What is your one great desire? Is it to be wealthy? Is it to be famous and have your picture displayed in bright neon lights in Times Square or is it to be on the cover of a major national magazine? Is it to achieve the impossible and do what no one else in the world has been able to do? Or is it to achieve some measure of public prominence? All of us are driven by some goal throughout the course of our lives. Some we reach others we never attain.

I want to suggest that our one great desire, that exceeds all others, is to know the fullness of life and find ultimate satisfaction in our relationship with Jesus Christ. Many people are not quite sure as to what will make them happy. I believe that it is when we come to know Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior, order our lives according to God’s Word and allow the Holy Spirit to take complete charge that we begin to experience the abundant life.

When we look at the life of Jesus of Nazareth we see the perfect example of how to reach our fullest potential in life. For Jesus the greatest joy was to do the work of Father that had sent into the world. Jesus said to them, “My food is to do the will of Him who sent me, and to accomplish His work” (John 4:34; see also 5:30; 6:38).

Prior to beginning His earthly ministry, “Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil” (Matthew 4:1). Jesus went into the wilderness to prepare for the strong challenges that he would face during the conduct of His ministry. Throughout His ministry people wanted to make Him a king and hero (see John 6:14-15). How was Jesus able to resist these attempts by Satan for self-exaltation? He did it by preparing spiritually for the work of the ministry. Jesus told Satan, in response to his challenge to turn some stones into bread, “It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the
mouth of God” (Matthew 4:4 KJV). The point that Jesus made here and throughout His ministry was that life consists of more than things, clothes and the externals of life (see Matthew 6:25; Luke 12:13-21). When the central focus of our lives is on the accumulation of things we miss those things that make life worthwhile (see Deuteronomy 8:3; Isaiah 55:1).

Some Key Questions

Listed below are twenty questions that are intended to help you to think about your personal spiritual pilgrimage.

1. Do you know what it means to be spiritual?
2. What is your definition of spirituality?
3. Are you offended when someone talks to you about spiritual things?
4. Do you ever spend time thinking about your relationship with God?
5. How much time do you spend, on average daily, reading the Bible?
6. Do you and your spouse or a friend practice a consistent prayer life?
7. How often do you fast?
8. When was the last time you sought God’s will for an important decision?
9. Do you know how to meditate?
10. Have you discovered what your spiritual gift or gifts are?
11. Do you confuse spirituality with worship and ministry?
12. Have you ever just sat before the Word of God? What does that mean?
13. When was the last time you read the book of Psalms?
14. When was the last time you felt lifted to a new spiritual level?
15. How much do you want to grow in your personal spiritual journey?
16. Do you want to grow in your relationship with God?
17. Do you seek God in prayer before making decisions?
18. Is there a time that you spend alone in reflection? Meditation?
19. Are you inhibited from public displays of praise and adoration?
20. Can you rejoice in the gathered congregation of saints?
Without an understanding of life that is shaped by a spiritual perspective we are prone to self-destructive behavior that is both the product of sin and our personal tendencies toward sinful behavior (see Luke 15: 11-24; Romans 7:14-25). We can find ourselves in a paradox of plenty, yet we be faced with scarcity (see Haggai 1:3-8). We can have all of the material possessions we need, but none of what we possess makes us happy and fulfilled. What then is the answer to our deepest dilemma? The answer is in developing a biblical spirituality that will both form us in the image of Jesus Christ and will be Christ centered. The answer to life’s deepest longings is in drawing closer to God in an intimate and personal relationship that will both strengthen us inwardly and sustain us throughout the journey of life. As we grow in grace we will move away from our marginal relationships with God and find something deeper and more fulfilling (see 1 Peter 2:1–3)

Purpose of our Study of the Christian Spirituality

The purpose of this study is to begin the quest for a deeper spiritual relationship with God, by studying and practicing the spiritual disciplines. As we discipline ourselves, we open ourselves up to a greater fullness of God’s presence in our lives. Our ultimate aim is to come to know God in the fullest way possible. The Apostle Paul wrote in Philippians 3:10, That I may know Him, and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death. One of the central questions of life is this: How do we come to know and experience the fullness of God? Is it possible to know God in a deeper more meaningful way? Is it practical to even think of knowing God more fully, given the very nature of our modern world? Is the quest for a deeper spiritual relationship out of style in our modern society?

There are four goals that will guide us throughout these lessons. First, we seek to learn what it means to live authentically as Christians and how to develop a sustained consistent pattern of spiritual growth. We will set out on a journey to learn how to reach new heights of spiritual maturity. Second, we will seek to discover who
we are in Jesus Christ and how the Holy Spirit works within our lives to reshape our character, purpose, and lifestyle so that we are shaped into the image of God, which is holiness and righteousness. Third, we will discover together how to grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ (see 2 Peter 3:18). Lastly, we will learn practical techniques (referred to as the spiritual disciplines) that we can use to develop spiritually.

Many believers never reach the full potential possible in their relationship with God. One reason is their failure to grow as disciples. The writer to the Hebrews expressed his concern about their lack of spiritual growth when he wrote, "Concerning him we have much to say, and it is hard to explain, since you have become dull of hearing. For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you have need again for someone to teach you the elementary principles of the oracles of God, and you have come to need milk and not solid food" (Hebrews 5:11-12). We spend a great deal of time searching for the ultimate "spiritual high." Hence we are like the children who are tossed and driven by every new religious fad that comes along (see Ephesians 4:11-16). What we should focus on are the things that lead to a more consistent and stable spiritual walk with God.

What Is Spirituality?

Humans have been in search of a relationship with God since the dawn of creation. Throughout the ages men and women have sought intimacy with the Eternal God of the universe. Since Cain and Abel made the first recorded offerings to God, human have sought to know what pleases God (see Genesis 4:1-7). The key questions in this study are:
1. What is Spirituality?
2. How does one become a spiritual person?
3. What is the spiritual life?
4. How do we come live in the power of the Holy Spirit?

Dallas Willard has defined spirituality this way, "A ‘spiritual life’ consists in
that range of activities in which people cooperatively interact with God--and with the spiritual order deriving from God’s personality and acts.”¹ A spiritual person is one who seeks to integrate his or her life into the kingdom of God.² Norman Shawchuck and Roger Heuser have defined spirituality this way:

**Spirituality is the means by which we develop an awareness of the presence of the loving Lord in our lives, and the processes by which we keep that awareness alive and vital, to the end that we become formed in the Spirit of Christ.**³

Notice several key aspects of their definition. They consider spirituality to be the “means” by which we develop a sense of the presence of God in our lives. Further, spirituality is understood as a series of processes in which we can keep alive the awareness of the presence of God in our lives. There are things that we can do to promote spiritual growth. Sampson lost his physical and spiritual strength because he engaged in activities that drained him of God’s presence and power. His downfall began when he disobeyed God (Judges 13:5). When the Philistines came upon him after Delilah had shaved his head, Sampson did not know that the Lord had departed from him (see Judges 16:15-20).

**Spirituality is paying attention to the life of the spirit in us; it is going out to the desert or up to the mountain to pray; it is standing before the Lord with open heart and open mind; it is crying out, “Abba, Father”; it is contemplating the unspeakable beauty of our loving God.**⁴

Henri J.M. Nouwen

Spiritual development refers to the interaction of our efforts with those of the Holy Spirit in order to bring about strong and healthy Christian spiritual life in believers, congregations, and in the ministers who lead them.⁵

David S. Dockery & David P. Gushee
I urge you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is our spiritual service of worship. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.

Romans 12:1-2, Apostle Paul

In each of the definitions of spirituality and spiritual formation, the emphasis is on cultivating and developing the inner sanctuary of our hearts, minds and spirits. The work that we are called to do is a spiritual work, and it cannot be effectively done unless the preacher is spiritually strong. We are engaged in a cosmic conflict and spiritual battle. Paul reminded the Ephesians of the nature of the struggle.

Finally, be strong in the Lord, and in the strength of His might. Put on the full armor of God, that you may be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers of this darkness, against spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places.

Ephesians 6:10-12

For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh, for the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but divinely powerful for the destruction of fortresses. We are destroying speculations and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God, and we are taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ, and we are ready to punish all disobedience, whenever your obedience is complete.

2 Corinthians 10:3-6
What is the Spiritual Life?

What do we mean by the spiritual life? In her wonderful little book entitled, *The Spiritual Life*, Evelyn Underhill says that, “A spiritual life is simply a life in which all that we do comes from the center, where we are anchored in God: a life soaked through and through by a sense of his reality and claim, and self-given to the greater movement of His will.”⁶

Spirituality is not an end within itself. It is not some point where we arrive, and can thus proclaim, “I am now spiritual.” Rather it is the life long quest for intimacy with God. Our aim is to know God and to know what is the good and perfect will of God for our lives. One can say that the quest for a deeper spirituality is akin to the quest of John Bunyan’s Christian Pilgrim, who set out on the road to freedom from the sin and death of the “City of Destruction” and headed for the “Celestial City,” where life and peace would be found.

The Word Spiritual in the Old and New Testament

Read all of the passages listed below. Take a few minutes to meditate and reflect over the contents of the passages and what they reveal about the spiritual life or the nature of spirituality.

Hosea 9:7  The days of visitation are come, the days of recompence are come; Israel shall know it: the prophet is a fool, the spiritual man is mad, for the multitude of thine iniquity, and the great hatred.

Romans 1:11 For I long to see you, that I may impart unto you some spiritual gift, to the end ye may be established;

Romans 7:14 For we know that the law is spiritual: but I am carnal, sold under sin.
Romans 15:27  It hath pleased them verily; and their debtors they are. For if the Gentiles have been made partakers of their spiritual things, their duty is also to minister unto them in carnal things.

1 Corinthians 2:13  Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual.

1 Corinthians 2:15  But he that is spiritual judgeth all things, yet he himself is judged of no man.

1 Corinthians 3:1  And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ.

1 Corinthians 9:11  If we have sown unto you spiritual things, is it a great thing if we shall reap your carnal things?

1 Corinthians 10:3  And did all eat the same spiritual meat;

1 Corinthians 10:4  And did all drink the same spiritual drink: for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them: and that Rock was Christ.

1 Corinthians 12:1  Now concerning spiritual gifts, brethren, I would not have you ignorant.

1 Corinthians 14:1  Follow after charity, and desire spiritual gifts, but rather that ye may prophesy.
1 Corinthians 14:12 Even so ye, forasmuch as ye are zealous of spiritual gifts, seek that ye may excel to the edifying of the church.

1 Corinthians 14:37 If any man think himself to be a prophet, or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things that I write unto you are the commandments of the Lord.

1 Corinthians 15:44 It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body.

1 Corinthians 15:46 Howbeit that was not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural; and afterward that which is spiritual.

Galatians 6:1 Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted.

Ephesians 1:3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ:

Ephesians 5:19 Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord;

Ephesians 6:12 For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.

Colossians 1:9 For this cause we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to desire that ye might be filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding;
Colossians 3:16  Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.

1 Peter 2:5  Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.

Write a brief summary of your understanding of how the word “spiritual” is used in the Scriptures.____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________

Spirituality in the New Testament

The New Testament uses the word “spiritual” (Greek, pneumatikos—pronounced as pneu-mat-ti-kos) to refer to things that relate to, belong to the realm of, or express the essence of the Spirit/spirit. In the New Testament this word is almost exclusively used by the Apostle Paul. The word pneumatikos, which is translated spiritual, occurs 26 times in the New Testament with 24 being used by Paul. For our purposes we will look at several of the passages in the New Testament that use the word, “spiritual” to discover its meaning.

First, the word spiritual is used to designate things that have their origin in God. For instance Paul told the Romans that when he came to visit them he wanted to share some spiritual gift with them. “For I long to see you in order that I may impart some spiritual gift (italics added) to you, that you may be established” (Romans 1:11). The same word is used by Paul to describe the believer’s spiritual
blessings in Jesus Christ (Ephesians 1:3). Our spiritual blessings are everything that we receive as a result of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, i.e. joy, peace, eternal life, and hope. See also Romans 15:27; 1 Corinthians 9:11 for additional usages of the word.

Second, the word spiritual is used to describe the new life of the believer in Jesus Christ. This is the person who is possessed so much by the Holy Spirit that he is called spiritual or “Spirit person.” The Spirit person is able to understand and comprehend the “things of God” because he is possessed by the Spirit of God. “But he who is spiritual appraises all things, yet he himself is appraised by no man” (1 Corinthians 2:15). The man or woman who is spiritual stands in stark contrast to the non-spiritual man or woman. The reason is expressed in verse 14, “But a natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually appraised” (1 Corinthians 2:14).

The spiritual man or woman is able to understand all things that relate to God’s redemptive grace through Jesus Christ. Because he or she is living in the power of the Holy Spirit and controlled by the Holy Spirit they take on the very character of God. This character is visibly manifested within the fellowship of faith. It finds expression in our relationships with one another (see Ephesians 4:25-32). In Galatians 6:1 the Apostle Paul wrote, “Brethren, even if a man is caught in any trespass, you who are spiritual, restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness; each one looking to yourself, lest you too be tempted.” Only persons who possess the character of God, which is the result of the Holy Spirit’s presence in his or her life, are in a position to bring healing and restoration to fallen brothers. Indeed as Curtis Vaughan has stated, “The ‘spiritual’ are those who live by the Spirit, walk by the Spirit, and exhibit in their lives the fruit of the Spirit.”

Restoration is to be carried out in a spirit of gentleness, not with overbearing judgment, because all of us are subject to falling into sin (see Romans 12:3; 1 Corinthians 3:18, Galatians 6:3).

Third, the word spiritual is used to refer to the powers of wickedness and
darkness. All believers are engaged in never ending spiritual warfare. Thomas A’ Kempis wrote in the Imitation of Christ, “The devil sleepeth not, neither is the flesh as yet dead; therefore cease not to prepare thyself for the battle; for on thy right hand and on thy left are the enemies who never rest.” 11 Paul wrote in Ephesians 6:12, “For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places.” Curtis Vaughan pointed out that it is crucial to know the enemy of the soul.

In military strategy the failure to estimate properly the strength and capabilities of an enemy is a tragic mistake. In the Christian confrontation it is not only tragic but inexcusable, for we are clearly warned both of the nature of the conflict and of the formidable character of the enemy. ‘We wrestle not against flesh and blood.’ We are engaged in a life-and-death struggle, not against a frail human enemy but against the supernatural forces of evil. The word translated ‘we wrestle’ suggests hand-to-hand combat and thus magnifies the personal nature of the encounter. 12

In order to defeat the powers of spiritual wickedness we must use the spiritual weapons God has placed at our disposal (see 2 Corinthians 10:4-5). Even Jesus was confronted by the diabolical forces of darkness (see Matthew 4:1-11). Jesus overcame the assaults of Satan by referring to God’s Word. God’s Word is truth and life! The Holy Spirit equips us for spiritual warfare giving us the necessary strength and understanding to ward off and defeat the attacks of the adversary.

Fourth, the word spiritual has a general usage attached to it in the writings of Paul. For example in Ephesians 5:19 he made mention of “spiritual songs.” Spiritual songs are songs that have their origin in God and seek to glorify and honor Him. Further, Paul informed the Colossian church in his prayer of his desire for them to be “...filled with the knowledge of His will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding (Colossians 1:9). Here again spiritual wisdom is wisdom that has its origin in God. Spiritual wisdom and understanding is true knowledge that leads to life. It is contrasted from the earthly or worldly wisdom that does not seek to glorify
Earthly wisdom seeks its own glory (see 1 Corinthians 1:20-25). James stated that wisdom is from God (James 1:5).

**For Personal Spiritual Growth**

1. Read Psalm 119:2, 10, 34, 145. What does it mean to seek God with the whole heart? How do we seek God with our whole hearts?

2. List four spiritual growth goals that you would like to reach.

3. What or who has been the most important influence when it comes to spiritual growth or spirituality?

4. Write out your definition of spirituality.

**Spiritual Growth Disciplines**

- Begin to develop personal moments for you and the Lord to spend together each day. The most important part of your day will be those moments that you wait before the Lord. Make time for personal worship, prayer, Bible reading, meditation, reflection and listening each day.
• If you are new to the Christian faith, begin your Bible reading from the Gospels and the Psalms. The Gospels will help you to learn about Jesus Christ and His teachings. The Psalms will help you develop a worshipful attitude and teach you the importance of praise to God.

• If you have a Bible dictionary, look up the words, “flesh,” “carnal” and Spirit. Here you want to begin to understand the nature of our spiritual warfare against Satan and the powers of darkness.

• Develop family devotional time. You will want to start a time for you and your spouse, if you are married, to come together for prayer, meditation and prayer.

• Decide that you are going to keep a journal of your spiritual progress. This will give you a personal record of your growth and the things you did to reach your new level of spirituality.

End Notes


2. Ibid.


8. Ibid.


Christian spirituality is about more than having warm feelings toward Jesus. Of Christian traditions of spirituality, the Evangelical tradition has been attentive to otherwise neglected topics, concerns, and formative figures in the evangelical tradition of spirituality. Reflective of interdisciplinary engagement with related fields of inquiry, this volume has two main divisions: (1) thirty-four larger integrative perspective essays followed by (2) nearly seven hundred. Some contributors specialists in their own biblical, historical, or theological fields have been obliged for the first time to think carefully about the links between subjects familiar to them and the discipline and dynamics of Christian spirituality. A Biblical and Christian theology has to be formulated and developed so as to address the traditional theology of mystical and impersonal powers. 2) What is the nature of this traditional belief in the mystical, mysterious powers and forces and its total influence and impact upon the total man in traditional Africa? The definition of the divinities or ancestors as “intermediaries” is very weak in the face of the Biblical definition of religions, divinities and gods in general. Traditional Africans believe in a Supreme Being, who is “above the lesser divinities and the hierarchy of beings.” Christian theology of reconciliation becomes relevant here. 2. Practices Relating to Rituals and Ceremonies. Ritual practices are many, depending upon their functions. Different Christian writers and speakers have used the term “spiritual formation” to refer to the various facets of spiritual growth journey of believers, resulting in different concepts and constructs for its definition. Armstrong (2009) has emphasized the need for strong biblical and theological support for spiritual formation to prevent the movement from becoming a Christian fad that does not get entrenched in the Body of Christ. Such a desire will propel believers towards the practice of spiritual disciplines and the participation in faith communities that will further enhance and strengthen the transformation process. Issue of Definition. The earlier section has highlighted the history of spiritual formation, and the