
- Relational implications of being made in “the image of God”. If God is primarily relational – if there is a Relationship at the center of the universe characterized by the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit in other-focused, self-sacrificial, unconditional love – then reflecting or “imaging” Him on earth must have something to do with relating to others the way He relates. A significant implication for our understanding of spiritual formation is that it must be primarily relational formation. So we ask the question: what has God done to make it possible for us to relate with each other the way God relates to us and within Himself? The practical implications are far reaching. We will consult Scripture and authors such as Larry Crabb, Richard Rhor & CS Lewis).
- The above has special implications for spiritual leaders who are often vulnerable to putting more energy into loving the church or their ministry more than they do their spouses or closest family and friends. But this can change. The ultimate success of our ministry will be in direct proportion to the intimacy (health) of our closest relationships.

Seminar #2 (5/09/20) Independence vs Intimacy

- Navigating an internal Copernican revolution in our souls as we walk together through the 4 stages of Christian maturity taught by Bernard of Clairvaux: “I love myself for my sake”, “I love God for my sake”, “I love God for God’s sake”, “I love myself for God’s sake” (i.e., out of gratitude to God I embrace my life circumstances as an opportunity to respond in a way that delights and reveals Him).
- How to recognize our characteristic “pull” in relationships and our unique version of the internal battle between the flesh and the Spirit. Paradoxically, our independent insistence on defining life on our own terms and justifying to ourselves that our demands should be met makes intimacy with God and others impossible. Learn to identify and lay down your false definitions of “Life” and “Death” and answer the Lord’s invitation to become a source of living water for others (John 7: 38-39): pull/take/consume vs pour/give/provide.
- Humility and the “exchanged life”: Learning to trust Jesus (Beatitudes) and the Apostle Paul (2Corinthians 12: 7-10) that God’s power will be most on display in our lives when we realize that on our own we are poor and weak and inadequate, i.e., that on our best day in our own strength we’re a mess, but “with God all things are possible” (Matt 19: 26).

Seminar #3 (6/06/20) Learning to Trust Emptiness, Thirst & Unmet Longing

- Hour 1 - **Holy Indifference: Detaching from everything which is not God in order to Attach more fully to Him alone.** Another way to understand spiritual formation is detaching ourselves from everything but God as a source of soul satisfaction in order to attach ourselves in more settled fashion to Him alone. We will look to Scripture and to Ignatius of Loyola’s Principle and Foundation, Thomas Chalmers’ “expulsive power of a new affection” and CS Lewis for help turning from idolatry toward true worship and availability.

- Hour 2 - ***Thirst: Trusting what God is doing in the Dark.*** As we let go our idols and addictions, we learn to trust the painful experiences of longing, emptiness and ache in our souls as indications something *good* is happening inside and not that something is wrong (Ecclesiastes, Song of Solomon, St. John of the Cross).
- Hour 3 - ***The difference between Addiction to the Church and Becoming the Temple of God.*** The above has special implications for spiritual leaders who are often vulnerable to putting more energy into loving the church or their ministry than they do their spouses or closest family and friends. But this can change. The ultimate success of our ministry will be in direct proportion to the intimacy (health) of our closest relationships (intentional repeat). Opportunity for questions and discussion and integration of entire morning content.

Seminar #4 (9/19/20) Four Uncommon Sources of Energy for the Spiritual Marathon

- Authenticity and vulnerability in the life of the believer. We will explore excerpts from the Psalms, Lamentations, the life of Jesus, current research from Brene Brown on vulnerability and wholeheartedness, and discover that "God meets us where we **are** rather than where we pretend to be" (L Crabb, CS Lewis).
- The place of a Spiritual Friend or peer in your spiritual formation, as distinct from a spiritual director. We will see the importance of becoming more discerning and intentional about the number and types of relationships we have in our lives at any given time. We practice authenticity and vulnerability through finding and being a spiritual friend.
- The place of self-care in spiritual formation. Sometimes our *greatest spiritual* need is sleep!... or exercise or a quiet walk in a beautiful place or a hobby. We need to know ourselves well enough to understand what keeps our souls well and then give ourselves permission to build these things into the regular weekly schedules and seasons of our lives. A practical tool and help will be offered as we seek regular trips to green pastures and still waters and the careful tending of our souls (Ps 23, Prov 4:6).

All these are different angles on the same basic subject: How can we cooperate with the Holy Spirit's work to empty us of confidence in ourselves in order to grow our desperation and dependence on what only he can do in and through us for the sake of others? After all, the "spiritual life" is not looking or acting a certain way but living under the Holy Spirit's control so that Christ is revealed through how we live and relate to others (Ephesians 5:18; Galatians 4:19). Topics will be presented interactively.