



WORLDWIDE  
CHURCH OF GOD

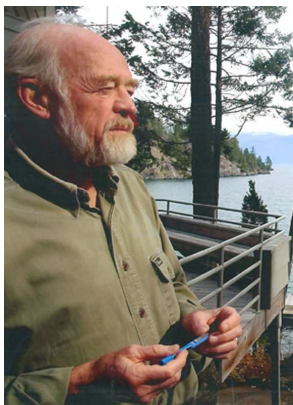
*Living and Sharing the Gospel*

# GC2 equipper

[www.wcg.org/mindev/](http://www.wcg.org/mindev/)

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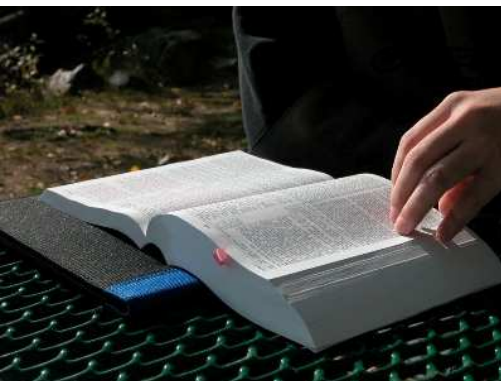
The monthly ministry development ezine of WCG-USA Church Administration and Development  
*Equipping workers and leaders for Great Commandment–Great Commission (GC2) ministry*



Eugene Peterson

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Spiritual formation

Dear assistant to the Great Physician of our souls:

This month many of us will participate in the WCG international elders' conference in Southern California where the focus will be on **spiritual formation**. This issue of *GC2 equipper* addresses this vital topic to prepare us for the conference and to remind us that spiritual formation is the primary work of Christian ministry.

It's easy to loose focus on this essential work. Some wrongly seek after 'success' equated with attendance. But this can be a discouraging dead-end. According to *BuildingChurchLeaders.com*, **eight out of ten pastors will never lead a church with more than 150 people attending**. Many of you reading this are pastors numbered among that 80%. Perhaps this is discouraging to you and to others who minister with you. If so, read on.

*BuildingChurchLeaders.com* asks an important related question: In an era that places so much emphasis on church size, how do we measure a truly 'successful ministry? In answer it offers an excerpt from *Building Your Church through Counsel and Care* where author Eugene Peterson defines a pastor's success not as 'running the church' but as faithfully offering 'the cure of souls.' He acknowledges that a pastor must deal well with the leadership and administrative work of running a church. But he emphasizes that a pastor's primary focus must be the spiritual formation of people (what Peterson calls the 'cure [or care] of souls'). It is here that Peterson locates true pastoral success.

As Peterson implies, this is not an 'either/or' proposition (*either* run the church *or* care for souls). Rather it involves maintaining clear priorities—something like the challenge faced by fathers and mothers. They must run a *household* well (various chores and responsibilities); but their primary calling (and true measure of success) is building a *home*.

May God encourage and otherwise equip you to be faithful in caring for the souls in the part of his 'household of faith' where he has placed you. *GC2 equipper* and the MinDev team are here to help.

-Ted Johnston  
national director, Generations Ministries

## Q&A: Ministry tips and resources concerning spiritual formation

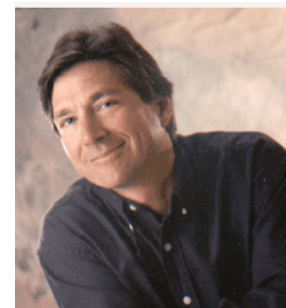
**Q:** What is the theological underpinning of spiritual formation?

**A:** We are spiritually formed as we experience and participate in the love and life of our triune God: Father, Son and Spirit. This participation is the realization and responsive outworking of the place humanity now has with God in Christ.

This theology of grace is grounded in the biblical doctrine of the adoption of humanity into the life of the Trinity through Jesus' incarnation, life, death, resurrection and ascension. In Jesus (who is uniquely and fully God and human), humanity is now reconciled to God. As believers, we have come to know and trust in the giver of this grace. And now, through the Spirit, we grow in our participation in the life that is ours in Christ. This growth is God's work in us, but we are called and enabled by the Spirit to participate actively.

God has granted to the WCG an understanding of this trinitarian theological vision through years of doctrinal reform. The vision is beautifully described by Baxter Kruger in "The Great Dance" and in his organization's website at [www.perichoresis.org/](http://www.perichoresis.org/). Baxter will be a presenter at the WCG international elders' conference this month. This same trinitarian theology is 'unpacked' systematically in "Invitation to Theology" by Michael Jenkins.

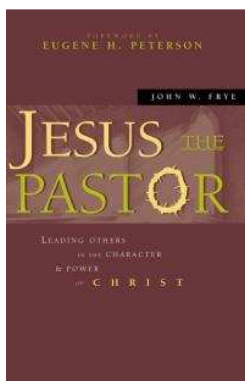
We find the theology presented in these resources to be faithful to what God has shown us in the Holy Scriptures. We therefore recommend them to you and also suggest you read our WCG Odyssey article, "Why Study Theology"—it's posted online at [www.christianodyssey.org/god/theology.htm](http://www.christianodyssey.org/god/theology.htm).



**Baxter Kruger**

**Q:** As a minister, how can I help others be formed in Christ?

**A:** We minister out of the overflow of the life of Christ formed within us. We have nothing to give but what he gives us. And therefore our spiritual formation as ministers is of great importance. This truth is helpfully expounded in a book reviewed here by WCG pastor Tom Kennebeck.



In "Jesus the Pastor" author and pastor John W. Frye communicates the importance of a pastor being in spiritual fellowship with Christ, and through that fellowship, as Christ's under-shepherd, leading others to God. This fellowship involves being yoked to Jesus: "Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls" (Matt. 11: 29). Jesus is saying to us, "Connect with me for learning and training. Imitate me in all you do. I will be next to you, the wiser, stronger, seasoned one who will impart to you all that I am."

Frye asks, "How seriously do pastors look to Jesus Christ as the one who shapes their vision and expression of pastoral ministry?" At times, we can be so focused on agendas and programs that we fail to look to the Chief Shepherd in fulfilling our ministry calling. Of course, there is nothing wrong with agendas and programs, but we must not get 'the cart before the horse.' Only as we "fix our eyes on Jesus," the one who leads and empowers the church, will we be effective leaders in the service of Christ's body, the church.

As ministers, our relationship with God needs to be intimate and personal—one where the Spirit forms Christ in us. For this to happen, it is necessary to be actively engaged in the spiritual disciplines, which create 'space' in our minds, hearts and time for God to work. As an example of creating this 'space,' Frye urges every pastor to be involved in a small worshipping, caring and praying support group.

**Q:** What are some resources that will help my congregation progress in our spiritual formation?

**A:** We recommend the following:

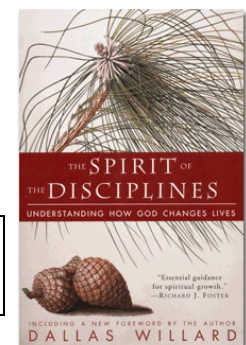
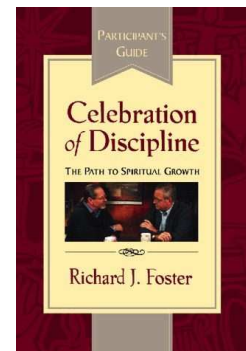
**1. WCG resources related to spiritual formation:**

- The *Spiritual Formation* course offered by Ambassador College of Christian Ministry (ACCM) at [www.ambascol.org](http://www.ambascol.org). This online course gives practical help to students in growing in their spiritual life in Christ. It approaches spiritual formation as the life-long work of the Holy Spirit that forms the basis of Christian ministry. Participants explore basic concepts related to developing a personal prayer life, effective Bible study, personal and corporate worship, discovering their spiritual "SHAPE", a holistic approach to service, and maintaining priorities. To schedule your congregation or pastoral network for a weekend intensive related to this class, contact [Randy.Bloom@wcg.org](mailto:Randy.Bloom@wcg.org).
- The following WCG online articles discuss topics related to spiritual formation:
  - "Leading in Spiritual Formation" by Dan Rogers [www.wcg.org/lit/spiritual/formation.htm](http://www.wcg.org/lit/spiritual/formation.htm)
  - Various articles on spiritual growth: [www.wcg.org/lit/spiritual/default.htm](http://www.wcg.org/lit/spiritual/default.htm)
  - Small group study series on spiritual formation [www.wcg.org/lit/spiritual/group/default.htm](http://www.wcg.org/lit/spiritual/group/default.htm)

**2. Non-WCG books on spiritual formation:**

- *Celebration of Discipline* by Richard J. Foster
- *The Spirit of the Disciplines* by Dallas Willard
- *Hearing God (Developing a Conversational Relationship with God)* by Dallas Willard
- *Deepening Your Conversation With God* by Ben Patterson
- *Spiritual Formation for Pastors: Feeding the Fire Within* by Michael C. Gemignani

Note: Richard Foster and Dallas Willard will be speaking this month (July) at the WCG international elders' conference in Southern California. Both are part of the RENOVARE organization— [www.renovare.org/](http://www.renovare.org/)



GC2 *equipper* is edited by Ted Johnston & published monthly by WCG Church Administration and Development.

Our resource recommendations do not constitute unreserved endorsement.

We welcome your questions, comments, short articles, resource recommendations, and testimonies. Send them to [Ted.Johnston@wcg.org](mailto:Ted.Johnston@wcg.org).

Past issues of *GC2 equipper* are posted on the WCG Ministry Development website at [www.wcg.org/mindev/](http://www.wcg.org/mindev/).