

Abilene Christian University

Christian Spiritual Formation

BIBM 648.01

January 2005

David W. Wray
2301 Fulwiler Road
Abilene, TX 79603
(325) 698-2391 (Home)
wray@bible.acu.edu (office)

ACU Office: 215 College of
Biblical Studies Building
(325) 674-3740 (Office)
wrayd@acu.edu (home)

Mission

The **mission of ACU** is to educate students for Christ service and leadership throughout the world.

The **mission of the College of Biblical Studies** is to provide leadership preparation and resources for effective worldwide ministry in the cause of Christ.

The **mission of the Graduate School of Theology** is to equip men and women in effective ministerial leadership in a variety of missions and ministry contexts and to provide strong academic foundations for theological inquiry.

Course Description

Christian spiritual formation is the process of being conformed to the image of Christ for the sake of others. This course identifies how God utilizes scripture, people, personal experiences, contexts, literature, spiritual disciplines, and events to transform believers into Christlikeness.

Purpose and Audience

This course primarily challenges graduate students to continue prayerfully examining their own personal spirituality, character, habits of the heart, and spiritual formation.

Prerequisites

As an entry-level graduate course, this course requires no prerequisites.

Biblical/Theological Rationale

Jesus declared that the greatest commandment is “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind”. . . and the second is like it: “Love your neighbor as yourself.” (Matthew 22:37-39) Before he ascended to heaven, Jesus instructed his disciples to “make disciples” (Matthew 28:19-20). Every Christian has both the responsibility and privilege to intentionally pursue these commandments, which are the heartbeat and mission of the church. The result is a passionate relationship with the Trinity. “We call all people to God. The God we call people to is most perfectly seen in Jesus Christ. Our task is to imitate him. We commit ourselves, through the power of the Holy Spirit, to be living expressions of Himself on the earth” (Eph. 5:1).

Course Description

Designed as an introduction to Christian Spiritual Formation, this course encourages personal growth toward holy living and spirituality maturity. The format of the course includes inquiry, critical thinking, theological reflection, worship, contemplation, spiritual disciplines, and praxis.

The course will also challenge students to examine ways in which they can assist family, friends and other Christians in the quest for Christlikeness. Students will be encouraged as co-laborers with God in spiritually forming others into disciples of Jesus.

Course Reading

Boa, Kenneth. **Conformed to His Image**. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 2001.

Homes, Urban T. III. **A History of Christian Spirituality: An Analytical Introduction**. Harrisburg, PA: Morehouse Publishing, 2002.

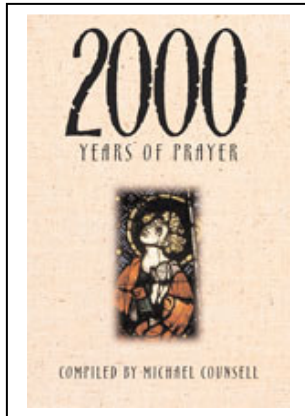
Thompson, Marjorie. **Soul Feast**. Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press, 1995.

Topliffe-Beasley, Keith (Ed.). **Dictionary of Christian Spiritual Formation**. Nashville, TN: Upper Room Books, 2003.

Wray, David. **Christian Spiritual Formation 2004**. Abilene, Texas: Copy Stop, 2004.

Recommended

Counsell, Michael (Ed.). **2000 Years of Prayer**. Harrisburg, PA: Morehouse Publishing, 1999.

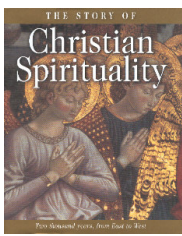


Extensive collection of prayers honors two thousand years of Christian spirituality. Containing prayers from every era of our spiritual history, from every continent and Christian tradition, this anthology provides a compelling and comprehensive portrait of the ways in which men and women have expressed their longing for God through the centuries.

Make sure that your library has numerous books of prayers, which have been recorded throughout the ages.

Foster, Richard, and James B. Smith (Ed.). **Devotional Classics**. San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1990.

More than fifty readings, penned by spiritual masters, fill this volume with reflective reading. John of the Cross, St. Augustine, Thomas a' Kempis, Gregory of Nyssa are just a few of the authors in this exceptional book. A companion volume, **A Spiritual Formation Workbook**, is a good curriculum resource for small groups seeking an introduction to Christian Spiritual Formation.



Mursell, Gordon (General Editor). **The Story of Christian Spirituality**. Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2001. *Drawing from East and West, the authors present a full and fascinating picture of humanity's desire for the divine across the centuries.*

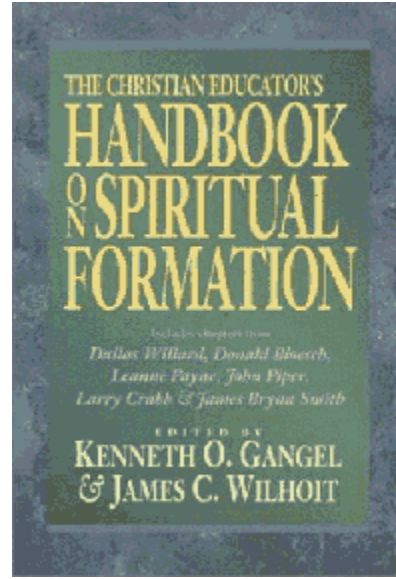
McGrath, Alister E. **Christian Spirituality**. Oxford, England: Blackwell Publishers, 1999.

This book accurately provides information that will help those unfamiliar with the Christian tradition to engage with classical texts on spirituality. McGrath is Research Lecturer in Theology at the University of Oxford and principal of Wycliffe Hall, Oxford.

Practical and insightful, this volume provides both concepts and practices of Christian Spiritual Formation. Christian educators from across the nation provide chapters for this book edited by Kenneth Gangel and James Wilhoit.

Other practical volumes include:

- Richard Foster, **Celebration of Disciplines**
- Richard Foster, **Streams of Living Water**
- Susanne Johnson, **Christian Spiritual Formation in the Church and Classroom**
- Parker Palmer, **To Know as We are Known**
- Dallas Willard, **The Spirit of the Disciplines**
- Dallas Willard, **Renovation of the Heart.**
- Donald Whitney, **Spiritual Disciplines for the Spiritual Life**



Internet Sources

- <http://www.ccel.org/> **Christian Classics–Ethereal Library**
- http://www.ewtn.com/New_library/library1.htm **Catholic Spirituality**
- <http://www.shc.edu/theolibrary/spirit.htm> **Theology Library of Spirituality**
- <http://landru.i-link-2.net/shnyves/prayer.html> **Praying the Psalms**
- <http://www.renovare.org/> **Renovare'**
- <http://www.csbsju.edu/library/internet/theospir.html> **St. John's University**

Course Requirements

Course Competencies	Measurability
1. Learners will identify historical approaches Christians have utilized in the spiritual formation process.	1. Read A History of Christian Spirituality and write a two page reflection paper over each of the four chapters.
2. Learners will examine biblical principles for living out the Christlife as disciples of Jesus Christ.	2. Read Conformed to His Image in preparation to writing you spiritual autobiography.

<p>3. Learners will examine spiritual disciplines literature and through practicing disciplines this semester develop lifetime habits of the heart.</p>	<p>3. A.) Read Thompson’s book and select spiritual disciplines which will be practiced throughout the fall. B.) Learners will write a Rule of Life. (A rule is a set pattern or practice whereby one’s life with God is nurtured and deepened-See Thompson’s final chapter)</p>
<p>4. Students will identify and reflect on how Scripture, people, contexts, literature, spiritual disciplines, and events have spiritually formed them in the past.</p>	<p>4. Learners will write a spiritual autobiography of their life from birth until the present. (10-12 pages)</p>
<p>5. Learners will experience community issues in Abilene, and will commit personal resources and time to ministering to the oppressed and poor during the semester and in future ministry contexts.</p>	<p>5. Students will ride with a police officer during the night shift and then minister for 8-10 hours in community service (context of your choice). A three-five page paper: <i>Theological Reflections on Community Ministry</i> (and ride) will be written on the ride and service.</p>
<p>6. Learners will demonstrate knowledge and comprehension of literature, people, contexts, and events God uses in the forming people into mature Christians.</p>	<p>6. Using the Dictionary of Christian Spiritual Formation as a foundation document, learners will write a 6-8 page research paper on one of the topics listed below. (or negotiate a topic of interest with the teacher)</p>
<p>7. Learners will participate in spiritually journeying with others in the class in a spiritual formation group.</p>	<p>7. The last hour of each day, you will be placed in a spiritual formation group with three or four other peers. This is provides a time to process the content of the day, share personal spiritual issues, and support and nurture one another.</p>

Course Requirements

1. **A History of Christian Spirituality** (Holmes) should be read before the class begins on **January 3**. Before the first day of class, you are to write a reflection paper on each of the four chapters of the book. The reflection papers should address issues such as: 1.) In what ways do you share in the “holy longings” of the spiritual masters of each era? 2.) What spiritual insights do you observe by reading about the godly men and women of that era? 3.) What spiritual concepts/practices do you find confusing or offensive? You are not limited to responding to these questions, they are simple prompts to get you started. Limit your reflection papers to two pages per chapter. Word process the reflections in 12 point font, double space, and include a cover sheet. **Purpose of Project:** To gain appreciation for the various spiritual streams that individuals have drunk from for the past two thousand years, and discover touch points for your personal spirituality.
2. One of the great dangers of Christian Spiritual Formation is making it esoterical. Boa’s book, **Conformed to His Image** helps put “feet” on spirituality. His twelve “facets” of the complete Christian life will give you “handles” for daily living as you process the discipline of spiritual formation. The book should be read before the first day of class and then write a three to five page review of the book. Word process your responses in 12 point font, double space, and include a cover sheet. **Purpose of Project:** In addition to gain scholastic insights to Christian Spiritual Formation, you will identify specific ways in which to live out the facets of the Christian life as described by Boa.
3. **Soul Feast** is also to be read before the first day of class. As evidence of reading the book, please answer these questions: 1.) What spiritual disciplines do you regularly practice? 2.) What disciplines are difficult or foreign to you? 3.) How does one go about encouraging members of a congregation to practice spiritual disciplines? Limit your response to no more than two pages. **Soul Feast** provides practical suggestions for engaging in spiritual disciplines. You are invited to practice spiritual disciplines throughout the spring as you reflect on the principles in this book.

Notice the last chapter in Thompson’s book, “**A Rule of Life**.” This chapter provides guidelines for writing your Rule of Life. Your Rule of Life (“habits of the heart”) will be word processed, 12-point font, and limited to two pages. You may use whatever format best expresses your heart (prayer, poem, etc.). Be sure and include a cover sheet on the project. Rather than writing a “new year’s resolution,” or producing as “spiritual laundry list” the rule provides principles which will be foundational for your future spiritual growth and formation. You will share your rule with all of us on **Friday, January 7, 2005**. Instead of reading your rule to the group, please be prepare to summarize your future spiritual

commitments. You will have only three minutes to share your rule of life with the group. **Purpose of Project:** To experience the spiritual benefits of spiritual disciplines and transform your heart toward living the Christlife throughout your life.

4. Your **Spiritual Autobiography** is a 10-12 page paper, double-spaced, 12 point font, with a cover sheet that is due on **Friday, January 7, 2005**. In your spiritual autobiography, plan on highlighting people, events, literature, contexts, etc. that have been formative in your spiritual journey. Anything that is shared in the autobiography will be kept **completely confidential** between you and me. In other words, it is appropriate to articulate any spiritual struggles as well as your spiritual victories. You should feel free to describe your spiritual journey as honestly as you desire. If you find that it will be helpful to talk through some aspects of your journey, I would cherish spending time with you to process past experiences and future hopes and dreams. Spiritual direction is a vital part of spiritual formation. **Purpose of Project:** To celebrate the ways in which God has spiritually formed you and to participate in spiritual inventory about ways you need to transform your heart for spiritual formation in the future.
5. Please determine the best weekend for your **Police Ride** in January or February. If you are plan to ride with an Abilene Police Officer, you will need to sign up during the week of class so that I can inform the department of your plan to ride. Information about the ride is provided in your expanded syllabus. You are requested to sign "release and indemnification agreement" and follow the guidelines provided by the Abilene Police Department. After your ride along you need to participate in **6-8 hours** of community service in response to what you observed during the ride (Volunteer and Service Learning Center, in the Student Center basement, is a good resource to determine your community ministry. Nancy Colburn is the director of the center.). The 3-5 theological refection paper due on **March 4, 2005**. You should include both the ride with the police officer and your community service in your **theological reflective** essay. **Purpose of Project:** Riding with an officer may break your heart because of the situations you may encounter. Often students experience first hand the ways in which Satan works destructively and creates hopelessness through poverty, oppression, domestic violence, and substance abuse.
6. **Dictionary of Christian Spiritual Formation** is designed for browsing (as well as looking up topics of immediate interest to you). The chart (found on pages 302-307) compares several major streams of Christian spirituality and cross-references articles on those streams. There is also information on pages 481-515 in **Conformed to His Image**, which will give you a broad overview of the history of spirituality and will perhaps give you ideas for a topic for your research paper.

Your 6-8 page **Research Paper** should be on a topic (identified from class presentations, from the dictionary, or from other readings during the semester) that you would like to research in greater depth.. This paper is to be scholarly essay with at least 6-8 scholarly citations (primary source literature-journals). Please e-mail me during the semester (or talk to before or after class) and tell me about the topic you would like to explore. This writing assignment is due in my office no later than 5:00 pm on **Monday, March 14, 2005. Purpose of Project:** Your scholarly research will give you in-depth insights into a vital aspect of spiritual formation and spiritual growth. You need to produce intellectual property in this discipline in addition to be a consumer of literature.

- 7. Spiritual formation groups provide opportunities to share life together. In groups of four or five, you will be invited to process the content of the day, discuss spiritual issues in your personal life, encourage one another, and pray together. The groups will meet Monday-Thursday afternoons. Groups will meet for the last hour of class each day. **Purpose of the Project:** Experience community in spiritual formation groups.

Course Grading

Reflections on A History of Christian Spirituality	10%
Questions from Conformed to His Image	20%
Spiritual Autobiography.....	20%
Six-Eight Page Research Project.....	20%
Rule of Life.....	10%
Police Ride, community service, and Theological Reflections.....	20%

All assignments are due on the dates assigned by the professor. Any assignments received after the assigned date will be reduced by **one letter grade** for days 1-7. Assignments received from days 8-14 will be **reduced by an additional letter grade**. **No assignments will be accepted which are over two weeks past the due date.**

Grading for the course will be:

92-100	A	84-92	B
76-83	C	68-75	D

Class Format

This course will consist of presentations by the professor, guest lectures (both live and on video), ride-along with police officer, community service, and class participation. Each graduate student is expected to be a full participant in the teaching/learning process.

Attendance

Attendance during each session, this is especially true of a short course, is critical. Students are expected to be in class on time and stay for the entire day. Our regional accrediting agency requires that we meet for five full days. In order for us to conclude class at noon on Friday, we will need to have a session on Thursday evening, January 6, 2005. I would like to host you for dinner that night, and we will have a class session after dinner. Our session should be from about 7:00-9:00 pm. Please adjust your schedule for this evening session.

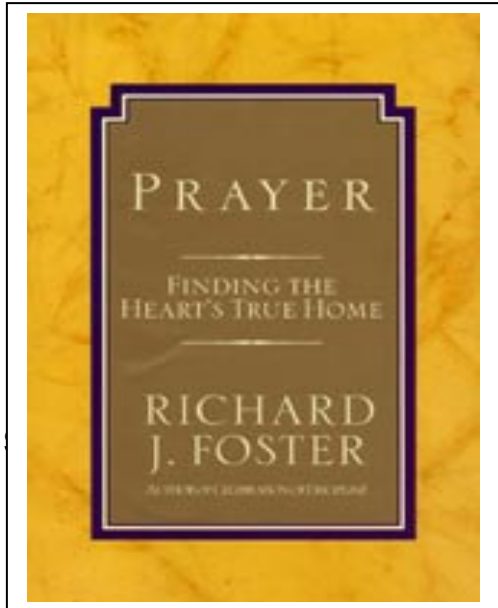
Intellectual Integrity

Intellectual integrity is of high value at Abilene Christian University, in the Graduate School of Theology, and in this class.

Violations of academic integrity and other forms of cheating, as defined in ACU's Academic Integrity Policy, involve the intention to deceive or mislead or misrepresent, and therefore are a form of lying and represent actions contrary to the behavioral norms that flow from the nature of God. Violations will be addressed as described in the Policy. While the university enforces the Policy, the most powerful motive for integrity and truthfulness comes from one's desire to imitate God's nature in our lives. Every member of the faculty, staff and student body is responsible for protecting the integrity of learning, scholarship and research. The full Policy is available for review at the Provost's office web site (<http://www.acu.edu/campusoffices/provost>) and the following offices: provost, college deans, and dean of campus life, director of student judicial affairs, director of residential life education and academic departments.

Conversation Outside of Class

I especially enjoy dialog outside of class times with you. My office door is always open. If are new to ACU please find a convenient time for you, and come by the office this spring so that I can get to know you better. You may want to send me an e-mail telling me about a good time for you to drop by so that I will be sure and be in the office. My office hours typically are: Monday-8:30-10:00 am, 3:00-5:00 pm; Tuesday-9:30-11:00 am, 1:30-5:00 pm; Wednesday-8:30-10:00 am, 1:30-5:00 pm; Thursday 9:30-11:00 am, 1:30-5:00 pm; Friday-1:30-5:00 pm. My office is 215, located in the Department of Bible, Missions, and Ministry. I am happy for you to call me at home. My home phone is **325-698-2391**.



Foster J., Richard. **Prayer: Finding The Heart's True Home**. San Francisco: HaperSanFranciso, 1997.

Foster worked on this book for more than a year. At one point he asked for and received a key to the library at Fiends University to write late into the night. About six months into the writing project he realized that he had stopped praying. The scholastic writing became so consuming that he stopped practicing the very thing that he was writing about. How often have we gotten so “busy” in being spiritual that we forget the very nature of relationship with God?

Session	Content	Assignment
Unit One: Spiritual Formation As Process		
1. January 3, 2005	Introductions and overview of the course Please purchase the reader for the course before this first session. It may be secured in the ACU bookstore (textbook area).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Purchase expanded syllabus before first section. • Reflection paper on Holmes' book due. • Book review on Boa's book due. • Response to Thompson's book due.

2.	January 3	<p>Spiritual Formation Streams through the last two millenniums</p> <p>We will use Urban Holmes III model as foundational in exploring the discipline of Christian Spiritual Formation.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read content of second section in expanded syllabus for this class session
3.	January 3	<p>“Speculative,” “Rationalism,” “Kataphatic” spirituality-Urban Holmes (Theological Renewal)</p> <p>Allan Sager’s book, Gospel Centered Spirituality develops an assessment instrument for use with Holmes’ model.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Spiritual Formation Practice: Praying the Psalms • Read section three in expanded syllabus
4.	January 4	<p>“Kataphatic,” “Pietism,” “Affective” spirituality-Urban Holmes (Personal Renewal)</p> <p>The writings of Henri Nouwen (more than 30 books) are especially helpful in this approach to spiritual formation.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Spiritual Formation Practice: Prayers throughout the ages • Read section four in expanded syllabus.
5.	January 4	<p>”Affective,” “Quietism,” “Apophatic” spirituality-Urban Holmes (Inner Life)</p> <p>The monastic and mystical spiritual masters’ writings are reflective of this stream of spirituality.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Spiritual Formation Practice: <i>Hands Meditation</i> • Read section five in expanded syllabus.

<p>6. January 4</p>	<p>“Apophatic,” “Encratism,” “Speculative” spirituality- Urban Holmes (Societal Regeneration)</p> <p>Mother Teresa is a spiritual exemplar of this stream of spirituality. Reading about her life will prove beneficial.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Spiritual Formation Practice: Mother Teresa • Read section six in expanded syllabus.
<p>Unit Two: Spiritual Formation in the Church and Classroom</p>		
<p>7. January 5</p>	<p>Spiritual Formation Through the Disciplines</p> <p>Richard Foster revised Celebration of Discipline (20th Anniversary Edition) in 1998. In 1978 this volume broke the silence of 300 years in the area of spiritual disciplines.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Spiritual Formation Practice: Praying Prayers of Scripture • Read section seven in expanded syllab.
<p>8. January 5</p>	<p>Biblical/Theological Foundations of Spiritual Formation</p> <p>Recording biblical/theological principles of spiritual formation provides a good foundation on which to build a life of Christlikeness. The Gospels are a good source to find and record these principles.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Spiritual Formation Practice: <i>Lectio Divina</i> • Read section eight in expanded syllabus.

9.	January 5	<p>Spiritual Leaders as Spiritual Directors, Spiritual Mentors, Spiritual Friends, or Spiritual Guides</p> <p>Missional Spirituality encourages all Christians to use their spiritual gifts to be “ministers” and “missionaries” in the places they find themselves (home, work, marketplaces)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Spiritual Formation Practice: Contemplation of Guided Images • Read section nine in expanded syllabus
10.	January 6	<p>Spontaneous and Deliberate Spiritual Formation</p> <p>Using II Cor. 2:8-10 we will explore ways in which the apostle Paul faced the challenges of transforming moments. John of the Cross addresses such experiences as “Dark Night of the Soul.” It is not a matter of “if” but “when” we will experience spontaneous formation.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Spiritual Formation Exercise: Examen (spiritual inventory) • Read section ten in expanded syllabus
11.	January 6	<p>Spirituality of Education</p> <p>Holiness of God is the core of spiritual formation. When we give God glory in thought, word, and deed, we grow spiritually and become like Christ. Holiness is not one attribute of God, it is His essence, and we are to be “holy as He is holy.”</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Spiritual Formation Exercise: Centering Prayer • Read section eleven in expanded syllabus.

12.	January 6	<p>Can Spirituality Be Taught?</p> <p>The organizing principle of Christian education is spiritual formation. Rather than create “education ministries” in our congregations we should seek ways to spiritually form children, youth, and adults into the image of Christ.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Spiritual Formation Exercise: African Bible Study • Read section 12 in expanded syllabus
Unit Three: Spiritual Formation for Daily Living			
13.	January 7	<p>A Model for Spiritual Formation</p> <p>John Westerhoff III provides a model to enhance spiritual formation in communities of faith. Be sure and read the two articles in your reader as foundational for this session.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Spiritual Formation Exercise: “ACTS” prayer <i>Hands Meditation</i> • Read section 13 in expanded syllabus.
15.	January 7	<p>We will meet in the Living Room of the Student Center to share our Rule of Life.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rule of Life Due.