

# Invitation to a Journey

## Prologue, Chapters 1 & 2

- **Opening Prayer**

*Heavenly Father, as we embark on a new series digging into our spiritual formation, we give thanks that you are by our side, as always, on this journey. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.*

- **Introduction**

- [Video](#) [1:03] - Robert Mulholland & Ruth Haley Barton
- Robert Mulholland (1936-2015)
  - Graduate of the Naval Academy
  - Master of Sacred Theology from Wesley Theological Seminary in D.C.
  - Doctorate from Harvard Divinity School
  - Elder in Kentucky Conference of UMC
  - Professor of NT at Asbury Theological Seminary near Lexington, KY
  - Also taught at Wesley Theological Seminary in D.C., Harvard, and in seminaries in Moscow, West Africa, and Estonia
  - Published *Invitation to a Journey* in 1993
- Ruth Haley Barton
  - Author in her own right
  - Barton revised and added to the book in 2016
  - Founded the Transforming Center in IL, providing retreats and resources for Christian leaders

- **Prologue & Chapter 1 – The Process**

- [Video](#)
- [Prologue] “The Christian community...has too often been merely an echo of the culture”
  - Where do you see Christianity echoing secular culture?
- Would you characterize your faith as more of a “static possession” or a “journey”? Why?
- How would you define “spiritual formation”?
- Mulholland presents the definition of spiritual formation as:
  1. A **process**...
  2. of being **formed**...
  3. in the **image of Christ**...
  4. for the sake of **others**
- Does he cover all the bases? *For example, how about “the relationship with God”?*
- How does our “instant gratification” society impact our spiritual life?
- Mulholland suggests that spiritual growth is like physical growth in that it has periods of spurts and plateaus
  - How does this line up with your personal experience?
- [27] “*Everyone* is in a process of spiritual formation.” Every action, thought, response, etc. shapes us “into either the wholeness of the image of Christ or a horribly destructive caricature of that image”
  - What are your reactions to this “wholeness” vs. “destructiveness” assertion?
- Read Ephesians 4:11-15
  - Mulholland describes the Christian journey as an intentional and continual commitment
  - In what ways are you intentional in your journey?
- Other reflections?

- **Chapter 2 – Being Formed**

- [Video](#)
    - What do you think about the pastor’s comment of us not giving the Holy Spirit permission, but rather the Holy Spirit is always at work within us?
  - Give some examples of how you attempt to be “controlling”
    - Give examples specifically related to your practice of faith
  - What do you think is the underlying reason why you want to be in control?
  - How does our controlling nature get in the way of God’s work?
    - Where do you sense God would like you to give up control?
  - [34] “We tend to evaluate our own meaning, value and purpose, as well as those of others, not by the quality of our being but by what we do and how effectively we do it”
    - Reactions?
  - Do you struggle with “Doing” vs. “Being”?
  - Do you take time to be silent and just listen to God?
    - Did anyone do the 10-minute silence exercise?
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- **Closing Prayer (ask a volunteer to offer this)**

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References for material:

- [Invitation to a Journey: A Road Map for Spiritual Formation](#) (note the Study Guide in the back of the book)
- [Chapter videos provided by Bethany Lutheran Long Beach](#)

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*Italics* imply important points or example answers the leader can convey

# Chapters 3 & 4

- **Opening Prayer**

*Lord God, we are told that you formed us in your image, and we struggle with all the ways we fall short of that. As we proceed on this journey, help us to embrace the image of Christ you intend for us. In His holy name we pray. Amen.*

- **Chapter 3 – The Image of Christ**

- What comes to mind for you when I say “the image of Christ”?
- [41] “the world wants to squeeze us all into the same mold”
  - In what ways do you find this true/untrue?
- Read Ephesians 1:3-6
  - [43] Mulholland clarifies that the Greek word used for “chose” means “spoke forth” and thus \*every\* human was spoken forth by God at Creation
  - Reflecting on this, what are your views on predestination?
- [45] “God meets us in those places of our lives that are most alienated from God.”
  - What are your thoughts on Mulholland’s observation that the times when we are re-formed in the image of Christ are those times when we are most unlike Christ?
  - He suggests this appears due to “confrontation”... from Scripture, worship, Christian brother/sister, etc.
    - Can you think of such confrontational moments in your life?
- “How much of our devotional life and our worship are designed simply to affirm, for ourselves, others and perhaps even God, those areas of our lives that we think are already well along the way?”
- Other reflections?

- **Chapter 4 – For the Sake of Others**

- What do you think of Mulholland’s claim that the sole purpose of our spiritual formation is to be in relationship with God and others?
- Turning back to our earlier thoughts of “the image of Christ” – were those images focused around “for the sake of others”?
- [49] “the points of our unlikeness to Christ are areas of our life where we are lord and Christ isn’t”
  - What are those areas for you?
- [50] Does Mulholland’s litmus test of spiritual growth – examining the growth of quality of relationships with others – work for you?
- To what extent do you agree that holistic spiritual growth cannot take place in a private relationship with God?
- Self-Examination
  - Do you ever begin or end your day with the exercise of asking God to make you aware of where you were not like Christ in the preceding day?
  - Does or could this work for you?
- Other reflections?

- **Closing Prayer (ask a volunteer to offer this)**

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# Chapters 5-7









- **Opening Prayer**

*Creator God, you made us in all shapes and sizes, and we thank you for that diversity. Be with us today as we explore our gifts, and how they relate to our spiritual path. In Christ's name we pray. Amen.*

- **Chapter 5 – Creation Gifts**

- If you have time *\*before\** class, have members take (or retake) the Jung/Myers-Briggs personality test at <https://www.humanmetrics.com/personality/test>
- Review the Jung/Myers-Briggs classifications.

## PERSONALITY TYPES KEY

 <b>E</b> <b>Extroverts</b> are energized by people, enjoy a variety of tasks, a quick pace, and are good at multitasking.	 <b>S</b> <b>Sensors</b> are realistic people who like to focus on the facts and details, and apply common sense and past experience to come up with practical solutions to problems.
 <b>I</b> <b>Introverts</b> often like working alone or in small groups, prefer a more deliberate pace, and like to focus on one task at a time.	 <b>N</b> <b>Intuitives</b> prefer to focus on possibilities and the big picture, easily see patterns, value innovation, and seek creative solutions to problems.
 <b>T</b> <b>Thinkers</b> tend to make decisions using logical analysis, objectively weigh pros and cons, and value honesty, consistency, and fairness.	 <b>J</b> <b>Judgers</b> tend to be organized and prepared, like to make and stick to plans, and are comfortable following most rules.
 <b>F</b> <b>Feelers</b> tend to be sensitive and cooperative, and decide based on their own personal values and how others will be affected by their actions.	 <b>P</b> <b>Perceivers</b> prefer to keep their options open, like to be able to act spontaneously, and like to be flexible with making plans.

SOURCE: "Do What You Are: Discover the Perfect Career for You Through the Secrets of Personality Type" by Paul D. Tieger, Barbara Barron, Kelly Tieger BUSINESS INSIDER

- What are you? Do others agree?
- What are your feelings toward this categorization?
- Do you agree with Mulholland's assertion that we have a tendency to evaluate our pattern as being superior?
- Read 1 Corinthians 12:12-14
  - How would you summarize Paul's message?
- Other reflections?

- **Chapter 6 – One-Sided Spirituality**

- [69] *Mulholland describes different expressions of spirituality for different Jung patterns*

- *Extraverts – highly social, avoid solitude/reflection bringing depth*
- *Intuitives – contemplative but minimize input of senses*
- *Thinking – theological/analytical/structural, slighting an emotional relationship with God*
- *Perceiving – unplanned spirituality open to God in whatever comes, resisting structure and regularity*
- How does your spirituality align with your pattern?
- Focus of the chapter is feeding the “shadow side” of each pair
  - Do you agree this side needs to be fed, and if so, do you currently work to feed this undernourished side?
  - If not fed, do you agree that spirituality will “disintegrate,” either through losing faith or stagnating?
- Other reflections?
- **Chapter 7 – Holistic Spirituality**
  - [77] “their [Extraverts] natural spiritual path is activity” and they require *reflection* for holism
    - Introverts – reflective; require *action*
    - Sensing – the body; *understanding*
    - Intuitives – natural; *service*
    - Thinking – knowledge; *devotion*
    - Feeling – devotion; *knowledge*
    - Judging – discipline; *spontaneity*
    - Perceivers – spontaneity; *discipline*
  - What are your reflections on these spiritual paths and requirements for holistic spirituality?
  - [84] “If the leader or leaders of the community of faith structure spiritual activities and worship in line with their preference patterns, any persons in the community who represent the alternate side of that pattern will have a sense of being spiritually marginalized”
    - To what extent do you think this happens in our church
  - Other reflections?
- **Closing Prayer (ask a volunteer to offer this)**

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# Chapters 8 & 9

- **Opening Prayer**

*Loving Father, we praise you for this spiritual journey, and pray that you'll show us the spiritual disciplines that will help us along our pilgrimage. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.*

- **Chapter 8 – The Classical Christian Pilgrimage**

- What comes to mind when you hear the word “pilgrimage”?
- Have you ever made a pilgrimage of any sort?
- *Mulholland suggests a four-stage path of pilgrimage:*
  - *Awaking – called out of unlikeness to Christ*
  - *Purgation – relinquishing unlikeness*
  - *Illumination – new structure of being and doing*
  - *Union – Christlikeness of spirit and behavior*
- [95] Review the chart of aspects of each stage
  - Reactions to this?
  - Would you describe the concept of spiritual journey in a different way?
- [109] “How often is our formal worship merely an attempt to appease God for lives that are lived essentially with no real reference to God’s purposes?”
  - How does this describe your experience with worship?
- The final stage “Union” reflects a complete oneness with God
  - Is this something to which you aspire, hearkening to John Wesley’s goal of perfection?
- Other reflections?

- **Chapter 9 – Classical Spiritual Disciplines**

- What comes to mind when you hear the word “discipline”?
  - Is it a positive or negative image?
- Philippians 2:12-13
  - Read first in NIV, NRSV, KJ, or CEB
  - [120] Mulholland points out what seems to be a contradiction in Paul’s direction between doing and letting God do
  - Now read in The Message
  - What additional perspective does this version provide?
- Classical disciplines
  - Prayer
    - [123] “primarily relational, not functional”
    - Can you put this into your own words?
  - Spiritual Reading
    - Why might this be an easier discipline than others?
    - [128] “Spiritual or *formational* reading is the exact opposite of informational reading”
      - What do you think Mulholland is getting at here? *Information gives us control; formation cedes control to God*
  - Lectio Divina – Divine Reading
    - Read, meditate, pray, contemplate
    - Have you practiced lectio divina?
    - Can you see its value for all of us, or is it just something for monastics?
  - Liturgy
    - Structure for both personal and corporate worship and devotion

- How important is liturgy in your life and the life of the church?
  - Mulholland calls out these elements of liturgy:
    - Worship
    - Daily Office – daily behaviors reminding us of whose we are
    - Study
    - Fasting
    - Retreat
  - Why, to Mulholland, do you think these didn't merit being disciplines in their own right?
    - Other reflections?
  
  - **Closing Prayer (ask a volunteer to offer this)**
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# Chapters 10 & 11

- **Opening Prayer [from Leader Guide] – also note that Hamilton prays at the end of the video**  
*Dear God, as we struggle to achieve spiritual perfection with you, we ask that you work within our lives that we might adopt disciplines that draw us away from our dead bodies to be more in concert with you. We pray this in your holy name. Amen.*
- **Chapter 10 – The Nature of the Spiritual Disciplines**
  - [140] Mulholland cites Romans 8 – “the Spirit gives life because of righteousness.”
    - How do you see righteousness yielding Spirit-given life in your experience?
  - Paul uses the word *body* in three ways:
    - Physical existence
    - Corporate entity (e.g., “body of Christ”)
    - Body of sin / dead body
      - Read Romans 7:13-25
      - How would you describe Paul’s state of being here?
      - Can you empathize with this state?
  - [143] John Wesley speaks of striving for perfection in terms of sanctification, and notes that those who are perfect do not sin *deliberately*?
    - Does this make sense to you, or does it seem like equivocation?
  - [147] “Many Christians... tend to think that if all of our old nature has not been done away with in conversion or sanctification, then we really have not become Christian.”
    - Have you or do you share this inclination?
    - How does Paul’s response to this (i.e., “If Christ is in you, your body is dead because of sin, yet your spirit is alive because of righteousness”) temper this inclination?
  - [151] Mulholland describes the futility of us trying to pull ourselves up by our bootstraps and adopting a “discipline” to counteract our brokenness, only to continually “fall off the wagon.”
    - What are some practical ways to yield this to God?
    - What experience do you have with accountability groups?
  - Other reflections?
- **Chapter 11 – The Inner Dynamics of the Spiritual Disciplines**
  - Mulholland calls out three inner dynamics of our disciplines:
    - Silence
      - What examples can you share where you’ve used silence to your advantage?
      - In what ways do you see incorporating silence in your spiritual discipline as relinquishing control?
    - Solitude
      - Mulholland states that this is not just getting away from others to be with God, but also “being who we are with God and acknowledging who we are to ourselves and to God.”
        - How does this extend your understanding of spiritual solitude?
      - Do you find yourself struggling with being authentic with God?
    - Prayer
      - *Serves as a bridge from what we are to what God wants us to be.*
      - Do you experience struggle when you pray? If so, in what way?
  - Other reflections?
- **Closing Prayer (ask a volunteer to offer this)**

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# Chapters 12 & 13

- **Opening Prayer**

*Holy Lord,*

- **Chapter 12 – Corporate Spirituality**

- [168] “how easy to try to squeeze one another into molds...instead of allowing each to contribute his or her uniqueness”
  - In what ways do you fall into trying to shape others into your mold?
- Mulholland provides the story of Dwight L. Moody talking with a man who claimed it was possible for a person to be a Christian without being active in church. Moody provided the example of a coal removed from a fire.
  - Mulholland state there’s been an epidemic of “private religion” since the 1960s
    - Have you witnessed this?
    - Do you think anyone could be a Christian without a church community?
    - How have you seen yourself positively impact others in their faith journey?
- Leech quoted – “The essential difference between orthodox Christianity and the various heretical systems is that orthodoxy is rooted in paradox...true faith can only grow...if it includes elements of paradox and doubt.”
  - What do you think about the need for doubt in your faith?
- Read John 3:1-9
  - Do you agree with Mulholland that Nicodemus is trying to control his relationship with God?
  - In what ways do you try to control your relationship with God?
- Other reflections?

- **Chapter 13 – Social Spirituality**

- Do you lean more toward personal or social holiness?
- Another Leech quote – “To dissociate the divine justice from the struggle for justice within the human community is to make nonsense of the biblical record.”
  - How does our community rate in associating divine justice with social justice?
- [186] “But while our spirituality must be lived out in the world, it must avoid becoming the captive of its context” and “There must be a creative tension between our spiritual pilgrimage and the world where it is lived out”
  - What does Mulholland mean by spirituality becoming captive to the world’s context? Do you see us falling into this trap?
  - What value do you see from the creative tension Mulholland describes?
- [190] Mulholland points out the need for a “corporate spirituality of accountability”
  - What vehicles of corporate accountability are present in your life?
- Other reflections?

- **Closing Prayer (ask a volunteer to offer this)**

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