

## CHAPTER FIVE: DESIGN AND PROCEDURES

### I. INTRODUCTION

Chapter two of this study showed that the Scriptures give a firm biblical basis for cultivating a God-generated life of living embedded with Christ in the Father through the advance installment of the Holy Spirit. It showed that the nature of this life is a covenantal life that is restored and deepened by the incarnation and embraced through repentance and faith. Moreover, illustrated that this life is enriched by the sacraments of baptism and Lord's Supper and embraces every aspect of life. Furthermore, it demonstrated that this life is a mysterious life that transcends human understanding. In addition, it showed that the significance of living embedded with Christ in the Father through the Holy involves being identified with Christ, living in Christ and Christ living in the believer, being conformed to Christ and resting in Christ.

Chapter three of this study showed that what Calvin taught enriched our understanding of what was discovered in chapter two. Of particular interest is what Calvin taught regarding believers becoming partakers of God's divine nature. According to Calvin, this is an ontological union with God that is a sort of deification (*quasi deificari*). Not that believers share in the essence of God, but they share in the properties of this essence. For Calvin, this is the greatest possible blessing a believer can receive.

Because deification or theosis is an important theme in patristic and Eastern Orthodox theology, chapter four of this study gave an *historical* theological review through church history and showed how deification or theosis was argued, nuanced, understood and applied. It noted that for Irenaeus, deification is the effect of the incarnation, life and death upon the body and spirit of those incorporated into the body of Christ by faith. For Palamas,

deification is genuine immersion in the presence or the energies of God and is facilitated through constant prayer, especially the Jesus prayer. For Daniélou, deification includes being drawn into the life of the Trinity and being interpenetrated with this Trinitarian life through the ministry of the church. For Luther, deification is realized through faith because through faith Christ and a believer ontologically become one so that Christ Himself lives in and through the believer. For Wesley, deification renews a believer's spiritual senses and has the potential to entirely sanctify him already in this life. This sanctification works like a leaven in society. For Pinnock, deification is the special work of the Holy Spirit.

The general hypothesis of this study is that it appears that many Reformed Christians not only do not experience what living a God-generated life of being embedded with Christ in the Father through the advance installment of the Holy Spirit is, but also do not intentionally live this kind of life. Instead, they appear to live self-generated, dis-embedded lives. However, going through a ten-week learning experience meant to equip (young) adults to live this kind of life will serve as a stepping stone in moving them from this kind of self-generated, dis-embedded living to more God-generated, embedded living with Christ in the Father through the advance installment of the Holy Spirit. In order for this hypothesis to be verified or falsified, three research questions need to be answered. First, "To what extent was or is the spirituality of (young) adults in my congregation and in a neighbouring congregation characterized by various forms of detachment or dis-embeddedness between Christ and themselves?" Second, "To what extent do Reformed Christians live self-generated, dis-embedded lives?" Third, "To what extent will going through a 10-week spiritual learning experience meant to equip (young) adults to learn to live a God-generated life of living embedded with Christ in the Father through the advance installment of the Holy Spirit serve

as a stepping stone to move Christians from living self-generated, dis-embedded lives to God-generated live of being embedded with Christ in the Father?”

This chapter shows how what was discovered in the biblical/theological chapters can be used to design a ten-week learning experience to help Christians move from dis-embedded, self-generated lives to God-generated lives of living embedded with Christ in the Father through the advance installment of the Holy Spirit. It does so in the following manner. First, it identifies the possible forms of detachment in the present reality and suggests possible reasons for this detachment. Second, drawing on what was discovered in the biblical/theological chapters of this study, it defines a biblical/theological solution to the experience of these possible forms of detachment. Third, it identifies learning activities to help people move from these possible forms of detachment to embracing a theotic spirituality of living embedded with Christ in the Father through the advance installment of the Holy Spirit. Fourth, it defines outcomes the learning experience hopes will occur and why these are the desired ones. The chapter is concluded with a description of how the ten-week learning experience was set up and processed.

## **II. DESIGN OF THE TEN-WEEK LEARNING EXPERIENCE**

### **A. Present realities: possible forms of detachment**

Chapter one noted that the three sources of the theological conversation are Scripture as the “norming norm” of the conversation, the tradition as the hermeneutical trajectory of the conversation and culture as the embedded context of the conversation. Chapter two engaged the “norming norm” of the theological conversation (Scripture). Chapters three and four engaged the hermeneutical trajectory of the theological conversation (tradition). This first section of the ten-week learning experience dealing with various forms of detachment or

dis-embeddedness from Christ engages the embedding context of the theological conversation (culture).<sup>1</sup>

Lesson one deals with being embraced by God's Father-Son love through the advance installment of the Holy Spirit. The hypothesis of this lesson is that the Christian faith sometimes or often feels like a distant relationship for some Christians because they may not live out of the embrace of God's Father-Son love through the advance installment of the Holy Spirit.<sup>2</sup> A theological reason for this form of dis-embeddedness may be that Christians may not sufficiently realize<sup>3</sup> that the heart of the Christian faith is being embraced by God's Father-Son love through the advance installment of the Holy Spirit.<sup>4</sup>

Lesson two deals with surrendering to God's Father-Son love through the advance installment of the Holy Spirit. The hypothesis of this lesson is that Christians sometimes or often do not feel the presence of God in Christ because they may not have surrendered every

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<sup>1</sup> It should be noted that culture is much broader than the embedding context of the theological conversation for this study. The embedding context for the theological conversation of this study has intentionally been very narrowly defined to various forms of detachment or dis-embeddedness from Christ within two Reformed church communities. A broader embedding context would have raised insurmountable obstacles for an empirical study of this nature.

<sup>2</sup> This possible present reality is captured in narrative form. By beginning each lesson in this narrative form, I am intentionally appealing to those whose primary learning style is an orientation toward *concrete experience*. This style emphasizes "being involved in experiences and dealing with immediate human situations in a personal way. It emphasizes feeling as opposed to thinking; a concern with uniqueness and complexity of present reality as opposed to theories and generalizations; an intuitive, 'artistic' approach as opposed to the systematic, scientific approach to problems." See David Kolb, *Experiential Learning: Experience as the Source of Learning and Development* (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1984), 68. See also Kenton Anderson, *Choosing to Preach: A Comprehensive Introduction to Sermon Options and Structures* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2006), 48-49.

<sup>3</sup> In chapter two, excursus seven on the mind it was noted that "the *nous* is a faculty of *perception*, analogous to your ears or eyes. After you perceive something you might have rational thoughts about it, and you might have emotions about it – but first of all, you just notice it. The *nous* is your 'noticer.'" The word 'realize' is used in the pregnant, twofold sense of the *nous* functioning first as the 'noticing' mind then as the 'thinking' mind. Because a person can have rational thoughts or pleasant or unpleasant emotions about what she has noticed, to 'realize' something includes emotions. Thus, it would appear that to separate thoughts from feelings and feelings from thoughts is an imaginary separation. As Matthew-Green reminded me in personal email correspondence, "Our rationalizing is heavily influenced by our emotions, and our emotions are dominated by our thoughts. Both thinking and feelings are *reactions* [to what the *nous* has noticed or registered]."

<sup>4</sup> This theological reason is not exclusive, but inclusive. Thus, other theological reasons are imaginable. The one chosen in this and the other lessons are chosen on the basis of the biblical-theological basis that was developed in chapters two to four.

dimension of their soul to God in Christ through the advance installment of the Holy Spirit.<sup>5</sup> A theological reason for this form of detachment may be that they do not sufficiently realize that God wants to enter their souls with his Father-Son love through the advance installment of the Holy Spirit.

Lesson three deals with receiving God's Father-Son love through the advance installment of the Holy Spirit. The hypothesis of this lesson is that the Christian faith sometimes or often feels more self-generated than God-generated for some Christians because they may busy themselves too much with giving to God and others before they have first intentionally received from God. A theological reason for this form of dis-embeddedness may be that Christians insufficiently realize that the basic posture of faith is being receptive to God's Father-Son love through the advance installment of the Holy Spirit.

Lesson four deals with visualizing God's Father-Son love through the advance installment of the Holy Spirit. The hypothesis for this lesson is that Christians sometimes or often feel detached from God because they may tend to communicate more verbally with God than they do in mental pictures. A theological reason for this form of detachment may be that Christians do not sufficiently realize that God also communicates his Father-Son love through the advance installment of the Holy Spirit in a visual manner.

Lesson five deals with radiating God's Father-Son love through the advance installment of the Holy Spirit. The hypothesis of this lesson is that Christians sometimes or often experience the Christian faith more as a private relationship than a public because the

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<sup>5</sup> In his *Stages of Faith*, drawing on Wilfred Cantwell Smith, Fowler makes the distinction between belief and faith. Whereas belief is "the holding to certain ideas", "faith involves an alignment of the heart or will, a commitment of loyalty and trust." Fowler shows how "to believe" used to have the meaning of "to align one's heart and will." Citing Smith, he writes, "There was a time when 'I believe' as a ceremonial declaration of faith meant and was heard as meaning: 'Given the reality of God, as a fact of the universe, I hereby proclaim that I align my life accordingly, pledging love and loyalty.' A statement about a person's believing has now come to mean, rather, something of this sort: 'Given the uncertainty of God, as a fact of modern life, so-and-so reports that the idea of God is part of the furniture of his mind.'" Fowler, *Stages of Faith*, 13.

Christian faith may be more<sup>6</sup> about their own salvation than participating with God in working out his plan of salvation. A theological reason for this form of dis-embeddedness may be that Christians insufficiently realize that they are called to participate in the life of the Trinity and allow the Trinity to permeate and inhabit the different spheres of life through them as the Father, Son and Holy Spirit inhabit and permeate one another.

Lesson six deals with discovering God's Father-Son love through the advance installment of the Holy Spirit. The hypothesis of this lesson is that Christians seldom experience the Christian faith as a mystery to be discovered because they may consider the gospel to be primarily about right beliefs and right conduct. A theological reason for this form of detachment may be that Christians insufficiently realize that because the heart of the Christian faith is about being embraced by God's Father-Son love through the advance installment of the Holy Spirit, the heart of the Christian faith involves discovering the joy of living in the mystery of this Father-Son embrace through the advance installment of the Holy Spirit.

Lesson seven deals with representing God's Father-Son love through the advance installment of the Holy Spirit. The hypothesis of this lesson is that Christians sometimes or often experience that the hope they have to offer this world makes little difference in the day-to-day affairs of this world because they may consider the gospel to be primarily about forgiveness of sins instead of being the eschatological presence of God's Father-Son love in the world. A theological reason for this form of dis-embeddedness may be that Christians insufficiently realize that the hope of the gospel for the world involves not only forgiveness of sins but also setting up tangible signs of the coming kingdom of God.

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<sup>6</sup> When I write "more," I am not separating the two but indicating a possible imbalance.

Lesson eight deals with living embedded with Christ in God's Father-Son love through the advance installment of the Holy Spirit. The hypothesis of this lesson is that Christians sometimes or often live detached from the Father's love in Christ because they place more emphasis on what Christ did *for* them than what He does *in* them.<sup>7</sup> A theological reason for this form of detachment may be that Christians insufficiently realize that the mystery of the gospel is living embedded with Christ and Christ living embedded with them both individually and as a community of believers.

Lesson nine deals with being conformed to God's Father-Son love through the advance installment of the Holy Spirit. The hypothesis of this lesson is that Christians may not daily pray to be filled with the Holy Spirit because they may not be very receptive to and expectant of the Holy Spirit. A theological reason for this form of dis-embeddedness is that Christians insufficiently realize that conformity to Christ not only means that Christ is the pattern of their conformity, but also the source of their conformity through the advance installment of the Holy Spirit.

Lesson ten deals with resting in God's Father-Son love through the advance installment of the Holy Spirit. The hypothesis of this lesson is that Christians sometimes or often experience restlessness in the Christian life because the starting point of their Christian life may be characterized more by doing than resting in the presence of God's Father-Son love through the advance installment of the Holy Spirit. A theological reason for this form of detachment may be that Christians insufficiently realize that the starting point of the

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<sup>7</sup> This distinction can also be called redemption accomplished and applied, see John Murray, *Redemption: Accomplished and Applied* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1955). Cf. also Michael S. Horton., "Union with Christ." at <http://www.monergism.com/thethreshold/articles/questions/horton/union.html>

Christian life is resting with Christ in the Father through the advance installment of the Holy Spirit.

## **B. Biblical-theological solutions**

### **1. The Christian faith feels like a distant relationship**

A biblical-theological solution to the Christian faith feeling like a distant relationship because Christians may not live out of the embrace of God's Father-Son love through the advance installment of the Holy Spirit reflected upon in lesson one is to show that the heart of the Christian faith is being embraced by God's Father-Son love through the advance installment of the Holy Spirit.

Chapter two with the biblical basis noted that living embedded with Christ in the Father through the advance installment of the Holy Spirit is an intimate covenantal relationship that the Scriptures compare to a marriage. God generates his own Father-Son love through the advance installment of the Holy Spirit into this intimate relationship or covenant community. God's intention for doing this is that his covenant community will represent Him as his image, i.e. mirror or reflect this divine Father-Son love or divine nature through the advance installment of the Holy Spirit to creation. This covenant community would be able to do this by remaining in God's Father-Son love through complete dependence upon this love.

Chapter three on John Calvin noted that to have the image of God restored in Christ involves looking like Christ, for "in his human nature, which He has in common with us, the imprint (*effigies*) of the Father's glory has been engraved, so that He might transform His members to it." Moreover, Calvin taught that this covenantal restoration and renewal of the image of God is nurtured in the church because the church to be the mother of believers.



Chapter four dealing with the historical-theological literature review noted that Daniélou taught that the Trinitarian relationship between the Father, Son and Holy Spirit from the structure of being and the essence of Christianity. Thus, when the Father enters into covenant with his people, He invites them to share in the life of the Son through the advance installment of the Holy Spirit. Moreover, when God's people enter into the life of the Trinity, they are divinized or deified. Furthermore, knowledge of the Trinitarian life is dependent upon the Scriptures and the Tradition of the Church. This chapter also noted that Pinnock teaches as the Father eternally expresses Himself in the Son, so He temporally expresses Himself in creation through the Son and the Spirit so that creation can share in their powerful, loving relationship of giving and receiving. Pinnock further teaches that while the Spirit bears witness to all of humanity, He does so in a special way in the Church.

These insights informed<sup>8</sup> the design of the learning experience in the following manner.<sup>9</sup> First, the participant's manual illustrates from Gen. 2:22-25, Ex. 19:4 and Eph. 5:31-32 that the heart of the Christian faith is covenantal relationship of living embedded with Christ in God through the advance installment of the Holy Spirit that is comparable to the intimacy of a marriage. Second, it shows from Eph. 5:31-32 and Jn. 15:1-8 that this

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<sup>8</sup> Because the learning experience participant's guide was finished before chapters two-four were finished, 'inform' means either implicitly or explicitly. When asked which theologian influenced him the most, Clark Pinnock responded, "It's hard to chose one particular person. Jurgen Moltmann and Wolfhart Pannenberg have influenced some of my ideas. I started thinking a certain way and then discovered them there to help me. They gave me help in specifics. I have a knack for finding fellow travelers, and appropriate truth wherever it comes from." See Maxwell Ryan, "A conversation with Clark Pinnock," *Christian Week*, Vol. 16 16 (2002): 11. *Mutatis mutandis* ("the necessary changes having been made") finishing the participant's manual before finishing chapters two to four make me feel a bit like Pinnock in this regard.

<sup>9</sup> Whereas the narrative section intentionally appeals to those whose primary learning style is an orientation towards concrete experience in David Kolb's learning paradigm, this cognitive section intentionally appeals to those who primary learning style is an orientation toward *reflective observation*. This learning style focuses "on understanding the meaning of ideas and situations by carefully observing and impartially describing them. It emphasizes understanding as opposed to practical application; a concern with what is true or how things happen as opposed to what will work; an emphasis on reflection as opposed to action." See Kolb, 68. See also Anderson, *Choosing to Preach*, 48-49. For faith as a mode of being in covenantal relationship with a shared center of value and power and others, see James W. Fowler, *Stages of Faith: The Psychology of Human Development and the Quest for Meaning* (New York: HarperSanFrancisco, 1995), 16-23.

marriage relationship is a corporate or communal relationship.<sup>10</sup> Third, it builds on what was learned by showing from Jn. 17:26 that this intimacy with God is nothing less than enjoying the same love that the Father has for the Son and the Son has for the Father through the advance installment of the Holy Spirit. In other words, she is being embraced by God's Father-Son love through the advance installment of the Holy Spirit. Fourth, it illustrates what can happen to doctrinal formation and social involvement if she is not organically generated by living embedded with Christ in God through the advance installment of the Holy Spirit. The participants in the learning experience are encouraged to reflect personally and communally on this biblical-theological solution to the Christian faith feeling like a distant relationship because they may live out of the embrace of God's Father-Son love through the Holy.

## **2. Christians do not feel the presence of God**

A biblical-theological solution to Christians not feeling the presence of God in Christ because they may not have surrendered every dimension of their soul to God in Christ through the advance installment of the Holy Spirit reflected on in lesson two is to show that God wants to enter their souls with his Father-Son love through the advance installment of the Holy Spirit.

Chapter two noted that a human person consists of an immaterial or inner self and a material or outer self. The immaterial or inner self is often called the soul. Because God has created human beings with an "openness to the world," with one's soul a person engages reality and attempts to have a meaningful relationship with this reality, such as God, others, creation and oneself. Yet, because the soul is a many-sided phenomenon, engaging reality in

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<sup>10</sup> In the light of our highly individualized understanding of the Christian faith, it is important to stress this foundational biblical insight.

a meaningful way is not a matter of course. For instance, a soul can open and surrender itself, but also close and withdraw itself. Moreover, this chapter noted that when the soul functions as *mind*, it does so in the twofold sense of the *noticing* mind and the *thinking* mind.

Chapter three noted that Calvin taught that the principal action of the soul is aspiring union with God. Moreover, it noted that Calvin taught that because Christ was obedient and fulfilled the law on our behalf in his human nature, it is through union with his human nature that the life of the Godhead flows into believers through the advance installment of the Holy Spirit since Christ in his humanity contains, as it were, the benefits of his obedience. When we are engrafted into Christ, not only do we draw the vigor and nourishment of life from Christ, but we also pass from our own to his nature. Furthermore, it noted that glorification involves God irradiating or shining upon our humanity with his divine glory.

Chapter four noted that Irenaeus taught that the wrong use of the free will was the cause of humankind's separation from God. Moreover, Christ had to annul and reverse the effects of Adam's disobedience by recapitulating his creation with his incarnation and Adam's disobedience with his obedience and death so that deification or theosis can take place. This chapter noted that Palamas taught that human beings can anthropologically be deified because God has created them with a soul that is able to receive the energies of his divine nature. Moreover, like Irenaeus, Palamas taught that the fall into sin involved Adam and Eve willfully separating themselves from God's Spirit. Furthermore, like Calvin, Palamas taught that humankind's point of contact with God is the flesh of Jesus Christ so that being deified means being in Christ, i.e., a participant of his body that is penetrated with divine life or energy because of the communication of idioms in the hypostatic union. This chapter also noted that Wesley taught that the renewal of the image of God is the heart of

Christianity. This renewal is possible because a human being is like a mirror that receives the grace of God in his own life and then reflects this grace to others and to God. Furthermore, the moral function of the image of God consists in being open to receiving God's love and life and communicating it to others. He compared this to "spiritual respiration" where God breathes into the soul and the soul freely breathes back what it has first received from God. Moreover, in addition to orthodoxy (right doctrine) and orthopraxy (right practice), Christians need to cultivate orthopathy (right feelings, affections, experience) through which they consciously participate in the transforming grace or energy of God and have an encounter with God. This chapter also showed that Pinnock teaches the Spirit is the One who makes the triune life an open circle and source of abundant life. The Spirit animates and interpenetrates human beings, seeking to reproduce in them the interior mystery of God that was exemplified and modeled in the Son. Pinnock also teaches that being created in the image of God involves being created with a spirit that can receive and mirror the love of the Trinity. Pinnock further teaches that because humankind does not receive the love of the Trinity and mirror this love in an undistorted way, the Son of God as the origin and embodiment of its order, takes on human flesh and becomes the undistorted receptacle and mirror of this intra-trinitarian love. The Son is able to do this because the Spirit anoints Jesus and takes Him on a representative journey in which He recapitulates human history in his life, death and resurrection and not only reverses the effect of Adam's sin, but also restores creation.

These insights informed the design of the learning experience in the following manner.<sup>11</sup> First, from Gen. 2:7, Jn. 14:23; 17:26, Col. 3:3, 2 Pet. 1:4 it shows that God wants

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<sup>11</sup> *Mutatis mutandis* regarding the Greek Orthodox/Lutheran understanding of the communication of idioms and Palamas' ontological distinction between the essence and energies of God.

to enter the soul of every Christian with his Father-Son love through the surrender of one's whole being to this love.<sup>12</sup> Second, from Gen. 3:1-7, it shows that the essence of the fall into sin was the intentional dis-embedding from this Father-Son love through unwillingness to surrender to it. As a result, life becomes self-generated instead of God-generated. Third, from Jn. 3:16, it shows that God does not want people to dis-embed themselves from his Father-Son love and live self-generated lives instead of God-generated ones. Thus, He sends his own perpetually generated Son into the world that whoever believes in Him would receive this God-generated life again.<sup>13</sup> Fourth, from Jer. 31:31-34 and Col. 3:16 it illustrates that when God enters our souls with his Father-Son love, He engraves this love deep within the inner recesses of our souls with his living Word. Fifth, from Jn. 3:3, 5; 1 Pet. 1:23 and 1 Jn. 3:9, it shows that his living Word functions as a seed of regeneration, constantly regenerating our life.<sup>14</sup> The participants are encouraged to reflect personally and communally on this biblical-theological solution to not feeling the presence of God in Christ because they may not have surrendered every dimension of their souls to God in Christ.

### **3. The Christian faith feels more self-generated than God-generated**

A biblical-theological solution to the Christian faith feeling more self-generated than God-generated for Christians because they may busy themselves too much with giving to God and others before they have first intentionally received from God reflected upon in lesson three is to show that the basic posture of faith is being receptive to God's Father-Son love through the advance installment of the Holy Spirit.

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<sup>12</sup> See also Philip Troost, *Christus Ontvangen: Gereformeerd en charismatisch: leren van elkaar* (Kok: Kampen, 2006) 43-62.

<sup>13</sup> One aspect of believing is surrender of the will (see next lesson).

<sup>14</sup> God entering our souls with his Father-Son love refers to initial regeneration and ongoing regeneration.

Chapter two noted that a metaphor used in the Old Testament for repentance is circumcising of the foreskin of the heart. A heart that is uncircumcised is one that is plugged up and no longer receptive to the source of its life. This circumcision of the heart is something that God does, but also something that human beings do. In the New Testament, God does this circumcision of the heart or regeneration through the advance installment of the Holy Spirit in a much greater degree than He did in the Old Testament. Moreover, it noted that the Scriptures often refer to faith as receiving. Receptivity was also the fundamental posture in Jesus' life. The receptive posture Jesus showed towards his Father during his earthly ministry is an extension of the receptive posture He has as the eternally, generated Son of the Father. Thus, receptivity ought to be the fundamental posture of the members of God's covenant community.

Chapter three noted that Calvin taught that "as long as Christ remains outside of us, and we are separated from him, all that he has suffered and done for the salvation of the human race remains useless and of no value for us. Therefore, to share with us what he has received from the Father, he had to become ours and to dwell within us." Moreover, Calvin taught that the Holy Spirit is "the bond by which Christ effectually binds us to himself." The Holy Spirit does this through faith by which Christ grafts or embeds us into his body and makes us participants not only in all his benefits, but also in himself. Consequently, faith leads to union with Christ and union with Christ leads to faith. Moreover, Calvin taught that faith is knowledge. This was interpreted in a twofold sense: faith as knowledge of its object and faith as a belief producing process.

Chapter four noted that Irenaeus taught that the proper use of the free will is the human agency for being joined to God or deified again. It also noted that Daniélou taught

that when the Holy Spirit deifies the soul through entry into the Trinitarian life, He divinizes faith and gives a new intellect to those who are divinized so that they enjoy new powers and new senses that perceive the things of God. It further noted that Luther taught that through faith believers participate in Jesus' victory over sin and the devil because through faith they participate in the person of Christ who is this victory. Thus, through faith believers are ontologically connected to Christ so that Christ is not only favour, but also the real presence of Himself in the life of the believer. Moreover, Luther taught that Christ gives faith its form and reality. Thus, believers' works are divinized works because Christ becomes incarnate in them. This chapter also noted that Wesley taught that because human beings are dead in their trespasses and sins, God's grace comes before (*pre-venio*) their being aware of it, awakening them to their true condition. This prevenient grace is universally offered, awakening a person's spiritual senses, enabling him to cooperate with this grace in faith so that he can consciously participate in the divine reality in which he lives, moves and has his being. According to Wesley, this is the *theosis* or divinization the Eastern Fathers wrote about. This chapter also noted that Pinnock teaches that humankind is incorporated into restoration of creation brought about by Jesus' life, death and resurrection through faith. When people are incorporated into Christ by faith, the life, death and resurrection of Christ becomes a power event that transforms their lives as they personally die and rise with Him through the advance installment of the Holy Spirit.

These insights informed the design of the learning experience in the following manner.<sup>15</sup> First, from the tree of life and the tree of knowledge of good and evil, it shows that faith involves continual receptivity to the love of God and unbelief involves unwillingness to live in continual receptivity to this love of God. Second, it suggests that because God is the

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<sup>15</sup> *Mutatis mutandis* with regard to faith being a free choice of the will facilitated by God's prevenient grace.

generator of his own life and character, humankind can only function as image of God by being receptive to God's Father-Son love through the advance installment of the Holy Spirit. Third, From Jn. 5:19-20, 30; 12:49; 14:20, it shows that receptivity was the fundamental posture of Jesus' life. Fourth, it suggests that because the Father perpetually generates the Son, the receptivity Jesus showed towards his Father during his earthly ministry is an extension of the receptive posture He has from all eternity as the eternally, generated Son of the Father. Fifth, from Eph. 5:22-24; Jn.15:4-5 and 1:12-13, it shows that receptivity ought to be the basic posture of faith for God's covenant community too. Sixth, from Jn. 20:22; Acts 2:38; 1 Cor. 6:19; 3:16, it shows that the word "received" is frequently associated with the Spirit. The participants are encouraged to reflect personally and communally on this biblical-theological solution to the Christian faith feeling more self-generated than God-generated because they may busy themselves too much with giving to God and others before they have first intentionally received from God.

#### **4. Christians feel detached or dis-embedded from God**

A biblical-theological solution to Christians feeling detached from God because they may tend to communicate more verbally with God than in mental pictures is to show God not only communicates his Father-Son love through the advance installment of the Holy Spirit verbally, but also visually.

Chapter two showed that the sacrament of baptism visibly portrays that God has embraced his covenant community with Father-Son love through the advance installment of the Holy Spirit. This love is to be personally affirmed and embraced in faith. It further showed that the sacrament of the Lord's Supper visibly portrays this Father-Son love for it is a remembrance of Christ, a communion with Christ and one another, an experience of



forgiveness with Christ and one another, a renewal of one's covenant commitment with God and one another, a meal at which a believer feeds on the Lord Jesus Christ and anticipates that one day all things will be put right and joyfully give thanks to God.

Chapter three showed that Calvin taught that baptism is a visible sign and seal that the church is engrafted into Christ. Calvin further taught that together with their parents infants participate in this engrafting into Christ. Moreover, Calvin taught that the Lord's Supper visibly portrays that when believers partake of the Lord's Supper in faith, they partake of the Lord Jesus Christ Himself so that "the flesh of Christ is like a rich and inexhaustible fountain that pours into us the life springing forth from the Godhead itself." In addition, this chapter showed that God's covenant community is called to behold and contemplate the manifestation of God in his work of creation and redemption so that she feels the weight of the glory of God in these works and is transformed into the image of this glory.

Chapter four showed that Daniélou taught that baptism visibly portrays that as God's first creation arose from the primordial waters through the work of the Spirit, so God's new creation arises from the baptismal waters through the Spirit. Moreover, since the Trinity dwells in the Church and baptism incorporates a person into the Church, the Trinity enters the soul at baptism. In this way, the Son imparts the divine energy of his human nature to the soul through the ministry of the Church. This chapter also showed that Wesley taught that since knowledge of God is found through the physical and spiritual senses, the Lord's Supper ought to be deeply appreciated as a means through which the Holy Spirit communicates the presence of Christ and fosters the renewal of the image of God. Wesley further taught that the Holy Spirit likewise laid a foundation of grace through the sacrament of infant baptism to which every baptized person was answerable by becoming a co-participant in the ongoing

work of renewal in his or her life. This chapter also showed that Pinnock taught that members of the church enter the realm of God's new creation through baptism and actualize this realm through faith.

These insights informed the design of the learning experience in the following manner.<sup>16</sup> First, from Heb. 11:3, it shows that God communicates visibly in and through his creation. Second, from Col. 1:15, it shows that Christ is the image or icon of the invisible God. Third, from Rom. 6:1-14, it shows that baptism is a symbol of the new reality God has created through Jesus death and resurrection. Fourth, from 1 Cor. 11:24-26, 1 Cor. 10:14-17 and 11:27-34, Mt. 26:26-28, Mk. 14:22-25, Jn. 6:35-58, Lk. 22:14-27 and Ac. 2:46-47 it shows that the Lord's Supper is a symbol of God's new creation through Christ's death and resurrection. The participants are encouraged to reflect personally and communally on this biblical-theological solution to not feeling close to God because they may tend to communicate more verbally with God than in mental pictures.

##### **5. Christians experience the Christian faith more as a private faith than a public one**

A biblical-theological solution to Christians experiencing the Christian faith more as a private relationship than a public because the Christian faith may be more about their own salvation than participating with God in working out his plan of salvation is to show that Christians are called to live in the life of the Trinity and allow the Trinity to permeate and inhabit the different spheres of life as the Father, Son and Holy Spirit inhabit and permeate one another.

Chapter two noted that when God's covenant community remains in God's Father-Son love through faith, this community learns to move or dance with the Father, Son and

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<sup>16</sup> *Mutatis mutandis* with regard to the Trinity entering the soul at baptism.

Holy Spirit because she makes room for and is interpenetrated with the love of this divine, Trinitarian community. Consequently, as this divine love is not focused on itself, but radiates out from itself, so too the love of God's covenant community radiates out from herself and interpenetrates or permeates the different spheres of life.

Chapter three noted that Calvin taught that the goal of our union with the Father in Christ through the advance installment of the Holy Spirit is that through faith we may share in the inner life of the Trinity. This entering into the inner life of the Trinity destroys the sacred-secular dichotomy in the Christian's life.

Chapter four noted that a dematerialized, elitist Gnostic spirituality was the occasion that Irenaeus taught that deification did not just affect the soul, but also the body. It also noted that Daniélou taught that the three Persons of the Trinity eternally coexist and co-inhere in one another, implying that when God's people enter into the inner Trinitarian life and are deified, they join in this interpenetrating, inter-trinitarian life. This chapter also noted that Wesley strongly believed that the Christian faith was not a solitary, but a social religion and thus taught that the life of sanctification is to be lived out not in isolation, but in community. Furthermore, it noted that Pinnock taught that the Spirit, as the bond of love, enables the Church to share in and mirror the powerful, giving and receiving love of the Trinity.

These insights informed the design of the learning experience in the following manner. First, drawing on Rublev's icon of the Trinity, it showed that the Father, Son and Holy Spirit are always radiating their love to one another and to us. Second, from Mt. 17:5 and Phil. 2:9-11, it showed that the Father radiates his love for the Son. From Jn. 5:19 and 12:27-28, it showed that the Son radiates his love for the Father. From Rom. 8:15-16 and 1

Cor. 12, it showed the Spirit radiating his love for the Father. From 2 Cor. 5:19, Mt. 11:28-30 and Jn. 3:5, it showed each of the three Persons of the Trinity inviting us into their community of love. Third, from 1 Thess. 5:17, Mk. 14:33 and 2 Cor. 12:7-10, Col. 2:1-2 and Mt. 12:18-21, it showed how being caught up in the Trinitarian movement or dance through faith would enable the covenant community to radiate the joy, vulnerability, wisdom and justice of God in Christ through the advance installment of the Holy Spirit. The participants are encouraged to reflect personally and communally on this biblical-theological solution to experiencing the Christian faith more as a private relationship than a public because the Christian faith may be more about their own salvation than participating with God in working out his plan of salvation.

#### **6. Christians do not experience the Christian faith as a mystery to be discovered**

A biblical-theological solution to Christians not experiencing the Christian faith as a mystery to be discovered because they may consider the gospel to be primarily about right beliefs and right conduct is to show that if the heart of the Christian faith is about being embraced by God's Father-Son love through the advance installment of the Holy Spirit, then the heart of the Christian faith involves discovering the joy of living in the mystery of this Father-Son embrace through the advance installment of the Holy Spirit.

Chapter two noted that being interpenetrated by the Persons and love of the Trinity and dancing with these three Persons is a mystery—though revealed and made known in the Scriptures—that transcends human understanding. Moreover, it noted that instead of God's covenant community merging with Christ in the Father in some sort of monistic manner, it remains distinct from the Father, Son and Holy Spirit even though she is united to it.

Chapter three noted that Calvin taught that living in union with Christ is ultimately a mysterious relationship that one should strive more to experience than try to understand.

Chapter four noted that Daniélou taught that being adopted into God's Trinitarian family and becoming a brother of the Lord Jesus Christ who not only looks like Him but also shares his life is a divine mystery. Moreover, a Christian has mystical knowledge of God to the extent his consciousness, through intellect and love, takes hold of the mystery of living embedded with Christ in the Father through the advance installment of the Holy Spirit. This chapter noted that Luther compared the mystery of Christ being present in faith to God being present in the cloud of glory. Furthermore, Luther taught even though believers' works are divinized works because Christ becomes incarnate in them, this does not mean that believers become sinless in this life.

These insights informed the design of the learning experience in the following manner.<sup>17</sup> First, from Mk. 4:11, 1 Cor. 2:1, 7, 1 Cor. 15:51-52, Rom. 11:25-26, Col. 1:26-27, Rom. 16:25-26, Eph. 1:9-10; 3:6; 5:31-32, 1 Tim. 3:9 and 16, it illustrates the twofold meaning of the word mystery. Second, from Eph. 3:16-19, it illustrates a Christian will only be able to enter deeper into the mystery of living embedded with Christ in the Father through the advance installment of the Holy Spirit by faith together with all the saints. Third, it illustrates some of the characteristics of this mystery by comparing it with some of the characteristics of the mystery of a marriage. Fourth, from 1 Tim. 3:16, it illustrates that the more a Christian surrenders herself to Christ in faith, the more she receives the godliness Christ has achieved for her. The participants are encouraged to reflect personally and communally on this biblical-theological solution to not experiencing the Christian faith as a

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<sup>17</sup> *Mutatis mutandis* concerning theosis only being able to be attained by saints (Daniélou).

mystery to be discovered because they may consider the gospel to be primarily about right beliefs and right conduct.

### **7. Christians experiencing the hope they offer the world makes little difference**

A biblical-theological solution to Christians experiencing that the hope they have to offer this world makes little difference in the day-to-day affairs of this world because they may consider the gospel to be primarily about forgiveness of sins instead of being the eschatological presence of God's Father-Son love in the world is to show that the hope of the gospel for the world includes not only forgiveness of sins, but also setting up tangible signs of the enduring, eschatological kingdom of God.

Chapter two noted that Jesus embodies or represents God's hope for the world by announcing that the kingdom of God is near and setting up visible signs that this kingdom is near as prophet, priest and king. It showed that the Spirit who had anointed and equipped Him for this threefold ministry anoints the church to this same threefold ministry of prophet, priest and king. Thus, living embedded with Christ in the Father through the advance installment of the Holy Spirit entails being where the action of Christ is going on. She is doing things together with Christ.

Chapter three noted that because the flesh of Christ is like a rich and inexhaustible fountain that pours into us the life springing forth from the Godhead, Calvin taught that where Christians are Christ is too.

Chapter four noted that Pinnock taught that as the Spirit anointed and equipped Jesus for his ministry of the reversal of sin and restoration of God's creation, so the Spirit anoints and equips the church to continue this ministry of reversal and restoration. Moreover, by

being a continuation of the anointing of Jesus, the church is a proleptic sign of the coming kingdom of God.

These insights informed the design of the learning experience in the following manner. First, from Mk. 1:14-15, Mt. 5-7, Mk. 5:1-20, Col. 2:15, Rev. 21:4, it showed that Jesus embodied or represents God's hope for the world by announcing that the kingdom of God is near and setting up visible signs that this kingdom is near as prophet, priest and king. Second, from Ac. 2:17 and 1 Jn. 2:27, it showed that the Spirit who had anointed and equipped Him for this threefold ministry of announcing the nearness of the kingdom by embodying it and setting up signs of its nearness anoints the church to this same threefold ministry. Third, from "A Call to an Ancient-Evangelical Future," it illustrated that God's covenant community is called to stand prophetically against today's culture's captivity to racism, consumerism, political correctness, civil religion, sexism, ethical relativism, violence and the culture of death.<sup>18</sup> Fourth, from this same document and an interview with the conveners of the document, it illustrated that the church is called to narrate the world through embodying the master narrative of the kingdom of God.<sup>19</sup> Fifth, Eph. 3:10, it illustrated that representing God's hope for the world is done in a significant way through the local church. The participants are encouraged to reflect personally and communally on this biblical-theological solution to experiencing that the hope they have to offer this world makes little difference in the day-to-day affairs of this world because they may consider the gospel to be primarily about forgiveness of sins instead of being the eschatological presence of God's Father-Son love in the world

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<sup>18</sup> See Robert Webber and Phil Kenyon (conveners), "A Call to an Ancient Evangelical Future" at <http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2006/009/11.57.html>.

<sup>19</sup> See David Neff, "Together in the Jesus Story" at <http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2006/009/10.54.html>.

## 8. Christians living detached from the Father's love in Christ

A biblical-theological solution to Christians living detached from the Father's love in Christ because they place more emphasis on what Christ did *for* them than what He does *in* them is to show that the mystery of the gospel is living embedded in Christ and Christ living embedded in them both individually and as a community of believers.

Chapter two noted that when Christ draws God's covenant community into his own life and work, she becomes part of a new movement that is rolling towards the new heaven and new earth where all things will be made right and where Christ is all in all. The Holy Spirit is the One who draws God's covenant community into this movement so that she is embedded in Christ and Christ is embedded in it. This mutual indwelling of God's covenant people being embedded in Christ and Christ being embedded in it parallels the mutual indwelling of the Father in the Son and the Son in the Father.

Chapter three noted that Calvin taught that when Christ fulfilled his office of prophet, priest and king on earth, He ushered in a new redemptive situation for his covenant community because as Head of this community, they were included in what He accomplished. In this new redemptive situation, God's people not only live embedded in Him, but He also lives embedded in them through the advance installment of the Holy Spirit by faith. Thus, the church lives an eschatological existence in this present age.

Chapter four noted that Palamas taught that union with God in Christ is the source of a believer's deification or theosis. It noted that that Daniélou taught that Christ imparts the divine energy of his human nature to the soul through the ministry of the Church. This chapter noted that Luther taught that when Christ lives in a believer, the believer and Christ ontologically become one person. This ontological presence of Christ in the believer by faith



makes a person God, not in substance, but in participation. This chapter also noted that Pinnock teaches that all humanity is *de jure* included in the new redemptive situation created by the life, death and resurrection of Christ. When a believer accepts this new situation in faith, Christ comes to live in her.

These insights informed the design of the learning experience in the following manner.<sup>20</sup> First, from Rom. 5:12-21, it showed that living embedded with Christ in the Father is a new redemptive situation for the church.<sup>21</sup> Second, from Rom. 5:17, it showed that this new redemptive situation is characterized by the reign of life. Third, from Col. 1:25-27, it showed that the church being embedded in this new redemptive situation and having Christ embedded in the church is part of the mystery of the gospel. Fourth, from Gal 2:19-21 and Eph. 3:16-19, it showed Christ lives in the members of the church through faith. Fifth, from Jn. 14:20, Jn. 17:26 and Col. 3:3, it showed that Christ living in members of the church through faith is the same as living embedded with Christ in God's Father-Son love through the advance installment of the Holy Spirit. The participants are encouraged to reflect personally and communally on this biblical-theological solution to Christians living dis-embedded from the Father's love in Christ because they place more emphasis on what Christ did *for* them than what He does *in* them.

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<sup>20</sup> *Mutatis mutandis* when it concerns Christ effecting a new redemptive situation for all humanity. Contrary to Piinnock, Christ effected this new redemptive situation not for all humanity, but for his covenant community.

<sup>21</sup> See N.T. Wright, *The Letter to the Romans: Introduction, Commentary, and Reflections in The New Interpreter's Bible: A Commentary in Twelve Volumes* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2002), X: 533, 537. On the Christ creating a new situation for his church, see also Lewis B. Smedes, *All Things Made New: A Theology of Man's Union with Christ* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1970); *Ibid.*, *Union with Christ: A Biblical View of the New Life in Jesus Christ* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1983).

## **9. Christians do not daily pray to be filled with the Holy Spirit**

A biblical-theological solution for Christians not daily praying to be filled with the Holy Spirit because they may not be very receptive to and expectant of the Holy Spirit is to show that conformity to Christ not only means that Christ is the pattern of their conformity, but also the source of their conformity through the advance installment of the Holy Spirit.

Chapter two noted that when Christ draws God's covenant community into his own life and work through the advance installment of the Holy Spirit, this community is conformed to the character and conduct of Christ. This includes being daily regenerated from living a self-generated life to living a God-generated life of living embedded with Christ in the Father through the advance installment of the Holy Spirit. This is the heart of what living in covenant with God is about and is more characteristic of the new covenant than of the old.

Chapter three noted that Calvin taught that as long as Christ remains outside the life of members of God's covenant community, the new redemptive situation He has created with his life, death and resurrection will do these members no good. In order for Christ to share with them what He has received from the Father, He must dwell within them through the advance installment of the Holy Spirit. When He does, "the flesh of Christ is like a rich and inexhaustible fountain that pours into us the life springing forth from the Godhead itself."

Chapter four noted that Palamas taught that our bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit. Since the Holy Spirit connects us to the risen and glorified body of the Lord Jesus Christ, the light of this glorified body illumines our bodies through our souls from the inside. This divine ray of light is not created, but the uncreated light of the divinity of Christ shining through his humanity. This chapter further noted that Daniélou taught that the whole purpose of Christianity is that the Holy Spirit would bring humankind into the sphere of God and

divinize the soul. When the Spirit brings us into the sphere of God, we become a brother of Christ so that Christ becomes the pattern and the source of our conformity. This chapter also noted that Luther taught that through faith the Holy Spirit enables the believer to participate in God because God is present in faith divinizing the believer. It also noted that Wesley taught that the Holy Spirit is the one who renews the image of God in humankind and enables Christians to be entirely sanctified either in this life or the next. It also noted that Pinnock teaches that as the bond of love, the Holy Spirit opens up the Trinitarian circle of love, enabling the Church to share in and mirror the giving and receiving love of the Trinity. Conversion is the awakening of this love and continuing to freely respond to this love by being open to it. When we respond to this love by being open to it, the Spirit transforms our inherent image of God into the likeness of God, gradually and dynamically giving us the mind or attitude of Christ. The criterion for participation in God's love is not just cognitive, but also behavioral.

These insights informed the design of the learning experience in the following manner.<sup>22</sup> First, from Rom. 8:29, 8:3-4, Gal. 5:22-23, Rom. 8:26-27, 8:28, it illustrates that conformity to Christ is the purpose of the Father's love, the Son's work of redemption, the Spirit's work of regeneration, the reason why the Spirit groans and why all things work together for good for those who love God and are called according to his purpose. Second, From Gal. 3:1-5 and 4:19, it illustrates the conformity to Christ not only means being conformed to the pattern of Christ, but also the source of Christ. From Ac. 2:14-21 and Jer. 31:32-33, it illustrates that being filled with the Holy Spirit is the heart of what living in covenant with God is about and is more characteristic of the new covenant than of the old.

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<sup>22</sup> *Mutatis mutandis* concerning Wesley's view of entire sanctification. This is only achieved in the life hereafter.

Fourth, from 1 Cor. 4:15, it illustrates that Christ is formed in the covenant community as a whole and the lives of its individual members through the preaching of the Word of God.

Fifth, from Col 3:17 and 23, it illustrates that the more we treat others as if they were Christ and/or we were Christ, the more the Spirit enables us to embody Christlikeness.<sup>23</sup>

The participants are encouraged to reflect personally and communally on this biblical-theological solution to not daily praying to be filled with the Holy Spirit because they may not be very receptive to and expectant of the Holy Spirit.

### **10. Christians experiencing restlessness in the Christian life**

A biblical-theological solution to Christians experiencing restlessness in the Christian life because the starting point of their Christian life may be characterized more by doing than resting in the presence of God's Father-Son love through the advance installment of the Holy Spirit is to show that the starting point of the Christian life is resting with Christ in the Father through the advance installment of the Holy Spirit.

Chapter two noted that after God created humankind and gave them their task and vocation, the first day after their creation and vocation is the Sabbath, the day of rest. Thus, rest was not earned after preceding work, but is a gift of grace given before work. As a sign of God's covenant relationship with his people, this rest was institutionalized in the keeping of the Sabbath. Thus, as the tree of life symbolized that God would continue to generate his own love life into humankind if it would surrender to Him in faith, so the Sabbath symbolized this same promise if God's people would enter into this life and rest in faith on the Sabbath. Yet, the Sabbath rest not only points back to the rest God Himself took on the seventh day after He had completed his work of creation. It also points forward to the

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<sup>23</sup> See John Stott, *The Doctor-A Person* (Cape Town: Medical Christian Fellowship, 1959), 4.

Sabbath rest at the consummation of human history. Jesus embodies this eschatological rest and pulls it forward into the present. When we enter into this rest through faith, He makes us share in the eschatological rest of salvation achieved by his life, death and resurrection. Thus, the Christian life begins by resting in Jesus Christ and being receptive to God's activity in Him through the advance installment of the Holy Spirit. In this way, God's covenant community increasingly discovers more of the mystery of the God-generated life of living embedded with Christ in the Father through the advance installment of the Holy Spirit.

Chapter three noted that Calvin taught that the Sabbath rest is a symbol of the rest that is experienced when God renews and rules his people by his Spirit. In order to enter into this Sabbath rest of renewal and submission to the Spirit of God, God's people must cease from their own works and allow God to work in Him through his Holy Spirit. In this way, the goal of union with God is achieved.

Chapter four noted that Pinnock teaches that the Sabbath rest of unbroken communion with God begins on earth. Thus, being saved is not just enjoying God's unmerited favour, but falling in love with God. Conversion is the awakening of this love and continuing to freely respond to this love by being open to it. When Christians enter this realm of God's love through baptism and actualize it through faith, the Spirit transforms their inherent image of God into the likeness of God, gradually and dynamically giving them the mind or attitude of Christ. Death is the end of this journey in this broken world and a return to God where they enter into a Sabbath rest of unbroken communion.

These insights informed the design of the learning experience in the following manner. First, it illustrates from Gen. 2:2-3, that God rested after He had created for six days. Second, it illustrates from Ex. 31:13 that the Sabbath is a sign of God's covenant with his

people? Third, it illustrates from Heb. 4:8-11, that the Sabbath is an eschatological sign pointing to the eternal Sabbath rest that the people of God will enter at the consummation of history. Fourth, from Mt. 11:28-30, it illustrates that Jesus pulls the eschatological Sabbath rest forward into time. Fifth, from Eph. 1-3 and 1 Cor. 1:30, it illustrates some of blessings of this eschatological Sabbath rest pulled forward into time. The participants are encouraged to reflect personally and communally on this biblical-theological solution to experiencing restlessness in the Christian life because the starting point of their Christian life may be characterized more by doing than resting in the presence of God's Father-Son love through the advance installment of the Holy Spirit. In particular, they are asked to reflect upon the following thesis: Since faith is receptivity to God's activity in Jesus Christ, faith involves resting from our work and resting in the finished work of Jesus Christ who generates his finished work in and through us by his Holy Spirit. When we rest from our work and rest in the finished work of Jesus Christ, the eschatological Sabbath is experientially pulled forward in time and we enjoy a foretaste of this Sabbath through faith.

### **C. Possible learning activities**

Chapter two noted that a human person consists of an immaterial or inner self and a material or outer self. The immaterial or inner self is often called the soul. The peculiar nature of the soul is that it is multidimensional, highly mobile and has an "openness to the world." It was noted that this multidimensional openness entails we should never reduce the soul to one particular function, but realize the soul functions in a variety of ways. Moreover, it noted that we should realize that when one function is dominating, the other functions of the soul operate along with this function. Chapter two further noted that the Greek underlying the word "mind" is *nous*. "The *nous*," it observed, "is a faculty of *perception*, analogous to

your ears or eyes. After you perceive something you might have rational thoughts about it, and you might have emotions about it – but first of all, you just notice it. The *nous* is your ‘noticer.’”<sup>24</sup> Furthermore, this chapter noted that the will is the mind acting upon the emotions.

Chapter three noted that Calvin taught that the image of God is in the soul so that the soul is the reflection of God’s glory in humanity. It further noted that union with Christ leads to faith that is a true knowledge of God that “possesses the whole soul, and finds a seat and resting place in the inmost affection of the heart.” It “enter[s] our heart and pass[es] into our daily living, and so transform[s] us into itself that it may not be unfruitful for us.”<sup>25</sup> This faith as knowledge is not contrasted with knowledge, but *is* knowledge. According to Alvin Plantinga, this is true in at least two ways. First, faith is knowledge of its object, i.e., the stunning significance of God in Christ through the advance installment of the Holy Spirit. Second, faith is an extraordinary cognitive process or belief producing mechanism involving the direct action of the Holy Spirit.<sup>26</sup> Moreover, chapter three noted that because God manifests Himself in creation and the Word, faith is not only a new way of knowing, but also a new way of seeing.

Chapter four noted that Palamas taught that even though all human knowledge is based on perception by the senses, the Christian experience of God is beyond nature since humankind is capable of transcending its own nature because it possesses an organ of vision that belongs neither to the senses or intellect. This is the *nous* or “noticer,” the “(inner) sense directed on an object,” that has “the power of spiritual perception,” and “the capacity for

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<sup>24</sup> Frederica Matthewes-Green, “The Jesus Prayer” (Vancouver: Regent College Audio, 2007).

<sup>25</sup> John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*. John T. McNeill (ed.), trans. Ford Lewis Battles, (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1960), III, 6, 4: 688.

<sup>26</sup> Alvin Plantinga, *Warranted Christian Belief* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 256.

intellectual apprehension.’’<sup>27</sup> Chapter four further noted that Daniélou taught the Christian has mystical knowledge of God to the extent his consciousness, through intellect and love, takes hold of the mystery of living embedded with Christ in God through the advance installment of the Holy Spirit. This is because the Holy Spirit creates a new intellect that gradually grows more luminous as it makes the mind familiar with divine realities and participates in the knowledge that God has of Himself. This mystical knowledge of God is fostered through focusing the mind on God in prayer and becoming aware of his presence. Chapter four further noted that Luther taught that because faith and Christ essentially or ontologically belong together Christ is present in the life of the believer. Thus, Christ is not only the object of faith, but also the subject (actuality; *Seinswirklichkeit*). Consequently, a believer’s works are divinized works because Christ informs or becomes incarnate in them. Moreover, this chapter noted that Wesley taught that God’s regenerating grace begins the process of the renewing of the image of God by continuing the renewal of the spiritual senses begun by God’s prevenient grace. These spiritual senses, such as tasting (Ps. 34:8), seeing (Ps. 119:18), hearing (Mt. 13:15-16) and touching (1 Jn. 1:1) record impressions made upon them through the advance installment of the Holy Spirit, enabling a Christian to consciously participate in the divine reality in which he lives, moves and has his being. Thus, renewal of the image of God is also an epistemological event that involves a new way of knowing. Chapter four also noted that Pinnock taught that the Spirit brings to mind new dimensions of the truth. These insights informed *some* of the learning activities more than others, but they are presupposed on one way or another in *all* of them.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> J. Behm, “nous” in Gerhard Kittel, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1967), 952.

<sup>28</sup> *Mutatis mutandis* with regard to mystical knowledge being only attainable by saints.



## 1. From distance to intimacy<sup>29</sup>

The hypothesis of lesson one is that the Christian faith sometimes or often feels like a distant relationship for some Christians because they may not live out of the embrace of God’s Father-Son love through the advance installment of the Holy Spirit. The learning activity recommended to facilitate the moving from distance to intimacy is the formational reading of the Scriptures.<sup>30</sup> The following table compares and contrasts informational and formational reading.

| <b>Informational Reading:</b>  | <b>Formational Reading:</b>  |
|--|--|
| 1. seeks to cover as much as possible as quickly as possible for the sake of acquiring information.                                | 1. is more concerned about the quality of reading than the quantity: you read more for formation than information.   |
| 2. is linear, moving quickly over the surface of the text from point a to point b, etc.  | 2. seeks to move deeper and deeper into the text allowing the text to intrude into the deeper depths of your being.  |
| 3. seeks to control and master the text  | 3. allows the text to control and master you.  |
| 4. views the text as an object out there for us to control and/or manipulate according to our own purposes, intentions or desires. | 4. views the text as subject of the reading relationship; we are the object that is shaped by the text; thus we wait for the text to shape and control us. |

<sup>29</sup> Whereas the narrative part of the lesson intentionally appeals to those whose primary learning style focuses on concrete experience and the cognitive part of the lesson to those whose primary learning style focuses on reflective observation in David Kolb’s learning paradigm, this section intentionally appeals to those whose primary learning style is an orientation toward *abstract conceptualization*. This style focuses “on logic, ideas, and concepts. It emphasizes thinking as opposed to feeling; a concern with building general theories as opposed to intuitively understanding unique, specific areas; a scientific as opposed to an artistic approach to problems.” See Kolb, 69.

<sup>30</sup> It was stressed that formational Bible reading should not be done at the cost of informational Bible reading, but that informational reading is a means to move to formational reading. Thus, a balanced interplay of the two modes of reading was emphasized.

|   |   |
|---|---|
| 5. is analytical, critical and judgmental           | 5. is humble, detached, receptive and loving; we yield and are willing and pliable before the text. |
| 6. is characterized by a problem-solving mentality. | 6. is open to mystery   |

Table one: information and formational reading

This activity is recommended for the following reasons. First, the Scriptures teach that the Word of God functions as a seed of regeneration, constantly regenerating our life from self-generation to God-generation. Second, Luther confirmed this dynamic, life-giving function of the Word when he compared the Word to a womb that gives birth to a child because through the Word “we receive fire and light, by which we are made new and different, and by which a new judgment, new sensations, and new drives arise in us.”<sup>31</sup> Calvin taught that Christ is present in the Word. Fourth, formational reading encourages this birth-giving function of Christ through the Word as the seed of regeneration because it is a humble, receptive mode of reading that allows the text as subject to enter deeply into our soul. Fourth, the closer we draw to God, the more aware we become of his presence.<sup>32</sup>

In addition to formational Bible reading, the learning activity also recommended journaling, meditation, praying, memorizing and singing the Word. Journaling was recommended because it is a way of keeping written record of changes experienced in God’s Father-Son love entering deeper and more fully into one’s soul through formational Bible reading. Meditation was recommended because it is a way to focus the noticing mind on a small passage of Scripture, allowing this passage to mould and shape the soul or inner self through beholding and being allured by Christ who is present in the Scriptures. Praying the

<sup>31</sup> Martin Luther, *Lectures on Galatians* in LW 26:392.

<sup>32</sup> See also the biblical-theological insights presupposed in this learning activity.

Word was recommended because prayer is a way of focusing and purifying the noticing mind and becoming aware of the presence of God within us. Memorizing and singing the Word was recommended because it is a way of carrying the Word over into daily life.

## 2. From absence to presence

The hypothesis of lesson two is that Christians sometimes or often do not feel the presence of God in Christ because they may not have surrendered every dimension of their soul to God in Christ through the advance installment of the Holy Spirit. The learning activity recommended to facilitate the moving from absence to presence is identifying dimensions of the soul that have not yet been surrendered to God so that God can enter into these dimensions with his Father-Son love.<sup>33</sup> The following table shows seven psychological dimensions of the soul and the possible obstacles to God entering into the soul with his Father-Son love through the advance installment of the Holy Spirit.

| <b>Psychological dimensions</b>       | <b>Possible obstacles</b>                  |
|---------------------------------------|--|
| Our soul is vulnerable enclosed space | Erecting walls                             |
| Our soul is meant to live in God      | The soul trying to live on its own         |
| Our soul is our self-presentation     | Being a victim of what goes on in our soul |
|                                       |  |

<sup>33</sup> For God wanting to enter our soul, see Troost, *Christus Ontvangen*, 43-62. The point of this lesson is that Christians *may* not feel the presence of God because they are blocking his presence in ways they have not yet identified. This does not mean that when Christians do not feel the presence of God they are *always* blocking his presence in one way or another. Moreover, identifying dimensions of the soul that have not yet been surrendered to God so that God can enter into these dimensions with his Father-Son love is only the first step to healing. Concrete steps also need to be taken to remove each obstacle. Thus, this activity is only the beginning of a longer process of healing.

|                                   |  |
|-----------------------------------|--|
| Our soul is mobile                | Not intentionally focusing our soul in the right direction |
| Our soul must rest in the (O)ther | Seeking God in a consumerist fashion                       |
| Our soul must be lost (Mt. 16:25) | Trying to save our soul                                    |

Table two: Psychological dimensions of the soul and possible obstacles to God’s Father-Son love

This activity is recommended for the following reasons. First, God wants to enter our soul with his Father-Son love through the advance installment of the Holy Spirit. Second, God has created us with an “openness to the world” and thus the ability to hinder Him from entering into our soul.<sup>34</sup> Third, Calvin taught that if we are to know God we must also know ourselves. Thus, getting in tune with what lives in our soul is essential to experientially knowing God’s Father-Son love in the depth of our inner self. Fourth, the closer we draw to God, the more aware we become of his presence.<sup>35</sup>

### 3. From self-generation to God-generation

The hypothesis of lesson three is that the Christian faith sometimes or often feels more self-generated than God-generated for some Christians because they may busy themselves too much with giving to God and others before they have first intentionally received from God. The learning activity recommended to facilitate the moving from self-generation to God-generation is making an inventory of the masculine and feminine dimensions of our soul so that both these dimensions are developed and integrated. The following chart shows the masculine and feminine dimensions of the soul.<sup>36</sup>

<sup>34</sup> For how what lives in our souls shapes our identity, see Fowler, *Stages of Faith*, 18-23.

<sup>35</sup> See also the biblical-theological insights presupposed in this learning activity.

<sup>36</sup> Adapted from Troost, *Christus Ontvangen*, 109. Cf. *Ibid.*, 63-79, 103-123. While to some extent these dimensions are culturally bound, they also transcend culture.

| <b>Masculine</b>   | <b>Feminine</b>   |
|--|---|
| <p><i>Take initiative</i></p> <p>push<br/>charge<br/>lead<br/>extrovert</p>  | <p><i>React</i></p> <p>receive<br/>wait<br/>follow<br/>introvert</p>  |
| <p><i>Head</i></p> <p>analyze and structure<br/>reason logically<br/>use common sense<br/>abstract theoretical<br/>think in concepts</p> | <p><i>Heart</i></p> <p>give meaning<br/>reason associatively<br/>trust intuition<br/>concrete practical<br/>think in images</p> |
| <p><i>Goal</i></p> <p>do<br/>form<br/>solve<br/>issue focused<br/>erect boundaries</p>   | <p><i>Relation</i></p> <p>watch<br/>be formed<br/>sense<br/>people focused<br/>make connections</p>                             |

Table three: Masculine and feminine aspects of the soul

This activity is recommended for the following reasons. First, while God is transgender, in the Scriptures He is metaphorically depicted as having what we would call both masculine and feminine characteristics. Second, while God's covenant community is made up of both males and females, this covenant community as a whole is metaphorically depicted as feminine. Third, the basic posture of faith is receptivity. Fourth, receptivity is a feminine characteristic of our soul. Thus, in order for members of God's community to

receive God's Father-Son love into their souls, they need to develop this feminine characteristic of their souls and integrate it with their other characteristics.<sup>37</sup>

#### **4. From aloofness to nearness**

The hypothesis for this lesson is that Christians sometimes or often do not feel close to God because they may tend to communicate more verbally with God than they do in mental pictures. The learning activity recommended to facilitate moving from aloofness to nearness is to visualize or form pictures in our minds of God's Father-Son love. In addition, it recommended making a collage, a flower arrangement or draw a picture of God's Father-Son love.

These activities were recommended for the following reasons. First, in the depth of our souls we think visually.<sup>38</sup> Second, the Scriptures depict believers looking with the eyes of their hearts.<sup>39</sup> Third, Calvin refers to faith as a new way of seeing. Fourth, the closer we draw to God, the more aware we become of his presence.<sup>40</sup>

#### **5. From private to public**

The hypothesis of lesson five is that Christians sometimes or often experience the Christian faith more as a private relationship than a public because the Christian faith may be more about their own salvation than participating with God in working out his plan of salvation. The learning activity recommended to facilitate moving from private detachment

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<sup>37</sup> See also the biblical-theological insights presupposed in this learning activity.

<sup>38</sup> Han F. de Wit, *The Spiritual Path: An Introduction to the Psychology of the Spiritual Traditions*, trans. Henry Jansen & Lucia Hofland-Jansen (Pittsburg: Duquesne University Press, 1999), 75-76. See also Fowler, *Stages of Faith*. For Fowler, besides being a way of relating, faith is also a way of knowing. Virtually all knowing, according to Fowler, "begins with images and . . . most of what we know is stored in images." These images unite information and feeling and thus give "some kind of order, unity and coherence in the force fields of our lives." Fowler sees this come to expression very nicely in the German *Einbildungskraft* = the power (*Kraft*) of forming (*Bildung*) into one (*Ein*). See, Fowler, 24-26.

<sup>39</sup> For further reading on communicating visually with God, see Troost, *Christus Ontvangen*, 150-175.

<sup>40</sup> See also the biblical-theological insights presupposed in this learning activity.

to public participation is to learn to move or dance as a covenant community with the Father, Son and Holy Spirit by making room for and being interpenetrated with the love of this divine, Trinitarian community through faith.<sup>41</sup> One of the ways suggested to learn to move or dance with the Trinity is to intentionally behold and contemplate the multi-faceted sceneries of this Trinitarian love life with the eyes of their hearts.<sup>42</sup>

This activity was recommended for the following reasons. First, the Scriptures depict believers looking with the eyes of their hearts. Second, in the depth of our souls we think visually. Third, the closer we draw to God, the more aware we become of his presence.<sup>43</sup>

## **6. From correctness of the known to discovery of the unknown**

The hypothesis of lesson six is that Christians seldom experience the Christian faith as a mystery to be discovered because they may consider the gospel to be primarily about right beliefs and right conduct. The learning activity recommended to facilitate moving from the correctness of the known to the discovery of the unknown is to develop an initiation culture of personal experience within the community of faith.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> For radiating Christ, see Jos Douma, *Christus Uitstralen: worden als Hij* (Kampen: Kok, 2005).

<sup>42</sup> Mathewes-Green makes the insightful comment that “focusing on spirituality instead of on the Lord makes you stop halfway down the hallway and think about yourself. That obviously delays your progress. It can be a temptation to consumerism – ‘Gee, centering prayer didn’t work, I think I’ll try Ignatian meditation.’” See Frederica Mathewes-Green, “The Call and Spiritual Formation,” (Unpublished, 5). Contemplating on the many-faceted sceneries of this Trinitarian love life with the eyes of the heart would include contemplating on sceneries of Jesus’ his incarnation, life, crucifixion, resurrection, ascension, enthronement and attributes. For instance, contemplating on Jesus’ words, “It is finished!” can have an incredible transformative effect in learning to let go and learn to live embedded with Christ in the Father through the Holy Spirit instead of living dis-embedded from Him and try to live the Christian life in your own strength.

<sup>43</sup> See also the biblical-theological insights presupposed in this learning activity.

<sup>44</sup> On the mystery of living in union with Christ, see Troost, *Christus Ontvangen*, 32-42. On the tacit dimension of faith, see also Fowler, *Stages of Faith*, 27. 161-62. Faith, for Fowler, is a multi-dimensional, complex phenomenon. Drawing on H. Richard Niebuhr, he compares it to a cube of which one can always see three sides, but never all the sides. such as the back, bottom and inside. See *Ibid.*, 32. Fowler describes faith as a “human phenomenon, an apparently generic consequence of the universal burden of finding or making meaning.” *Ibid.*, 33. Yet, in this overall meaning-making process, human beings also place trust in the images that unify their meaning-making experience and commit themselves to centers of value and power beyond their control that provide orientation for their lives. See *Ibid.*, 11, 29, 16-23. In his essay “Where Is Faith?: Searching for the Core of the Cube,” J. Harry Fernhout argues that Fowler “has given a lot of attention to the side of the

This activity was recommended for the following reasons. First, developing an initiation culture is in line with the Tradition of the early church.<sup>45</sup> Second, in an initiation culture the reliability and credibility of faith transfer is strongly linked to the person who transfers and not to the knowledge that is transferred. Third, the fundamental problem of religious allegiance is not about what we think, but what or whom we love.<sup>46</sup>

### **7. From Gnostic detachment to hopeful engagement**

The hypothesis of lesson seven is that Christians sometimes or often experience that the hope they have to offer this world makes little difference in the day-to-day affairs of this world because they may consider the gospel to be primarily about forgiveness of sins instead of being the eschatological presence of God's Father-Son love in the world. The learning activity used to facilitate moving from Gnostic detachment to hopeful engagement is to be

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cube [such as the various stages of making sense out of life or meaning-making], but has not thoroughly dealt with the substance of its center, namely, that which makes it solid and uniquely a *faith* cube." Fernhout concludes that if we do not "get a firm grasp on the core of the faith cube . . . the many valuable elements in Fowler's theory will tend to dissipate." See J. Harry Fernhout, "Where Is Faith? Searching for the Core of the Cube," in Craig Dykstra and Sharon Parks (eds.), *Faith Development and Fowler* (Birmingham: Religious Education Press, 1986), 65, 87. For Fowler's brief response to Fernhout, see James W. Fowler, "Dialogue: Toward a Future in Faith Development Studies," in *Ibid.*, 280-81. It is beyond the scope of this study to determine who is right in this regard.

<sup>45</sup> Mathewes-Green emphasizes that "spirituality" "isn't a concept I find in the first millennium, or anywhere in Eastern Christianity. As far as I can tell, what we today mean by 'spirituality' is what St. Paul meant by 'life embedded in Christ.'" See Frederica Mathewes-Green, 3-4. She adds, "Early Christians did not talk about 'spirituality,' much less varieties of spirituality, appropriate to this or that kind of personality, or ethnic background, or gender. Not only is that unhelpful, I don't think it's even *possible* to set up such divisions. Each one of us is participating in the light of the One Christ, so in one sense 'spirituality' is exactly the same for everyone, because Christ is one. But each one of us is the only human being God ever made who is *exactly* us, so we will radiate that light back out again just a bit differently than any other saint. So although the unity of Christ means there is only one possible 'spirituality,' in another sense there are as many different "spiritualities" as the billions of people who live and who have lived. But an in-between that imagines that there are different styles appropriate to this or that sub-group, speaks of nothing so much as our culture's reflexive love of shopping." *Ibid.*, 4.

<sup>46</sup> See also the biblical-theological insights presupposed in this learning activity.



emotionally impacted by the following poem about the need to set up signs of the hope of the coming kingdom.<sup>47</sup>

### **Representing Jesus**

*Do you know  
do you understand  
that you represent Jesus to me?*

*Do you know  
do you understand  
that when you treat me with gentleness,  
it raises the question in my mind  
that maybe He is gentle, too.  
Maybe He isn't someone  
who laughs when I am hurt.*

*Do you know  
do you understand  
that when you listen to my questions  
and you don't laugh,  
I think, "What if Jesus is interested in me, too?"*

*Do you know  
do you understand  
that when I hear you talk about arguments  
and conflict and scars from your past,  
I think, "Maybe I am just a regular person  
instead of a bad, no-good little girl  
who deserves abuse.*

*If you care  
I think maybe He cares—  
and then there's this flame of hope  
that burns inside of me  
and for a while  
I am afraid to breathe  
because it might go out.*

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<sup>47</sup> On Protestant Gnosticism, see Philip Lee, *Against Protestant Gnostics*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987. For the kingdom of God as a unifying symbol of the ultimate environment for Jews and Christians, see Fowler, *Stages of Faith*, 29.

*Do you know  
do you understand  
that your words are His words?  
Your face, His face  
to someone like me?  
Please, be who you say you are.  
Please, God, don't let this be another trick.  
Please let this be real.  
Please.*

*Do you know  
do you understand  
that you represent Jesus to me?<sup>48</sup>*

Table four: Representing Jesus

Impacted by this poem, the participants are encouraged to set up signs of hope of the coming kingdom of God.

This activity was recommended for the following reasons. First, the will is the mind acting upon the emotions. Second, in order to activate the will, the emotions need to be positively impacted.<sup>49</sup>

### **8. From Christ *for* us to Christ *in* us.**

The hypothesis of lesson eight is that Christians sometimes or often live dis-embedded from the Father's love in Christ because they place more emphasis on what Christ did *for* them than what He does *in* them.<sup>50</sup> The learning activity recommended to facilitate moving from Christ *for* us to Christ *in* us is to be emotionally impacted by two citations. The

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<sup>48</sup> From Lee Strobel, From: Lee Strobel, *God's Outrageous Claims: 13 Discoveries About Doubt, Sex, Loneliness, business, Forgiveness and More* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997), 71-72. Koos van Loo first introduced me to this poem in his book *Christus Voorstellen: de gemeente van Christus red levens in een postmoderne tijd* (Kampen: Kok, 2001).

<sup>49</sup> See also the biblical-theological insights presupposed in this learning activity.

<sup>50</sup> On living the Christian life detached from God, see Christian Smith and Melina Lundquist Denton, *Soul Searching: The Religious and Spiritual Lives of American Teenagers* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 162-171, 262.

first citation is about how moralism is a way of life that essentially does not need God's Father-Son love through the advance installment of the Holy Spirit.

We are moral beings to the core—the very universe is moral. Right and wrong are embedded in the creation. It matters what is done, said, believed, even thought. Morality is fundamental and non-negotiable.

But *moralism* is something quite different. Moralism means constructing a way of life in which I have no need of a saving God. Moralism is dead; morality is alive. Moralism works off of a base of human ability and arranges life in such a way that my good behaviour will guarantee protection from punishment or disaster. Moralism works from strength, not weakness. Moralism uses God (or revelation of God) in order not to need God any longer. Moral codes are used as stepping stones to independence from God.

Moralism works from the outside: it imposes right behaviour on oneself or others. There is no freedom in it, and no joy. Moralism is a moral grid that is set on life. Up against this grid, I can see exactly where I fit or don't fit, where you fit or don't fit, what actions are right and which are wrong. And once I know that, what else is there? I either do it or don't. And you either do it or don't. Simple.<sup>51</sup>

The second quotation illustrates that as long as Christ remains outside of us, all that He has done for us is of no value for us.

We must now examine this question, How do we receive those benefits which the Father bestowed on his only-begotten Son—not for Christ's own private use, but that he might enrich poor and needy men? First, we must understand that as long as Christ remains outside of us, and we are separated from him, all that he has suffered and done for the salvation of the human race remains useless and of no value for us. Therefore, to share with us what he has received from the Father, he had to become ours and to dwell within us.<sup>52</sup>

This activity was recommended for the following reasons. First, the will is the mind acting upon the emotions. Second, in order to activate the will, the emotions need to be positively impacted.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> Eugene Peterson, *Christ Plays in Ten Thousand Places: A Conversation in Spiritual Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005), 145-46.

<sup>52</sup> Calvin, *Institutes*, III, 1, 1:537.

<sup>53</sup> See also the biblical-theological insights presupposed in this learning activity.

## **9. From little receptivity and expectancy to much receptivity and expectancy**

The hypothesis of lesson nine is that Christians may not daily pray to be filled with the Holy Spirit because they may not be very receptive to and expectant of the Holy Spirit. The learning activity recommended to facilitate moving from little receptivity and expectancy to much receptivity and expectancy is to pray continually also known as being on line with God 24 hours a day or listening prayer.<sup>54</sup>

This learning activity was recommended for the following reasons. First, only when our *noticing* mind first notices the presence of the Spirit will our *thinking* mind change about our receptivity to and expectancy of the Spirit.<sup>55</sup> Second, since the will is the mind acting upon one's desires, a change in the noticing and thinking mind and emotions will positively impact the will.

## **10. From doing to being**

The hypothesis of lesson ten is that Christians sometimes or often experience restlessness in the Christian life because the starting point of their Christian life may be characterized more by doing than resting in the presence of God's Father-Son love through the advance installment of the Holy Spirit. The learning activity meant to facilitate moving from doing to being is practising the presence of God by having an interactive, conversational relationship with Him.<sup>56</sup>

This learning activity was recommended for the following reasons. First, if a member of God's covenant community wants to live intentionally embedded with Christ in the Father

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<sup>54</sup> See Troost, *Christus Ontvangen*, 176-197. Praying continually or being online with God 24 hours a day is also known as listening prayer. For an introduction to listening prayer, see Seth Barnes, "The Basics of Listening Prayer" at [http://www.adventures.org/a/articles/basics\\_of\\_listening\\_prayer.asp](http://www.adventures.org/a/articles/basics_of_listening_prayer.asp)

<sup>55</sup> See also Gordon Smith, *Beginning Well: Christian Conversion & Authentic Transformation* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2001), 157-167.

<sup>56</sup> While there is overlap between listening prayer and practising the presence of God by having an interactive, conversational relationship with Him, the emphasis of the former is more on listening than in the latter.

through the advance installment of the Holy Spirit, she first needs to remind herself of the presence of this Trinitarian God. Second, God has created human beings with a soul that has an “openness to the world” or an “openness to God.” Thus, in order to intentionally live embedded with Christ in the Father through the advance installment of the Holy Spirit, one needs to focus one’s “noticer” on the presence of God in Christ.<sup>57</sup>

#### **D. Desired outcomes<sup>58</sup>**

Chapter four noted that since the whole process of salvation has its origin and goal in union with Christ, I consider union with Christ is the integrative doctrine of salvation. Yet, even though this is true, union with Christ does not appear to function in the Christian life as it ought. The first reason suggested for this lacuna in the Christian life is an overemphasis on the objective, forensic aspect of what Christ has done *for* us at the cost of the subjective, transformational aspect of what Christ does *in* us. The second reason suggested for this omission in the Christian life is feeling more comfortable dealing with the propositional content of salvation than the mystical process of salvation.

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<sup>57</sup> See also the biblical-theological insights presupposed in this learning activity.

<sup>58</sup> Whereas the narrative section intentionally appeals to those whose primary learning style focuses on concrete experience, the cognitive section to those whose primary learning style focuses on reflective observation and the learning activity section to those whose primary learning style focuses on *abstract conceptualization* in David Kolb’s learning paradigm, this section appeals to those whose primary learning style is an orientation toward *active experimentation*. This style focuses “on actively influencing people and changing situations. It emphasizes practical applications as opposed to reflective understanding; a pragmatic concern with what works as opposed to what is absolute truth; an emphasis on doing as opposed to observing.” See Kolb, *Experiential Learning*, 69. Kolb makes the insight comment that the “combination of all four of the elementary [= primary] learning forms produces the highest level of learning.” Ibid., 66. Each of the ten lessons is structured using this integrative method of learning. The section headings function as tag lines that label and track the major movements in each lesson. A key word or concept recurs in each section heading giving the whole lesson a form of inner cohesion. I am indebted to Kenton C. Anderson for inspiring me to use this integrative method for my preaching. I have adapted it for this dissertation project.

Chapter four further noted union with Christ includes theosis and leads to theosis. Thus, just as union with Christ is the integrative doctrine of salvation, so theosis function as this integrative doctrine too. The suggestion was made that one could therefore speak of inaugural theosis, progressive theosis, and consummative theosis. Accordingly, chapter four suggested that since union with Christ includes deification and leads to deification, Evangelical and Reformed theology has concentrated more on the objective, forensic aspects of the Christian life instead of the relational, subjective aspects and that Augustine did not bring the doctrine of deification to an edifying end in the west, it is beneficial to cultivate a theotic spirituality of being embedded with Christ in the Father through the advance installment of the Holy Spirit. This will, however, be a theotic spirituality that looks more like that of Irenaeus and Calvin than that of Palamas.

This theotic spirituality of being embedded with Christ in the Father through the advance installment of the Holy Spirit engages all our senses. Chapter two noted that when Jesus re-members and re-embedding his covenant community into the divine life of the Trinity, this being re-membered and re-embedded is something that is perceptible and affects spiritual senses of the believing members of God's covenant community. One is ravished by God's goodness and begins to taste and see just how good God is. Chapter three on Calvin noted that union of Christ that leads to faith and faith that leads to union with Christ is a firm knowledge that "possesses the whole soul, and finds a seat and resting place in the inmost affection of the heart." It "enter[s] our heart and pass[es] into our daily living, and so transform[s] us into itself that it may not be unfruitful for us." This is because the knowledge of God is engraved upon the soul that is the living core of the believer's subjective feelings, attitudes, responses, and convictions. Because this soul is made for communion with God, it

is constantly searching for God, first contemplatively moving towards God and then contemplatively resting in Him. This chapter also noted that when we feel the weight of God's glory through the contemplation of his works God "sweetly allures" us to Himself for the enjoyment of his benefits and the dedication of our hearts to Him in love.

Chapter four noted that for Irenaeus being re-embedded in the Father by being re-membered to Christ is an experience that not only touches the soul, but also the body. It noted that for Palamas when believers receive the energies of God into their souls this affects their bodies. This chapter noted that for Daniélou when the supernatural grace of God divinizes the soul the spiritual man is endowed with new powers and new senses. It noted that for Luther a believer and Christ ontologically become so much one person through faith that He is, as it were, cemented in her. This chapter noted that for Wesley, in addition to orthodoxy (right doctrine) and orthopraxy (right practice), Christians need to cultivate orthopathy (right feelings, affections, experience) through which they consciously participate in the transforming grace or energy of God and have an encounter with God. This is because the grace of God is perceptible and human beings are psychosomatic beings. It noted that for Pinnock, the Spirit is "the ecstasy that makes the triune life an open circle and a source of pure abundance." The Spirit "embodies and triggers the overflow of God's pure benevolence, fosters its ecstatic character and opens it up to history."<sup>59</sup>

Chapter four also made the following observations about feelings. Feeling, for Wesley, is being inwardly conscious of impressions made upon the spiritual senses through sources outside oneself, such as words, actions and gestures. The mind tries to interpret these impressions by reflecting upon them in the light of scriptural norms and the tradition of the church. Because a human being is a psychosomatic unity, mind and body work together. In

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<sup>59</sup> Clark Pinnock, *Flame of Love: A Theology of the Holy Spirit* (Downer's Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1996), 38.

fact, “An embodied spirit cannot form one thought but by the mediation of its bodily organs. For thinking is not, as many suppose, an act of a pure spirit, but the act of a spirit connected with a body, and playing upon a set of material keys.”<sup>60</sup> Thus, experience has sacramental significance for Wesley. This sacramental significance can be distorted either by absolutizing it or by attaching no value to it at all.<sup>61</sup> Experience is right (*ortho*), however, when it has its source in God, is transforming, is social, rational, sacramental and teleological.<sup>62</sup> This experience is “important not just subjectively and personally but objectively, because it puts us in touch with the new order of which it is a proleptic sign. In orthopathic faith our experience is incorporated into the unfolding history of salvation and we are given a goal and direction that includes both personal renewal and a participation in the first fruits of the Kingdom.”<sup>63</sup>

When reflecting on Calvin’s teaching that seeing and contemplation is an intrinsic element of faith together with hearing and teaching, Zachman noted that when we downplay or ignore seeing and contemplation as an essential element in our knowledge of God our life of faith is impoverished. Thus, he wrote:

The loss of manifestation and contemplation in our understanding of the Reformed tradition today has deprived us of an essential element of the knowledge of God according to Calvin and those who followed him, and has led to an unfortunate impoverishment of the life of piety, the experience of worship, and our relationship with the natural world.<sup>64</sup>

What Zachman writes about seeing and contemplation is equally true about feeling because seeing and contemplation lead to feeling the weight of God’s glory.

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<sup>60</sup> Wesley, Sermon 57, “On the Fall of Man,” 2.2 in Thomas Jackson (ed.), *The Works of John Wesley*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed (Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, 1986), 6:218.

<sup>61</sup> Theodore Runyon, *The New Creation: John Wesley’s Theology for Today* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1998), 146-160.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, 160-167.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, 167.

<sup>64</sup> Randall Zachman, *John Calvin as Teacher, Pastor, and Theologian: The Shape of His Writings and Thought* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2006), 196.



Thus, a theotic spirituality of being embedded with Christ in the Father through the advance installment of the Holy Spirit is by nature an orthopathic spirituality through which members of God’s covenant community consciously participate in the transforming grace or energy of God and have an encounter with God. It will, however, always be a theotic spirituality that is governed by the Chalcedonian axiom *distinctio sed non separatio*.

That brings us to the desired outcomes of the ten-week learning experience. The desired outcome is to move members of God’s covenant community from an objective, forensic, spirituality to a more subjective, relational spirituality. Formulated in the light of the general hypothesis and the research questions of the study, the desired outcome is to move members of God’s covenant community from living dis-embedded, self-generated Christian lives (i.e. a strong emphasis on the forensic, objective nature of salvation) to living embedded, God-generated lives of living embedded with Christ in the Father through the advance installment of the Holy Spirit (i.e. a strong emphasis on the theotic, subjective nature of salvation). What this movement from self-generated to God-generated, dis-embedded to embedded, objective to subjective movement looks like can be seen in the following table.

|   | <b>Detachment</b>                                      | <b>Bib-theological S</b>  | <b>Learning activity</b>              | <b>Desired Outcome</b>   |
|---|--|---|---------------------------------------|--|
| 1 | The Christian faith feels like a distant relationship. | Living embedded with Christ in the Father through the advance installment of the Holy Spirit is the heart of the Christian faith. | Formational reading of the Scriptures | Experiencing the Christian faith as an intimate relationship through the advance installment of the Holy Spirit. |
|   |  |   |                                       |  |

|   |  |  |   |   |
|---|--|--|---|---|
| 2 | Not feeling the presence of God in Christ through the advance installment of the Holy Spirit | God wants to enter our soul with his Father-Son love through the advance installment of the Holy Spirit.   | Identifying the dimensions of the soul that have not yet been surrendered to God  | Feeling the presence of God in Christ through the advance installment of the Holy Spirit                                      |
| 3 | The Christian faith is more self-generated than God-generated.                               | The basic posture of faith is being receptive to God's Father-Son love through the advance installment of the Holy Spirit.   | Develop and integrate the masculine and feminine characteristics of our soul.   | The Christian faith is more God-generated than self-generated.  |
| 4 | Not feeling very close to God through the advance installment of the Holy Spirit             | God also communicates his love visually.   | Visualize God's Father-Son love and contemplate on the images of this love.   | Feeling closer to God through the advance installment of the Holy Spirit  |
| 5 | Experiencing the Christian faith more as a private relationship than a public one.           | Christians are called to move or dance with Trinity and inhabit and permeate the different spheres of life as the Persons of the Trinity inhabit and permeate one another. | Learning to move or dance with the Trinity by intentionally beholding and contemplating the multi-faceted sceneries of God's Trinitarian love with the eyes of our hearts | Experiencing the Christian faith more as a public relationship.   |
| 6 | Experiencing the Christian faith to be about right beliefs and right conduct.                | The Christian faith is about growing in discovering what it means to live embedded with Christ in the Father through the advance   | Develop an initiation culture of personal experience within the community of faith.   | Experiencing the Christian faith to be about discovering what it means to live embedded with Christ in the Father through the |

|   |   |  |  |   |
|---|---|--|--|---|
|   |   | installment of the Holy Spirit   |  | advance installment of the Holy Spirit  |
| 7 | Experiencing the hope the Christian faith has to offer this world makes little difference in the day-to-day affairs of this world because this hope is primarily about forgiveness of sins. | The hope of the gospel for the world includes not only forgiveness of sins, but also setting up tangible signs of the enduring, eschatological kingdom of God through the advance installment of the Holy Spirit | Remembering that the church represents Jesus to the world. Thus, our gentleness is Jesus' gentleness, our understanding his understanding, our words his words, our face his face. | Offering the world the hope of the presence of Jesus Christ by setting up tangible signs of the enduring, eschatological kingdom of God through the advance installment of the Holy Spirit.     |
| 8 | Living dis-embedded from God because faith is too objective by placing more emphasis on what Christ did <i>for</i> us than on what He does <i>in</i> us.                                    | The mystery of the gospel is living in Christ and Christ living embedded in us.  | Remembering that moralism or self generated living is a way of life that does not need God.  | Living embedded with Christ in the Father through the advance installment of the Holy Spirit by placing just as much emphasis on what Christ does <i>in</i> us as on what He did <i>for</i> us. |
| 9 | Not daily praying to be filled with the Holy Spirit because one may not be very receptive to and expectant of the advance installment of the Holy Spirit.                                   | Conformity to Christ not only means that Christ is the pattern of our conformity, but also its source through the advance installment of the Holy Spirit.  | Praying continually or being online with God 24 hours a day (also known as listening prayer).  | Christ being the source of our conformity to Him by daily praying to be filled with his Spirit and experiencing his generating and transforming work.   |

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| 10 | Experiencing restlessness in the Christian life because the starting point of our Christian life may be characterized more by doing than resting with Christ in the Father through the advance installment of the Holy Spirit. | The starting point of the Christian life is resting with Christ in the Father through the advance installment of the Holy Spirit. | Practising the presence of God through having an interactive, conversational relationship with Him. | Experiencing rest in the Christian life by reminding themselves of the rest of the presence of God so that their doing flows from being embedded with Christ in the Father through the advance installment of the Holy Spirit |

Table five: the movement from an objective spirituality to a more subjective spirituality

### III. PROCEDURES

#### A. The workbook

During the summer months of 2006, I designed a workbook for a learning experience called *Cultivating a God-Generated Life: Living embedded with Christ in God through the advance installment of the Holy Spirit*.<sup>65</sup> The Trinity Western University Research Ethics Board examined the research proposal and concluded that, in all respects, the proposal met appropriate standards of ethics as outlined by the “Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct of Research Involving Humans” on September 9.<sup>66</sup> My supervisor, Dr. Larry Perkins and a high school teacher, Mr. Hugo Vanderhoek, who did a research project on “The Role of Adults in the Faith Development of Children” for his Master’s degree in Educational Administration and Leadership Studies at the University of Victoria in 1999

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<sup>65</sup> See appendix one.

<sup>66</sup> See appendix two

reviewed the workbook.<sup>67</sup> Each lesson explores an aspect of the general hypothesis of this study.

## **B. The subjects**

The subjects of my study are 27 adults divided into two focus groups. Two other adults each attended one session, but decided not to participate in the learning experience. The first focus group, made up of eight males and eight females, met from 7:30-9 pm on ten Friday evenings from September 15 to December 1. The second focus group, made up of six males and six females, met from 8 to 10 pm on nine Sunday evenings from September 17 to December 3.<sup>68</sup> The intent was to include a retreat for each of the focus groups, but due to logistical reasons this did not materialize.<sup>69</sup> All 28 people participated in the learning experience. The Friday night focus group met in one of the rooms of the Surrey Covenant Reformed church. The Sunday night group met in the participants' home, alternating from home to home. The author functioned as teacher and facilitator of the learning experience. Permission was obtained from councils of both congregations for doing research with their members.

The first focus group was in part randomly recruited from my own congregation, the Surrey Covenant Reformed church, via an announcement in our local church bulletin. Since our church is a small congregation with quite a few seniors, I asked three husband and wife couples from the Langley Canadian Reformed Church in Langley to join the nine people from my own congregation who had responded positively to the bulletin announcement. The

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<sup>67</sup> See Hugo Vanderhoek, "The Role of Adults in the Faith Development of Children" at [http://www.hugovanderhoek.com/pages/UvicResearch/Research\\_ToC.html](http://www.hugovanderhoek.com/pages/UvicResearch/Research_ToC.html).

<sup>68</sup> Due to inclement weather, one evening had to be cancelled. To make up for this missed evening, the last two sessions were combined into one. The group met an hour earlier than usual.

<sup>69</sup> If a retreat had been included, the group would have met eight times instead of ten.

second focus group was a Sunday evening Bible Study group randomly chosen from the Langley Canadian Reformed Church. One Sunday evening in August, the convener of this group passed by our back yard. At that time, I shared with him the progress I was making with my workbook. I mentioned that I needed another focus group in addition to the one I was recruiting from my own congregation. When he approached his group, it volunteered to participate in the learning experience. Since I live in Langley and at one time used to be a member of the Langley Canadian Reformed Church, I knew all participants from this congregation. I also knew the couple worshipping in a Christian Reformed church in Abbotsford and the couple worshipping in an Evangelical church in Langley.

On the first evening of the learning experience, each participant was given an official letter of invitation.<sup>70</sup> Moreover, at that time each participant filled out a consent form.<sup>71</sup> This form informed them of the purpose of the learning experience, the procedures to be followed, the time commitment required, the potential risks and discomforts, the potential benefits, confidentiality and contact information about the learning experience. Furthermore, each participant filled out a 40-item questionnaire, designed by the author, to determine to what extent he or she experiences living embedded with Christ in God.<sup>72</sup> At the close of the tenth session, each participant was given a second questionnaire, also designed by the author, to determine the effects of the 10-week spiritual learning experience to equip them to learn to live with Christ in God through the advance installment of the Holy Spirit.<sup>73</sup> This questionnaire was filled out at each participant's leisure at home and handed in during the debriefing sessions that took place on Dec 8 for the Friday night focus group and Sunday

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<sup>70</sup> See appendix three.

<sup>71</sup> See appendix four.

<sup>72</sup> See appendix five.

<sup>73</sup> See appendix six.

December 17 for the Sunday evening focus group. At that time, the participants had shared their thoughts and feelings about the learning experience. The author also shared some of his own thoughts and feelings. The participants were promised a copy of the final chapter of the dissertation that will show the results and conclusions of the project.

### **C. The Questionnaires**

The first questionnaire was designed to answer my first research question: to what extent is the spirituality of (young) adults in my congregation and in a neighbouring congregation characterized by various forms of detachment between Christ and themselves? The questionnaire addresses not just one aspect of a person, but the whole person. Thus, the first question is an affective one focusing on the participant's feelings. The second is a cognitive one focusing on their thinking. The third is a volitional one focusing on their will. The fourth is a behavioral question focusing on their conduct. The questions are in groups of four. Thus, each set of four questions is investigating how the participants feel, think, desire and act with regard to each of the 10 topics introduced and discussed in the 10-week learning experience. The participants can answer the questions with a Y = yes, an N = no, an S = sometimes or somewhat and a U = unsure.

The second questionnaire was designed to answer my second research question: to what extent will going through a 10-week spiritual learning experience meant to equip (young) adults to learn to live a God-generated life of living embedded with Christ in God through the advance installment of the Holy Spirit serve as a stepping stone to move Christians from living self-generated lives of detachment from God in Christ to a God-generated life of living embedded with Christ in God? This questionnaire once again focuses on the whole person, addressing the affective, cognitive, volitional and behavioral

dimensions of their lives. The participants have the same four options of answering as they had with the first questionnaire. Unlike the first questionnaire, however, they had the opportunity to add a narrative response to each set of four questions and were encouraged to do so. My supervisor, Dr. Larry Perkins, and Mr. Hugo Vanderhoek, reviewed both questionnaires.

The questionnaire results of both groups were tabulated together according to gender. The questionnaire results of the three Evangelical participants were tabulated separately. The tabulation was done separately for the affective, cognitive, volitional and behavioral components of each lesson. An overall tabulation of the affective, cognitive, volitional and behavioral components was also given. Schematically, the comparison between the two questionnaires can be diagrammed as follows:

$$O_1 \text{ ----- } X \text{ ----- } O_2^{74}$$

#### **D. Independent and dependent variables<sup>75</sup>**

One independent variable is the different learning styles of the participants. Some learn better through concrete experience while others learn better through reflective observation. Some learn better through abstract conceptualization while others learn better through active experimentation. The learning experience controlled this variable by offering a learning experience that integrates all four different learning styles. A second independent variable is the unfamiliarity of some of the concepts in learning experience workbook. The learning experience controlled this variable by having the author of the workbook teach and

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<sup>74</sup> John W. Creswell, *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, 2003), 168.

<sup>75</sup> Independent variables are “those presumed to cause, effect or influence the outcome but are independent of the outcome itself.” See Larry Perkins, “Doctor of Ministry Dissertation Manual” (Langley: ACTS, 2005), 18. Dependent variables are “those on which the outcomes are directly dependent, depending on how they are managed or manipulated.” See *Ibid.*, 18.



facilitate the learning experience. A third independent variable is the risk of feeling pressured or embarrassed to reveal one's level of spiritual commitment. The learning experience controlled this variable by assuring the participants in the consent form that any information that is obtained in connection with this study will be anonymous. Consequently, all documents were identified only by a code number of the participant's own choice, unless he or she chose to identify him or herself. Either way, participants were assured that they would not be identified by name in any reports of the completed study. A fourth independent variable is the level of open-mindedness a participant brings to the learning experience.<sup>76</sup> The learning experience controlled this variable by offering a communal learning experience in which each participant participated in the learning experience of the other.

One dependent variable is the gender ratio in the focus groups. The learning experience controlled this variable by having a mix of 13 males and 14 females. A second dependent variable is the varying ecclesiastical traditions participants bring to the learning experience. The learning experience controlled this variable by limiting the learning experience to two local Reformed denominations with the same background that are in the process of merger talks. The three participants from an Evangelical background were tabulated separately. This reduced the Reformed group to 12 males and 12 females. A third dependent variable is that each participant did not attend all ten sessions. The learning experience controlled this variable by encouraging those who missed a lesson to read the lesson in the workbook at home and reflect on the learning activities. A fourth dependent

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<sup>76</sup> The level of open-mindedness may be connected to the stage of faith development. Fowler, for instance, distinguishes between seven stages of faith: (1) primal faith; (2) intuitive-projective faith; (3) mythic-literal faith; (4) synthetic-conventional faith; (5) individuative-reflective faith; (6) conjunctive faith; (7) universalizing faith. See Fowler, *Stages of Faith*, 117-213. It is beyond the scope of this study to explore this connection or any other connection relating to stages of faith development.

variable is that the participants may not have completed the weekly assignments. The learning experience could not control this variable.

#### **IV. CHAPTER SUMMARY**

This chapter showed how what was discovered in the biblical/theological chapters can be used to design a ten-week learning experience to help Christians move from dis-embedded, self-generated lives to God-generated lives of living embedded with Christ in the Father through the advance installment of the Holy Spirit. It did so in the following manner. First, it identified the possible forms of detachment in the present reality and suggested possible reasons for this detachment. Second, drawing on what was discovered in the biblical/theological chapters of this study, it defined a biblical/theological solution to the experience of these possible forms of detachment. Third, it identified learning activities to help people move from these possible forms of detachment to embracing a theotic spirituality of living embedded with Christ in the Father through the advance installment of the Holy Spirit. Fourth, it defined outcomes the learning experience hoped would occur and why these are the desired ones. The chapter is concluded with a description of how the ten-week learning experience was set up and processed.

That brings us to the findings of the ten-week learning experience. It is to this task that this study now turns.