

reminiscent of the ancient Temple of Herod (20 BC to 70 AD) in Jerusalem, sometimes called the Second Temple.³ Anyone who entered the Temple Mount complex was required to pay a fee. Within the Temple Mount walls, there were several chambers and courtyards which were designated for certain groups. For instance, women and Gentiles had restricted access – they were only permitted in designated outer courtyards of the Temple Mount complex. Only the Jewish Priests were allowed to enter the Temple itself – no one else. This structure sounds surprisingly similar to the inaccessibility a patient encounters at a doctor’s office. In order to see a physician, a patient must first schedule an appointment, then pay a copay, then sit in the waiting room to be called, then wait again in a restricted exam room for the physician to see them. The “forbidden Gentiles” are akin to uninsured patients with limited or no access to healthcare who are left on the outside looking in. Contrast that with the accessibility of pharmacists, who are widely available, offer free consultation, and are often separated from the public by only a countertop. While this accessibility may increase the frequency of interruptions, it also increases our opportunities for ministry and service to others.

Interruptions have long been associated with a negative context, impeding the things we need to do. But I challenge us to view interruptions in a different, more positive light. As Tim Elmore wrote, “an interruption can be transformed into an introduction.”⁴ Interruptions can help us develop relationships with new patients and strengthen existing ones. An interruption is simply an invitation to engage with our patients and students and meet their needs in that moment. Interruptions are an opportunity to serve our patients in the most sincere and caring way. They are not impeding our work; they are a valuable part of our work. While Jesus did perform amazing and grandiose miracles, the majority of His ministry was a composite of small, impactful moments. When we willingly welcome the small interruptions in our day, we mirror the compassion of Christ. If we seek to be more Christ-like in our lives and our careers, then we must embrace these interruptions... or dare I say, these blessings.

References:

1. Staton T. *Praying like Monks, Living like Fools: An Invitation to the Wonder and Mystery of Prayer*. Zondervan Books; 2022.
2. Downs, AF. Made for More at Work. Sermon presented at: Crosspoint Church; September 1, 2024; Nashville, TN.
3. The Editors of Encyclopedia Britannica. Temple of Jerusalem. Encyclopedia Britannica. Updated April 17, 2025. Accessed May 1, 2025. <https://www.britannica.com/place/Temple-Mount>
4. Elmore T. *The Eight Paradoxes of Great Leadership: Embracing the Conflicting Demands of Today’s Workplace*. HarperCollins Leadership; 2021.



Dr. Jarett C. Worden is an Assistant Professor of Pharmacy Practice at Belmont University College of Pharmacy and Health Sciences in Nashville, TN. He received his Bachelors in Chemistry from Florida Gulf Coast University and a Doctor of Pharmacy from Belmont University. He is a Board-Certified Infectious Diseases Pharmacist (BCIDP) and specializes in infectious diseases and antimicrobial stewardship. Throughout his career he has worked in a variety of pharmacy practice sites, including community, hospital, and academia. Dr.

Worden is passionate about teaching, learning, and serving others.

Formation: Thoughts on Spirituality, Leadership, and Community

By Amy E. Broeseker

Introduction

We are all being formed by something. To live intentionally, it is clarifying to consider what is shaping us on our journeys. As I ponder this, it is logical to start conceptually at the origin of all things. Since the first words of Scripture are “*In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.*” (Gen 1:1, NIV), the Trinity is both the central reality and mystery of our existence. All of creation flows from the Father, Son, and Spirit. These words by Baxter Kruger about our triune God have had a significant effect on me: “The Father, Son and Spirit are all about fellowship and shared life, and God delights in including mere humans in his work. And there is far more going on in an ordinary moment of an ordinary day on this planet than we have ever imagined.”¹

Consequently, since it all starts with God at the center of our faith, my thoughts begin there as well. Just as there are three distinct yet co-equal Persons of the Trinity, so are there three separate yet related aspects to my understanding that we are God’s partner in the world in the areas of: *spirituality, leadership, and community*. Though books have been written about each of these areas, I will share just a few thoughts of how these three arenas foster personal growth, develop insights in my “ordinary” days, and relate to my spiritual formation.

Spirituality

In very general terms, spirituality can

be described as expressing “a sense of meaning and purpose in life.”² It is a simple explanation, yet I believe it is accurate. If something is meaningful and purposeful to us, it will likely have a deliberate focus in our thoughts, words, and deeds. Christian spirituality, then, can be described as expressing that sense of meaning and purpose in life through our relationship with Jesus. This realization is connected to our incomplete understanding of and indescribable appreciation for the birth, life, death, and resurrection of Christ. As Ronold Rolheiser states, this paschal mystery “is the central mystery within Christianity”³ and is “the secret to life.”⁴ It certainly provides ultimate meaning and purpose for me.

In contemplating the origins of my Christian spirituality, it undeniably got its start at home. I had the best parents and brothers that anyone could ever want, and our evening supper around the table was a highlight of my day. My family provided the starting blocks for me on the Christian path and have been with me through every turn of my race. My upbringing in the church, particularly the youth group and youth choir, also had a deep impact on me and laid a solid groundwork in my teenage years as I prepared for adulthood. Embedded in this supportive foundation are several practices that have cultivated my spirituality. Without question, a few major ones are prayer, solitude, and study.

Prayer: Rolheiser offers that “there is no way to stay in touch with one’s soul and to keep a balance there, outside of regular private prayer. Only prayer can ground a soul.”⁵ To that end, a prayer practice that has become particularly meaningful to me is through *Lectio 365* (a daily devotional and prayer app) as I become centered in the mornings and have an examen in the evenings. These starting and ending minutes serve as anchors and bookends for

my daily experiences. Breath prayers (e.g., inhaling with “Help me, Jesus” and exhaling with “Thank you, Lord”) or humming a chorus or hymn also help to keep my conversation with God flowing. In an effort to deepen my prayer life, I have begun to set aside a time in the evening to light a candle, reflect on a passage of Scripture, and have a prayer journal with me that guides my interceding for others. For example, given the indescribable tragedy in Texas in July, one verse that comforts me states that “*the Lord is close to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit.*” (Psalm 34:18, NIV). Moreover, Paul’s words in one of my favorite chapters ensures us in times of unspeakable grief such as this that “*we do not know what we ought to pray, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express.*” (Rom 8:26, NIV). These opportunities for prayer provide time alone with the Trinity in solitude.

Solitude: Henri Nouwen states that “solitude is where spiritual ministry begins. That’s where Jesus listened to God. That’s where we listen to God. It’s not easy to sit and trust that in solitude God will speak to you—not as a magical voice but that he will let you know something gradually over the years. And in that word from God you will find the inner place from which to live your life.”⁶ Even Jesus needed time alone with the Father so that He could be filled up in order to be poured out. For instance, Mathew documented that “*after he had dismissed them, he went up into the hills by himself to pray. When evening came, he was there alone.*” (Matt 14:23, NIV). Again, Jesus provides the model for us in that he “*often withdrew to lonely places and prayed*” (Luke 5:16, NIV). Obviously, this need is more so the case with us. Though the *Lectio 365* prayer practices have become essential for my daily rhythm, I also seek to have a periodic day alone with God to remove as many distractions and as much noise as possible to sense the

nudging of the Holy Spirit. Even if we cannot find an entire day to do this, carving out ten minutes of stillness can help us listen for God’s gentle whisper. This is also true about study.

Study: Spiritual growth relates to interactions where our hearts join the heart of God in big or small ways that are significant to us. Studying Scripture assists us in not only *knowing about* the Trinity but also *experiencing* the Trinity through new encounters. As Rolheiser advocates, “*We need knowledge and heart. Spirituality is about both.*”⁷ Also, learning about those in the faith who have gone before us (or learning from those who are travelling with us) helps to show us the way. Lately, I have been particularly inspired by the Desert Fathers and Mothers. These were early Christian ascetics who lived in the Egyptian, Syrian, or Palestinian desert during the 3rd to 6th centuries, seeking spiritual transformation through solitude, prayer, and self-denial. It is beneficial for me to contemplate their life and words to see how they developed in their spiritual walks over 1500 years ago.

These life-giving practices of prayer, solitude, and study are ways that my spiritual formation has been and will continue to be enhanced. They also affect my leadership as well.

Leadership

As we know, a person does not need to have a title to be a leader. To that point, my favorite one-word definition of leadership is influence. Undoubtedly, the manner in which we *influence* others is crucial. When considering how I want to lead, I desire to follow Jesus’s example in ways such as listening well, helping others feel seen, and being clear in my communication. Regarding leadership, Nouwen declares in his book, *In the Name of Jesus*, that “the Christian leaders of the future have to be theologians, persons who know the heart of God and are trained—through prayer, study, and

Careful analysis—to manifest the divine event of God’s saving work in the midst of the many seemingly random events of their time.”⁸ Simply put, and with a nod to the book’s title, he asserts that “the Christian leader thinks, speaks, and acts in the name of Jesus.”⁹ To this end, the practices of gratitude, shepherding, and questions are vital for me to grow in leadership.

Gratitude: It is imperative that leaders authentically express gratitude to others. Communicating genuine gratitude can positively impact not only individuals but also the culture of an entire organization, such as a pharmacy department or an educational institution. An attitude of gratitude colors the way that we interact with God and others and makes life more joyful. There are many instances when thankfulness is expressed in Scripture; just a few of these are “Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good; his love endures forever.” (Psalm 118:1, NIV) and “We always thank God for all of you, mentioning you in our prayers.” (I Thess 1:2, NIV). Just a simple act or single sentence can make others feel appreciated and give them a sense of belonging. Since all people need encouragement and want to know that they matter, I desire to hone the habit of expressing gratefulness in my encounters with others.

Shepherding: Over the past decade, the most precious image to me of Jesus’s life is that of a shepherd. Seeing pictures or sculptures of Christ holding a lamb in His arms remind me that He is holding us as well. Reassuringly, Jesus tells us twice that He is “the good Shepherd” (John 10: 11,14, NIV) and that His love for us is so strong that “no one can snatch them out of my hand.” (John 10:28, NIV). Along these lines, and as we seek to be God’s representatives in the world, Nouwen suggests that “Jesus sends us out to be shepherds.”¹⁰ This shepherding can take shape in various forms, such as serving as mentors, supporting others

in difficult trials, listening to those who need a soulful companion, assisting in the discernment process, or just reminding them that they are beloved children of God. As we come alongside others, this shepherding will likely involve asking questions.

Questions: Jesus asked far more questions than He answered. In speculating on His rationale for doing this, it seems that Jesus really wants us to think deeply on our own and then hear ourselves articulate a response to our request of Him. Tim Keel states that “it takes a lot more depth, presence, and creativity on the part of the leader to ask a well-informed, sensitive, and sincere question that engages the person on the other end of the relationship. We have to ask in order to learn. What if leaders learned the art of the question?”¹¹ Certainly, a well-framed question can facilitate getting to the crux of an issue in an effort to help clarify thoughts and feelings. I want to keep learning how to ask helpful and better questions not only to others but also to myself. For instance, this inquiry is one that I have been asking myself regularly during the past couple years of my spiritual life: “Who am I becoming?”

These important practices concerning gratitude, shepherding, and questions are ways that my leadership is shaped by my formation. These will also affect my interactions in community.

Community

Connection is a beautiful gift that is both modeled and given to us by the Trinity. Rolheiser describes that the “church, by definition, is...walking to God within a community.”¹² Since we are imperfect people, being in community can also be challenging, stagnant, or even divisive at times. There are various ways to explore how a community can function effectively as a body of Christ, “so in Christ we who are many form one body, and each member belongs to all the others.” (Rom 12:5, NIV).

These can include the practices of story, fellowship, and ritual.

Story: We are made for stories—both telling them and hearing them. Of course, Jesus knows this since we are God’s creation, so He shares important points through numerous parables in the synoptic Gospels. In fact, He tells seven parables about His Kingdom in Matthew Chapter 13 alone. Furthermore, Warren Brown and Brad Strawn offer that “the biblical story begins to shape our story. The true goal of Christian life is to place our human stories into the larger narrative of scripture in such a way that we become shaped by it.”¹³ Therefore, creating opportunities for people to share their stories in some way has a powerful effect on fostering community. Offering our faith experiences can be encouraging to those who may just need to hear what someone is saying in order to know that they are not alone. This could then open doors for more meaningful relationships as the Christ in one person meets the Christ in another.

Fellowship: Spiritual formation is a group project. Brown and Strawn emphatically declare that “we believe people develop and change in, through, and with other people!”¹⁴ Similarly, Tim Suttle states that “we are wired by God for this type of familial connection. The abundant life is a life of mutuality and relationship characterized by participation in the new community of God.”¹⁵ This participation is made possible through the function of spending time together. Examples of this in the New Testament are “if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another.” (I John 1:7, NIV). Also, “they devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.” (Acts 2:42, NIV). Ways that this fellowship can happen are through such things as enjoying meals, taking walks, discussing Scripture or Christian books in-person

or online, sharing struggles, and serving in an area of need. These examples relate to the presence of ritual in our lives.

Ritual: We collectively embrace the mystery of the Christian faith through certain rituals. There is something special that happens when repeated activities are experienced together. Rolheiser asserts that rituals “are not meant to be an experience of high energy and creativity, but are meant precisely to be predictable, repetitive, simple, straightforward, and brief. Without ritual gathering we will, like any family, soon fall apart.”¹⁶ These include the communal acts of participating in the Lord’s Supper, reading and hearing Scripture, worshiping through song, praying together, laying on of hands, and sitting in silence. Regarding some of these aspects, Jesus instructs us in our receiving of the communion bread to “do this in remembrance of me.” (Luke 22:19, NIV).

Additionally, we are encouraged many times in the Psalms to corporately bring our songs to God, such as “Come, let us sing for joy to the Lord; let us shout aloud to the Rock of our salvation.” (Psalm 95:1, NIV). Also, the grace to receive power or to be commissioned for a certain task can be felt through touch, as “they presented these men to the apostles, who prayed and laid their hands on them.” (Acts 6:6, NIV). These rituals provide a certain cadence to our interactions as the body of Christ and as we are formed together.

Indeed, practices related to story, fellowship, and ritual are mechanisms by which the sense of community can be deepened. We are designed to be in relationship with each other.

Conclusion

These areas and practices of **spirituality** (e.g., prayer, solitude, study), **leadership** (e.g., gratitude, shepherding, questions), and **community** (e.g., story, fellowship, ritual) are meaningful to me as I grow in my formation as an apprentice of Jesus. They relate to each other in various ways as I interact with God, others, and myself. Just as I began this piece with thoughts about the Trinity by Kruger, so shall I end it with his remarks that “behind it all is Jesus and his life with his Father in the fellowship of the Spirit. The great dance is being played out every day in our lives. It is the way things are... the secret of human existence.”¹⁷ May we become increasingly aware of our formation through God’s love and movement in our lives so that we can better represent Him to those we encounter along the way.

References

1. Kruger CB. *The Great Dance: The Christian Vision Revisited*. Vancouver, British Columbia: Regent College Publishing; 2000:60-61.
2. McKee DD, Chappel JN. Spirituality and medical practice. *J Fam Pract*. 1992; 35:201.
3. Rolheiser R. *The Holy Longing: The Search for Christian Spirituality*. New York, NY: Image

Publishing; 2019:142.

4. Rolheiser, 148.
5. Rolheiser, 218.
6. Nouwen H. “From Solitude to Community to Ministry.” *Leadership J*, Spring: 1995. <http://www.christianitytoday.com/pastors/1995/spring/51280.html>. Accessed June 13, 2025:3.
7. Rolheiser, 214.
8. Nouwen H. *In the Name of Jesus: Reflections on Christian Leadership*. New York, NY: Crossroad; 1993:88.
9. Nouwen, 86.
10. Nouwen, 91.
11. Keel T. *Intuitive Leadership: Embracing a Paradigm of Narrative, Metaphor, and Chaos*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker; 2007:229-230.
12. Rolheiser, 135.
13. Brown WS, Strawn BD. *The Physical Nature of Christian Life: Neuroscience, Psychology, and the Church*. New York, NY: Cambridge; 2012:119.
14. Brown and Strawn, 110.
15. Suttle T. *Shrink: Faithful Ministry in a Church-Growth Culture*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan; 2014:193.
16. Rolheiser, 236-237.
17. Kruger, 56.



Amy E. Broeseker is a Professor at the Samford University McWhorter School of Pharmacy. She earned both her Bachelor of Science in Nursing and Doctor of Pharmacy degrees from the University of Florida. Most of her practice experience at that time was in critical care. She then earned her Doctor of Philosophy degree and Thanatology certificate from the University of Alabama. She also has a Master of Arts in Christian Spiritual Formation and Leadership degree from Friends University. She was named a Fellow in the National Academies of Practice interprofessional organization, and she is a Fellow in Samford’s Healthcare Ethics and Law Institute. Her main interests are in ethics, interprofessional education, Christian spiritual formation, the science of learning, and the social sciences in healthcare. She is the advisor for Samford’s CPFI student chapter, and she enjoys the mountains, music, and gardening.