Pastor to Pastor: The Spiritually Vital Leader
Part 2
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1. Introduction

This presentation by H.B. London, Dallas Willard, and John Ortberg is a round table discussion that looks deeper into spiritual formation and spiritual vitality and answers specific audience questions about the topic. The presentation began with *Pastor to Pastor: The Spiritually Vital Leader*, *Part 1* and continues here. This teaching is valuable for ministers, church workers, and laypersons.

2. Question: Where can I look for encouragement in ministry in relationship to success?

a. You want to look at two things:

- How are you progressing in Christ's likeness?
- What lives have been changed?

b. You do that, normally, by looking _____. We don't normally see the blessing of God by looking in the present.

- This is why we need to practice the discipline of _____ and remembering and looking backward - that's where we can really see the hand of God.
- God doesn't necessarily let us know of all our successes.
- Medieval theologians used to say that God has hidden the glory of the human soul from itself lest it be destroyed by pride.
- I don't have my ministry; it is God's ministry.
    - I don't want to think much about my success. I want to think about _____ success.
        - He is triumphant and is moving on.
        - I can see His work *with me* by looking inwardly, by the person I'm becoming, and by looking at how I have affected people.

We want people, not necessarily recognizing us, but saying, *"God is wonderful!"*

> *Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.*
>
> Matthew 5:16 (NKJV)

That is a standard of success that involves bringing people to the Lord and that involves people who have gone through tough times and come out because we've walked with them and their faith is in God.

c. In terms of defining success, consider joy. Ask: What do I actually enjoy doing? That is a clue to what God made me to do.

3. Question: Spiritual Formation and Spiritual Vitality – What are we talking about?

a. We're talking about taking care of ourselves in the context of 1 Timothy 4:16 (NKJV): *Take heed to yourself* [Take care of yourself] *and to the doctrine. Continue in them, for in doing this you will save both yourself and those who hear you.*

Spiritual formation, viewed practically, is just taking care of yourself.

- What you do in taking care of yourself is, primarily, you attend to where your _____ is, to where your _____ are, to what's in your _____ and ready to go without thinking. Unfortunately, it is usually anger.

- You take care of your soul under God, as your soul is that part of you that integrates all the rest of you and makes one life out of it.

That's very important to understand because the soul is not under our direct control.

> *The Lord is my shepherd;*
> *I shall not want.*
> *He makes me to lie down in green pastures;*
> *He leads me beside the still waters.*
> *He restores my soul;*
> *He leads me in the paths of righteousness*
> *For His name's sake.*
> Psalm 23:1-3 (NKJV)

> *The Law of the Lord is perfect, restoring the soul.*
> Psalm 19:7a (NASB)

- These are deep teachings about what we do. That's the outcome: the person with the _____ _____ is the person whose life hangs together in the way it's supposed to.

  That would mean, among other things, the things they believe they ought to do, they easily do them. The things they believe they ought not to do, they easily don't do them.

  The opposite of this is the statement by Paul in Romans 7:19, where he says, *"For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do."*

  ⇒ Unfortunately, many people think this is the permanent human condition.

b. Using spiritual disciplines.

- Solitude is, perhaps, the most radical discipline for the person who's trying to begin [spiritual formation] in a purposive or intentional way.
  - It's the only discipline that breaks the grip of all the external stuff over you.
  - What you do in solitude is you do _____.
    - This will agitate your soul, but that's what it's about. You want to do that until you're no longer agitated by it.
    - Be still. As you do that, you learn that, after all, you don't run the world and you don't have to.

- Jesus said, "In your patience possess ye your souls." (Luke 21:19)

- We get in a position where we're not trying to make everything work.

- Then, we begin to use things like scripture memorization.

  - Memorize passages, not just verses.

c. Understanding the role of the streams of thoughts and feelings inside you.

- We all have a body, and our body is always in the process of being formed and shaped for better or for worse, whether we're intentional about it or not. We affect our body's formation by exercise, sleep, diet, etc.

- Similarly, we have an inner life or a spirit. That includes the _____ of our minds – the constant stream of thoughts we think.

- When we talk about a person's characteristics (mean, insecure, needy, etc.), we're talking about the _____ of that person's stream of _____ to run in certain directions.

- External circumstances do not have much power to change the patterns of the streams of thoughts in our minds. Those thoughts all carry feelings with them – joy, anxiety, anger, and so on.

- Our choices, by and large, flow out of that inner life. Sometimes I can override that by an act of the will for a moment, but the vast majority of choices that I make will just reflect the kinds of thoughts and feelings running on inside me all the time.

- Spiritual formation, when it's done in a Christ-like way, is simply _____ with _____ and allowing Him to bring vitality - health, goodness, love, joy, peace - to those streams of thoughts and feelings that are running inside me all the time.

- Our formation can lead to vitality or lead to death.

  - The stuff that we watch on TV, the conversations we have – the patterns are grooves or ruts in our minds that cause people to think mean or anxious or insecure thoughts. Those tendencies are being _____ all the time.

- The idea that spiritual formation is something you could or, maybe, could not do is very misguided.

- That stream inside you is who you are.

    - Jesus said (Matthew 7:16-18), *"You will know them by their fruits. Are grapes gathered from thorns or figs from thistles? In the same way, every good tree bears good fruit, but the bad tree bears bad fruit. A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a bad tree bear good fruit."*

d. Romans 12:1-2 (NKJV): *I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.*

- What does presenting your body have to do with the renewal of your mind? Absolutely _____!

  Your _____ is the first place where you actually make choices, but then you find yourself in bondage there. To break the bondage, you learn how to use your _____, and that includes solitude, silence, and fasting.

    - Fasting is one of the most important things we can do to help ourselves live with vitality from God.

    - Fasting is learning how to receive from God the resources for our body.

    - Man shall not live by bread alone. (Deuteronomy 8:3; Matthew 4:4)

What's the alternative? → The Word of God

John 6:33: *For the bread of God is He who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world.*

John 4:32: Jesus said, *"I have meat to eat that ye know not of."*

- _____ _____ is one way of taking the Word of God into our body because you memorize with your body, then use it with your body.

part of your body

Joshua 1:8 (NKJV): *This Book of the Law shall not depart from your _____, but you shall meditate in it day and night, that you may observe to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success.*

4. Question: What are some essentials of good spiritual health?

a. The start has to be with an authentic, unforced _____ for a better life. There needs to be a vision of life in the Kingdom.

- I don't have to do anything wrong. Everyone, even outside the church, wants to be good, but they think it's necessary to do evil. The vision of the _____ of God lifts that from you.

b. In terms of a practical step, anybody who's watching this that feels stirred, with longing or pain or both, today get a calendar out and mark at least a half day or a day to go and be alone. Just sit with it.

- Don't be in too much of a hurry to figure it all out or map a plan. Let that sink real deep…what's happening…the whole idea of thirsting for God or hunger for God. Just sit with it, and let it start to get inside you.
  - Be still and know.
    - It's not a study time.
    - If you go and do it, you will learn as you do it.
    - Don't go in with an agenda.
- When we go into solitude, what we essentially do is resign _____ kingdom. We take our hands off.

c. You must learn to use your time.

- Your time is in your control. God does not keep your calendar.

- You have to decide, in faith, that He never gives anyone too much to do.

d. Once you have a vision of God's Kingdom, then you can resign your kingdom to Him. Then you begin to make decisions that are good for you because now you have faith that He's running the show anyway.

e. Learn how to wisely spend your time. One way to spend your time will be scripture memorization. One passage to memorize is Colossians 3:1-17. I encourage you to do that, and I guarantee it will make an incredible difference in your life.

- One of the things it will do is _____ your mind. The fellow who is muttering the Law becomes different because the order that is in the Law begins to restore his soul.

- It works when you're not thinking about it, and it works as you think about it.

- You can fill your thoughts with it when you're doing anything else that you may be doing.

f. We need to do a lot of celebrating.

- Celebrating means lifting up to heaven. It's a joyous thing!

- Every meal in our homes should be a celebration.

- A _____ heart is one of the most strengthening things we can have.

- Celebrate the realization that God has done well for me.

Scripture Memory: Colossians 3:1-17 (NKJV)

If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth. For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory.

Therefore put to death your members which are on the earth: fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry. Because of these things the wrath of God is coming upon the sons of disobedience, in which you yourselves once walked when you lived in them.

But now you yourselves are to put off all these: anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy language out of your mouth. Do not lie to one another, since you have put off the old man with his deeds, and have put on the new man who is renewed in knowledge according to the image of Him who created him, where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcised nor uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave nor free, but Christ is all and in all.

Therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, put on tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering; bearing with one another, and forgiving one another, if anyone has a complaint against another; even as Christ forgave you, so you also must do. But above all these things put on love, which is the bond of perfection. And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to which also you were called in one body; and be thankful. 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. And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him.

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5. How do we thaw frozen anger?

   a. Recognize it. When I have an outburst, I don't pass it off. Say, "That came from me."

      - Anger comes from _____. If I'm angry with people, it's because I'm an angry person. The first stage in coming to grips with anger is to deal honestly and to recognize it.

   b. You need to know it isn't necessary. If you're frozen into it, you probably think it's necessary – that you have to have it.

   c. How would I conduct my life if I couldn't be angry? If there was an angry pill, which if you took it, you would never be angry again, would you take it? Is there some hesitation there?

   d. You have to recognize that anger is a _____ phenomenon.

      - The reason people get angry is because their wills are crossed.

        It doesn't matter how important or unimportant the issue, when your will is crossed, you will feel, rising in you, a thrust outward [anger].

      - The way you deal with this is by surrendering your will to God.

        That's why Jesus, when He was reviled, didn't curse back. He committed himself to Him that judges righteously.

        1 Peter 2:21-23 (NKJV): *For to this you were called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps: "Who committed no sin, Nor was deceit found in His mouth"; who, **when He was reviled, did not revile in return; when He suffered, He did not threaten, but committed Himself to Him who judges righteously.***

        That's the key to release from anger.

   e. Part of the reason for frozen anger is that we're conflict avoidant.

      - A lot of us do not do the ministry of admonishment because we're _____.

      - If I admonish people, they might not like me and that traps me in anger.

- The surrender of the will is important, and the right kind of honesty is also important, so I do not live in fear and conflict avoidance.

f. It really doesn't have to be this way.

- Anger is a secondary emotion and underneath is always fear, frustration, or hurt.
- Part of what I have to do when I'm aware that I'm angry is to stop and ask what's going on underneath that. Has someone hurt me? Am I frustrated? Am I afraid?
- Then I can ask, "What do I want to have happen?" and start moving toward it.

6. Question: Is spiritual formation different for Christian lay workers than for pastors?

The whole of spiritual formation and spiritual vitality and the sense of the nearness of God is fundamentally the same. You have different work, so the issues that come up may be different, but the Kingdom of God is all those areas. Discipleship is there, and discipleship applies to all areas, including the ministry.

7. In taking control of your time, how do you say *No*?

a. You have to take control of your time. You can only take control of your time if you really know what you're doing that's important.

b. If you know what you're doing that's important, in faith, then you can say *No* in terms of your time.

c. You have to get it fixed in your head that you will _____ get your work done by working _____. Your work will last longer than you do.

d. Getting control of your calendar is a big part of that. Unless you have control of your calendar, you cannot say *No*, and you will wind up working harder and harder.

Additional reading referenced in this presentation:

Henri J.M. Nouwen, *The Way of the Heart: Connecting with God Through Prayer, Wisdom, and Silence*, (New York City, N.Y.: Ballantine Books, 2003).