Dear participant

I am looking forward to our time together over the next year. Patti and I are praying that God will use it to build deep foundations in your life that will lead to an exceptional degree of faithfulness to God, and, in the midst of His people. In our day of cultural uncertainty, the demand for humble yet wise, faithful and righteous leaders will be eternally vital to the residue of true Christians in our nation.

I am convinced that younger people can learn the role of spiritual discipline in their lives earlier than we anticipate or plan for.  I am convinced that as they build these spiritual disciplines, they will grow “early onset” obedience to what God says to them through His word. They will make better decisions about the outcomes of their lives. As a result, they will put God, His calling and His assets at the top of their lives. They will make better decisions about education, vocation, marriage, and spending their assets. They will stand stronger against the overwhelming tides that conspire against them.

Down the corridor of biblical and Christian history we are amazed to see young people growing deep lives of walking with God and serving Him. David was a teenager when God first called him as a shepherd boy. Timothy was a teenager when Paul chose him. Amy Carmichael was 25 when she applied to go to China.

My experience with others who were like you ten and fifteen years ago gives me great hope in you and those like you. Given the present context of culture, it will not be easy. But, I will give you all I have to see you learn early on what it means to walk with God and faithfully represent Him among His people.

Below I have detailed more of what you can expect and what I am expecting.

I look forward to meeting you personally

Blessings on you

Dwight

 **SYLLABUS - PERSONAL SPIRITUAL FORMATION INTENSIVE**

**Mentor/Leader**: Dr. Dwight Smith smithdwightp@mac.com

**Why a formation group?** Two realities stand out ever to clear to me after over 50 years of serving the body of Christ. 1. While we may have gathered crowds, and in many cases preached our hearts out, we have done an abysmal job of forming people in faith. We are a generation of Christians who are illiterate of the Bible and unsure about the “costs” of living as Jesus prescribes. 2. We are succumbing to the perverted culture around us.

As a result, the most important relationships are damaged, too many beyond repair. We struggle for consistent intimate time with our Heavenly Father. Marriages crush under the weight of unmet expectations and reveal weak spiritual disciplines as the root cause. Churches move people around like a game of dominos and even the relationships of the leadership split apart.

**So, Why me?**That is a great question. I would like to think that I could escape any responsibility in the realities that we face. But, for 50 years, my wife Patti and I have worked with churches all over the world, by focusing upon the ideas, decisions, preaching, and lives of their leadership.

Our whole life together has been focused upon the expectation that God could and would do all that He wanted in the evangelization of our world through His unique and eternal relationship with the people of Christ. The strength of this rises or falls upon the kind of leadership that inspires and empowers them in each and every place. And, so, I believe that we are not being presumptuous when we say, follow us even as we follow Christ.

**Expectations and Goals**: What do we expect to happen? Many things. But at least two stand out among others.

1. Young men and women who hope to lead others will build solid intimate relationships with our Heavenly Father earlier in their lives through the disciplines upon which they build their daily lives. Many leaders alas never arrive at an easy yet deepening relationship with God our Father.

There are many reasons for this, but chief among them is that older men and women did not build intentional intimate dialogue with them early in their lives. In a day when Christian marriages are collapsing in unprecedented numbers and the influence of fathers disappearing, the situation has become urgent

2. Young men and women who hope to lead others need to know Scripture, doctrine, and theology. But equally important, maybe initially more important, they need to understand themselves. True biblical leadership is impossible without interdependency with others in the leadership team. The greatest failure of the top down leadership that still has a death grip on the Church is the deception that one person can ever supply the well-rounded empowerment ministry Christ gave to the church.

**Course Structure and Specifics**: What will we do over the year together? Each of you will read the assigned texts. They are all books written by me and they document a different aspect of the journey that I have been on.

Each will advocate a different part of the formation I would like to see in your lives. Below I have outlined each book, it’s content and just a bit of what each will contribute to your life. We will spend time each session reviewing what you have captured from your reading. We will plummet together how what you have captured needs to be applied to your life. We will have opportunity to spend time one on one.

Each of you will fill out the personal matrix that we use globally in SCP training, as guide through out our time together. As we look at each concept, your ability to fill in what God is saying to you will be concretely reflected in the matrix.

In between sessions you are free to dialogue with me via email or phone.

**A few more specifics**

In the sessions we will spend time discussing the thoughts behind each book that I have written and you read, your lives, and where God might be taking you over the next decade. Along the way, besides the topics from each book I hope to also plant formation in the following areas, which will be reflected in the matrices that you will fill out:

1. Your personal spiritual life and the daily disciplines that should be built.

2. Your understanding of yourself in terms of Spirit gifts, along with how those play out in interdependency in leadership.

3. How to learn to think from Scripture with the Holy Spirit as your guide in order that you might be better equipped to understand, defend and explain the most urgent theological issues of our day.

4. How to interpret Scripture as a discipline of your daily life.

5. How to faithfully put what you learn from Scripture into communication modes that prioritize God’s words.

**Course Materials**: The books that I will use, listed in order below, contain significant treatment of the issues above as well as other salient topics to your formation.

1. **“Divine Design: In the Beginning”**

God is on mission to take the gospel to every man, woman, and child across the globe, and He calls every believer in Christ to partner with Him in this. But too often pastors, leaders, and missionaries carry out the work of God, while the ordinary believer is occupied or even entertained with an abundance of contemporary church programs.

God’s design for each person is revealed in the Genesis creation story, where God created man to serve Him in righteousness in the mission He is carrying out across human history. Despite Adam and Eve’s disobedience, God restored righteousness in the people He created through Jesus’ death, burial, and resurrection. Jesus proclaimed that righteousness in the Sermon on the Mount, calling every believer to live God’s righteous values before and in the world.

As believers in Jesus Christ created and re-created in the image of God, let us look to God and live vibrant incarnational lives in the various places where He calls each one of us.

**Topics touched** in this book are meaning, purpose, relationship and representation of God, marriage, introduction of the flesh, interdependency, the promise that dances down the corridor of human history, and how the sermon the mount anticipates the restoration of this in the Last Adam, Jesus Christ.

2. **“Renovation: A Survey on Divine Design in The Life of The Church”**

The church in America has wandered. In recent years we have forgotten the conviction of thousands of Christ followers, across two thousand years, who gave themselves to completing the last sending command of Jesus: “In your going, make disciples of all the peoples of the world” (Matt. 28:19). Instead, in an effort to draw people to Christ, much of the Western church today has sought to become relevant through golden-tongued leaders, star-quality worship bands, large-scale buildings, and myriad social programs.

God is on a mission to redeem lost men and women to Himself and restore them to relationship with and representation of Him, and we, the already redeemed ones, are servants in this mission. Relevancy is not the primary need of the church in our day; rather, it is to provide people accessibility to the gospel through our day-to-day lives.

God’s ultimate design for the church is simply for every member of Christ’s church to live the gospel in whatever places God calls us, thus saturating every home, workplace, community, city, and nation with the gospel message through the people of God.

**Topics touched** are purpose of the church, role of leadership in the life of the church, and, minimal thresholds of what it means to be a follower of Jesus Christ.

3. **“Alone at the Top: Divine Design in the Leadership of the Church”**

God has designed the church to be “infinitely reproducible”—so virile and courageous that, swept along by the sovereign ministry of the Holy Spirit, it will reproduce itself infinitely.

To build such a church, God has designed leadership to work interpedently to grow Christ’s people in spiritual vitality and empower them for ministry effectiveness. When leaders have cooperated with God’s design, the church has multiplied its numbers and had great impact on the world around it. When it hasn’t, the church has suffered and failed to reproduce.

Jesus gave the pattern for church leadership in Matthew 20:20–28: “The rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them. It shall not be so among you.” God is looking for leaders who will lay aside top-down structures and instead empower His people to be fully His and do the work He has designed them to do. The result will be the incarnated holiness of Jesus pulsating through Christ’s people and poured out in the world around them to convince and convict the more than 7 billion people on this planet of the resurrection message of Jesus

**Topics touched** focus upon building a Biblical theology of leadership with emphasis upon interdependency, functions and gifts in the role of leadership and an introduction to God’s accountabilities for people in the leadership role.

4. **“Winning the War Against the Flesh: God’s Design for Healing and Wholeness”**

 What does it mean to say that if God does not heal us, we will not be healed? God is the only true healer—the only One who can make broken people whole again. In the beginning God created us with unconfirmed wholeness. We lacked nothing to be able to live in His created world—personal understanding, personal meaning, and relationship with others.

Adam and Eve, in choosing self-defined and self-managed lives, rejected God’s design and introduced rebellion. The whole of human history since that day is an exercise in men and women trying to build substitutes for God’s original designs. Humanity is marred, and our deformities dominate us, leaving us with cheap and unfulfilling substitutes for God’s planned righteousness.

The great news is that God was not to be thwarted by our rebellion. In His Son, Jesus Christ, whom He calls the last Adam, He restores some of the children of Adam and Eve to this righteousness—and not only for eternity but also in time. We will never be as whole as He intended this side of eternity, but we can be much more whole than we ever could have been without His healing of our rebellion through Jesus.

**Topics touched** are the ongoing power of the flesh, disciplines that fend off what Satan wants to do with our flesh, how to have daily victory over the flesh, and the dangers especially for leadership in ignoring the flesh.

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