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“PREPARING THE GROUND”**

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The enclosed material has been written and compiled by Dr. Ron Walborn. Where other sources have been used, every effort has been made to make accurate reference and give credit. A wise pastor once told me, “The only thing original is that which you have forgotten where you got it from.” For any of those errors, which may appear in this manual, I apologize now.

PART ONE
FOUNDATIONS OF SPIRITUAL FORMATION:
“PREPARING THE GROUND”

THE GARDEN CONCEPT OF SPIRITUAL FORMATION

INTRODUCTION:

A. There is a great deal of misunderstanding in the world and in the church today concerning Christianity:

1. Some say it is all about **R** _____ **D** _____
2. Some say it is all about **R** _____ **B** _____
3. Some say it is all about **R** _____ **M** _____

B. The Truth: It is all about **R** _____ **R** _____ with God through Jesus

I. DEFINITIONS:

Spirituality—“The intentional and continuous ordering of one’s orientation toward living all of life in the Spirit. Christian spirituality necessitates a willing surrender to the reigning presence of Christ. It is more a relational process than a list of do’s and don’ts. You surrender to Jesus as King over everything—thoughts, words, deeds.” (Dallas Willard, *Spirit of the Disciplines*)

1. God’s Part:

- The Time has come!

¹⁴After John was put in prison, Jesus went into Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God. ¹⁵“The time has come,” he said. “The kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news!” **Mark 1:14-15**

Kairotic Moments:

- Putting the Kingdom near—within our reach

2. Our Part:

- Repent
 - Believe
- = Faith

When we discover what God has put within our reach, we won’t hesitate to repent & believe.

Spiritual Formation—“Spiritual formation is a process of being conformed to the image of Christ for the sake of others.” (Robert Mulholland, *Invitation to a Journey*)

What is the balance between Grace and Works?

II. THE GARDEN CONCEPT

“God’s Grace is not opposed to effort, it is opposed to earning”
—Dallas Willard, *The Divine Conspiracy*)

Grace defined = *“God’s empowering presence enabling us to be all we were created to be and enabling us to do all we were created to do.”*

¹¹For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men. ¹²It teaches us to say “No” to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age. **Titus 2:11-12**

⁵What, after all, is Apollos? And what is Paul? Only servants, through whom you came to believe--as the Lord has assigned to each his task. ⁶I planted the seed, Apollos watered it, but God made it grow. ⁷So neither he who plants nor he who waters is anything, but only God, who makes things grow. ⁸The man who plants and the man who waters have one purpose, and each will be rewarded according to his own labor. ⁹For we are God’s fellow workers; you are God’s field, God’s building. **1 Cor. 3:5-9**

The Garden Concept of Spiritual Formation—A farmer cannot put life into a seed. That is God’s Job. But a farmer must water and weed. The farmer who leaves the watering and weeding up to God will starve and go bankrupt.

A. THE SEED OF GOD (God’s Job)

²³For you have been born again, not of perishable seed, but of imperishable, through the living and enduring word of God. **1 Peter 1:23**

⁹No one who is born of God will continue to sin, because God’s seed remains in him; he cannot go on sinning, because he has been born of God. **1 John 3:9**

... one who has become a priest not on the basis of a regulation as to his ancestry but on the basis of the power of an indestructible life. **Hebrews 7:16**

B. THE WATERING AND WEEDING (Our Job)

Spiritual disciplines are the tools to help us do this watering and weeding:

1. **Watering** (Nourishment)
2. **Weeding** (Removing the hindrances to growth)

²¹Therefore, rid yourselves of all malice and all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and slander of every kind. ²Like newborn babies, crave pure spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow up in your salvation, **1 Peter 2:1-2**

COME OUT OF DENIAL

THE RATIONALE FOR DISCIPLINE—FACING THE LIES WE BELIEVE

INTRODUCTION

- *Is there a need for discipline in the Christian life? If so why?*

Two Extremes to Avoid:

- 1.
- 2.

SAMPLE PREVIEW

I. WE HAVE THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF CHRIST

¹⁷Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!
²¹God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God. **2 Cor. 5:17,21**

³⁰It is because of him that you are in Christ Jesus, who has become for us wisdom from God—that is, our righteousness, holiness and redemption. **1 Cor. 1:30**

- The Question is: *Why don't our attitudes and behaviors immediately line up with the righteousness we have received in Christ?*

II. THERE IS A BATTLE WITH OUR FLESH/OLD SELF

¹⁷So I tell you this, and insist on it in the Lord, that you must no longer live as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their thinking. ¹⁸They are darkened in their understanding and separated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them due to the hardening of their hearts. ¹⁹Having lost all sensitivity, they have given themselves over to sensuality so as to indulge in every kind of impurity, with a continual lust for more. ²⁰You, however, did not come to know Christ that way. ²¹Surely you heard of him and were taught in him in accordance with the truth that is in Jesus. ²²You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; ²³to be made new in the attitude of your minds; ²⁴and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness. [Ephesians 4:17-24](#)

^{12:1}Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God--this is your spiritual act of worship. ²Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is--his good, pleasing and perfect will. [Romans 12:1-2](#)

III. FOUR LIES WE BELIEVE:

A. S _____ is bad.

⁷During the days of Jesus' life on earth, he offered up prayers and petitions with loud cries and tears to the one who could save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverent submission. ⁸Although he was a son, he learned obedience from what he suffered ⁹and, once made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him [Hebrews 5:7-9](#)

⁶In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. ⁷These have come so that your faith--of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire--may be proved genuine and may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed. [1 Peter 1:6-7](#)

²Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds, ³because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance. ⁴Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything. [James 1:2-4](#)

B. We have a right not to S_____.

C. Doing what I don't feel like doing is L_____.

D. Discipline is D_____.

SAMPLE PREVIEW

CONCLUSION

- *When is discipline unhealthy?*

1. When there is no F_____ in C_____.

2. When it is done for the W_____ M_____.

Asceticism:

THE DISCIPLINE OF HONESTY—Speaking the truth when a lie would work better!

INTRODUCTION

- A. No writer in Church History specifically lists “honesty” as one of the spiritual disciplines. But the concept is all through their writings and certainly all through Scripture.
- B. Contemporary Spiritual Formation may need to deal with honesty more intentionally because of our culture’s predilection for dishonesty:
- A recent Gallup Poll indicated that 75% of the population felt that lying was necessary in daily life
 - A recent ABC news special showed that children had “learned to lie” by the age of 5.
 - The same special showed teenagers lying about finding a loaded gun 65% of the time.
 - Prominent leaders in our government have been exposed in lies with their approval ratings going largely unaffected.
 - We have no reason to believe the church has been immune to this ethical decline in honesty and integrity.

I. THE CHURCH IS CALLED TO BE THE COMMUNITY OF TRUTH

- A. The Greek word for Truth is *Aletheia* (*a* = not; *lethano* = concealed). This word calls us to live in a place of unhiddenness—“not concealed.”

¹⁴Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of men in their deceitful scheming. ¹⁵Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into him who is the Head, that is, Christ... ²⁵Therefore each of you must put off falsehood and speak truthfully to his neighbor, for we are all members of one body. ²⁶“In your anger do not sin”: Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry, ²⁷and do not give the devil a foothold.
Ephes. 4:14,15,25-27

- B. The Church needs to be the place in our culture where truth is spoken!

¹⁶Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective. **James 5:16**

II. THE VALUE OF HONESTY AS A DISCIPLINE—Living an “Aletheia” Lifestyle

A. Truth confronts the sin of **H**_____.

“You are as sick as the secrets you keep.” —Author, John Bradshaw

B. Truth is necessary for real **H**_____ to take place.

*“Simply you desire truth in the inner parts;
you teach me wisdom in the inmost place.
Psalm 51:6*

C. **L**_____ requires truth.

1. If the person I present to you is not who I really am, then even if you love me I will not feel loved. I will suspect in my heart that it is not me you really love, but only the “false self” which I have presented to you.
2. Let me say the same thing to you a different way: If I present “XYZ” to you, when I am really “ABC,” then even if you love me I will not feel loved. Why? Because I know deep down you don’t love the real (“ABC”) me. Sadly, in this scenario, I have not even given you the opportunity to truly love me. True love requires truth!
3. Whenever love is conditional (based upon some external show), the soul will be (or feel) unloved.

*⁶If we claim to have fellowship with him yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not live by the truth. ⁷But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin. **1 John 1:6-7***

A word about spiritual warfare: One of the primary ways the Enemy tries to destroy us is with secrecy. He knows that Love is the food of the soul and if he can cut you off from love, he will starve you to death!

III. EXAMPLES AND PRACTICAL DIRECTIVES

A. There have been practical models of the discipline of honesty throughout Church History:

1. Pre-reformation: The confessional booth was at times a healthy spiritual discipline in the Catholic Church (When viewed in a James 5 perspective).
2. After the Reformation: Many of the Reformers instituted prayer groups and support groups for their followers to take the place of the confessional booth (an example of not throwing the baby out with the bath water).
3. Journaling: The Puritans and many like Jonathan Edwards made an art out of honest confession in journaling.
4. Renewal and Revival Movements: The Moravians and the early Methodists formed their followers into small groups and used accountability questions to draw out honesty—*“How are things with your soul?”*

B. Practical Directives—Consistently do these things:

1. Be Honest in **P**_____
 - Reaffirm Christ’s Love for you—
 - Take an Objective Inventory of your sins—

¹³When you were dead in your sins and in the uncircumcision of your sinful nature, God made you alive with Christ. He forgave us all our sins, ¹⁴having canceled the written code, with its regulations, that was against us and that stood opposed to us; he took it away, nailing it to the cross. ¹⁵And having disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross. **Col. 2:13-15**

True Self Esteem comes out of gut level honesty!

2. Be Honest in J_____.

- Keep your journals and reread them—celebrate the victories!
- Be careful—you may want to keep them in a safe place
- REMEMBER—It is not always safe to be open. There are unsafe places to share—use discernment and wisdom. However, don't ever stop practicing the Discipline of Honesty. This is where a Journal becomes an invaluable tool for spiritual formation.

3. Be Honest with your C_____ F_____ and S_____ D_____.

- We need others in the midst of Honesty to help us:
 - 1). Stay in the truth and accountability!
 - 2). Reaffirm the Love of Christ!

CONCLUSION

- Choose to model vulnerability as a strength and not a weakness.
- When we choose honesty it gives others permission to be honest and vulnerable too!
- "It's OK not to be OK!"

GRIEVING THE SEASONS OF OUR LIVES

INTRODUCTION—

A. Starting Premise—“We must grieve the painful losses of the past seasons of our life before we can effectively embrace the present and the future.”

B. Definitions:

To Grieve or Mourn—

“Blessed are those who mourn,
for they will be comforted.”
Matthew 5:4

• IMPORTANT QUESTIONS ABOUT GRIEF:

1. What brings about the need for grief?

⇒ A One Word Answer: L !

If there is any word that summarizes well our pain, it is the word “loss.” We have lost so much! Sometimes it seems as if life is just one long series of losses. When we were born we lost the safety of the womb, when we went to school we lost the security of our family life, when we got our first job we lost the freedom of our youth, when we got married or ordained we lost the joy of many options, and when we grew old we lost our good looks, our old friends, or our fame. When we became weak or ill, we lost our physical independence, and when we die we lose it all! And these losses are part of the ordinary life! But whose life is ordinary? The losses that settle themselves deeply in our hearts and minds are the loss of intimacy through separations, the loss of safety through violence, the loss of innocence through abuse, the loss of friends through betrayal, the loss of love through abandonment, the loss of home through war, the loss of well-being through hunger, heat and cold, the loss of children through illness or accidents, the loss of country through political upheaval, and the loss of life through earthquakes, floods, plane crashes, bombings and diseases. Perhaps many of these dark losses are far away from most of us; maybe they belong to the world of newspapers and television screens, but nobody can escape the agonizing losses that are part of our everyday existence—the loss of our dreams.

—Henri Nouwen, in *With Burning Hearts*, pp.24,25

⇒ Bottom Line—Nobody gets out of life without loss!

4. **With what options does our past pain leave us?**

- a. **H** _____ **or D** _____
- b. **R** _____
- c. **A** _____ **and B** _____
- d. **A** _____—Choose your painkiller: Drugs, Alcohol, sex, exercise, self-mutilation, TV, Entertainment, RELIGIOUS ACTIVITY!!!!
- e. **Biblical G** _____ **and M** _____—“We do not grieve as those who have no hope,” but we do grieve! (1 Thess. 4:13)

Yes, we must mourn our losses. We cannot talk or act them away, but we can shed tears over them and allow ourselves to grieve deeply. To grieve is to allow our losses to tear apart feelings of security and safety and lead us to the painful truth of our brokenness...But in the midst of all this pain, there is a strange, yet very surprising voice of the one who says: “Blessed are those who mourn; they shall be comforted.” That’s the unexpected news: there is a blessing hidden in our grief. Not those who comfort are blessed, but those who mourn! Somehow, in the midst of our tears, a gift is hidden. Somehow, in the midst of our mourning, the first steps of the dance take place. Somehow, the cries that well up from our losses belong to our songs of gratitude.
—Henri Nouwen, in *With Burning Hearts*, pp.27,28

CONCLUSION

- In order to grieve your past you must get in touch with your heart.

Dear Jesus, it is true. I have experienced loss in my life. Somewhere deep inside my heart is wounded. I fear to even open up these places, and yet I long to be free, to know my heart is well. So come, take me by the hand, and lead me into the grieving process. Only do not leave me there, but lead me to the place of comfort and gladness. I surrender Jesus. I will trust You. In Jesus Name, AMEN.

Bounded Set vs. Centered Set

INTRODUCTION

“This Sacred Romance is set within all our hearts and will not go away. It is the core of our spiritual journey. *Any religion that ignores it survives only as guilt induced legalism, a set of propositions to be memorized and rules to be obeyed.*” (Brent Curtis, John Eldredge)

I. A Definition: Spiritual Formation is the “**process of being formed** into the image of Christ for the sake of others” (*Robert Mulholland*)

A. It is a Process –

“But whatever was to my profit I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. What is more, I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them rubbish that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ – the righteousness that comes from God and is by faith. I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, and so, somehow, to attain to the resurrection from the dead.” **Philippians 3:7-12**

B. Of Being Formed-

“Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. And we, who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord’s glory, are being transformed into his likeness with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.” **2 Corinthians 3:17-18**

II. Bounded Set—Image is Everything!

A <i>REAL</i> Christian does not...	A <i>REAL</i> Christian does...
1.	1.
2.	2.
3.	3.
4.	4.
5.	5.
6.	6.

A. Important Concepts:

B. As a result of living in the Bounded Set...

How do we view ourselves?

How do view others?

How do we view God?

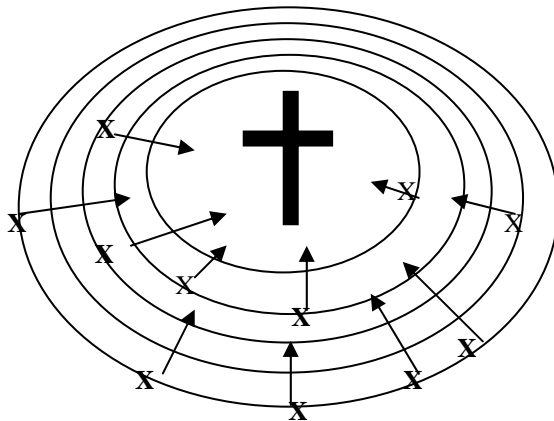
III. Centered Set – Truth (Jesus) is Everything

“ So he got up and went to his father. But while he was still a long ways off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion for him; he ran to his son, threw his arms around him and kissed him... the father said to his servants, ‘Quick! Bring the best robe and put it on him. Put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet...’
 ‘My son’ the father said, ‘you are always with me, and everything I have is yours.’”
Luke 15:20, 22, 31

“ O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you, how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings but you were not willing.” **John 23:37**

“You do not delight in sacrifice, or I would bring it; you do not take pleasure in burnt offerings. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise.” **Psalms 51:16-17**

A. Images from Scripture:



GOD	ME
Father	Child
Vine	Branch
Potter	Clay
Bridegroom	Bride
Redeemer	Redeemed

B. Important Concepts:

1. **Focus** -
2. **Direction** –
3. **Movement** –
4. **Re-alignment** -