

ABSTRACT

EXPLORING THE DYNAMICS OF TRANSFORMATIVE CHANGE OF *LECTIO DIVINA* IN THE CONTEXT OF TRANSFORMATIVE LEARNING THEORY

by

Joyce M. Chen

We all witness the sanctification gap in our fellow Christian brothers and sisters and in ourselves. Christian integrity is at stake. It is recognized that Scripture reading is important for forming Christians to be like Christ. Hence, this study explores the dynamics of transformative change of *lectio divina* in the context of Transformative Learning Theory (TLT) developed by Mezirow. This study focuses on understanding how the four learning movements of TLT (disorienting dilemma, critical reflection, discourse, action) explain the four movements of *lectio divina* (*lectio, meditatio, oratio, contemplatio*) that help Christians open to God to change. The change can either be transformative of meaning scheme or meaning perspective.

This research effort uses both qualitative and quantitative research methods. Twenty self-selected Chinese Christians from both Los Angeles and Orange Counties participated in this research. Quantitatively, this study uses Kathleen P. King's Learning Activities Survey as the main instrument tool to measure transformation. Qualitatively, this study uses the literature review done on both domains: *Lectio divina* and Transformative Learning Theory (TLT).

The study examines *lectio divina* through the lens of TLT and reveals that this spiritual discipline opens the door for Christians to depend upon God to release them

from the trap of common misconceptions and habitual ways of learning Scripture. Hence, the spiraling movements of *lectio*/disorienting dilemma, *meditatio*/critical reflection, *oratio*/discourse and *contemplatio*/action aid in the closing of the sanctification gap.

DISSERTATION APPROVAL

This is to certify that the dissertation entitled
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by

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I dedicate this work to God. Praise and thanks to our Lord Jesus Christ through whom God redeems us and transfers us into this grace in which we stand (Romans 5:2). Praise and thanks to our Lord Jesus Christ whose yoke is not burdensome and beyond our ability to bear (Matthew 11:30); His commandments are not burdensome for those who are born of the Father (I John 5:3).

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CHAPTER 1

NATURE OF THE PROJECT

Overview of the Chapter

This first chapter serves as an overview of the whole dissertation. It introduces the research by narrating what happened in the past to ignite a curiosity in the researcher, stating the problem, giving the purpose of this project, and listing research questions. The researcher also presents the rationale for the project, defining key terms and delimitations.

Statement of the Problem

It was not something that just happened one day. It was something that had puzzled the researcher all of her adult years. Why did Christians know so much about the Bible yet still sin? The researcher did not want to only point fingers at others and forget to reflect on her own life. No one is alone when it comes to the challenge of facing stubborn sinful behavior. It happens at home. It happens at work. It happens in church even while serving in ministry.

The researcher had some opportunities to work side by side with some internationally renowned Christian leaders. They were fruitful in their ministry and were very influential, yet close encounters with some of them brought so much disappointment.

There were also other, less renowned leaders the researcher had worked alongside in local churches who were very involved in church ministry, who had the utmost concern for evangelism and missions, who were always giving tithes, who had almost the whole Bible memorized and, when they prayed, the Bible verses flowed naturally out of their mouths. They would, during power struggles within the church, design the ugliest,

cruellest tricks to sabotage their opponents' reputation (their "opponents" being fellow co-ministers), even to the point of counterfeiting material and using it as blackmail. It was mind-boggling to witness afterward their utter lack of remorse about the misdemeanor. We have all witnessed the gap between biblical knowledge and actual behavior in our fellow Christian brothers and sisters and, regrettably, in ourselves.

Christian integrity is at stake. Indeed, there exists "a serious gap in the mind of many believers between what they know to be the *goal* of sanctification and growth and where they know they *actually are* in their life" (John H. Coe 4).

Research in this area, especially that of Richard Lovelace, suggests that there is a sanctification gap. In his article "The Sanctification Gap," he points out precisely how the Church has failed to live the essence of sanctification. Often times, people take it for granted that the gap is supposed to be there. Therefore, there are Christians who pretend that they have reached the goal of sanctification when they are actually not at the goal. Thus, the Church ends up not only misunderstanding sanctification but also becoming hypocritical because it is involved in a community of pretending (R. Lovelace 363–369).

We all fall short of our own standards. What happens next is that we tend to be hypocritical. As Lewis says, "human beings, all over the earth, have this curious idea that they ought to behave in a certain way, and cannot really get rid of it. Secondly, [they] do not in fact behave in that way" (C.S. Lewis 8). When we are anxious about not being able to measure up to our beliefs about how we should behave and when that anxiety is coupled with caring excessively about what others think about us, then the need to present a polished image emerges. This is when hypocrisy begins. This is when a false self emerges. Most of the time we love our false self. We are often carried away by our

false self to the point that we are unaware of our own deceitfulness. This happened in Jesus' time. We read in Scripture Jesus' invective against Pharisees, "[you] outwardly appear righteous to others, but within you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness" (Matthew 23:28 ESV).

To close the sanctification gap is one of the most pressing pursuits for many devout believers. It is widely recognized that Scripture reading is important for forming Christians to be like Christ. It is also true that "reading Scripture must begin with a deep commitment to growing in the knowledge of biblical information" (Tom Schwanda and Jim Wilhoit 3). Accurate exposition of Scripture is very important, but merely focusing on the academic and scholarly reading of Scripture without integrating that knowledge into our daily lives has been one of the reasons for the sanctification gap of Christians for centuries. Christians have to awaken to the fact that "information by itself is never enough to form healthy disciples of Jesus Christ. True and lasting transformation of lives comes only through a formative engagement" (Schwanda and Wilhoit 3).

Purpose of the Project

The purpose of this study was to explore how *lectio divina*, with its transformative learning pattern, can help Scripture-reading Chinese Christians from Los Angeles and Orange County open to God to change, setting them on the journey of transformation which improves the sanctification gap and, therefore, shapes both belief and behavior. Additionally, the study included Mezirow's Transformative Learning Theory (TLT) for the purpose of better understanding *lectio divina*'s technique of learning further proving its effectiveness.

In his Ph.D. dissertation, Dr. Richard J. McLaughlin already confirmed that there is a “strong compatibility between transformative theory and... Christian spiritual renewal....” (Richard J. McLaughlin, abstract). This research endeavored to flesh out this premise.

Research Questions

The following research questions expressed the need to understand if the concept of Transformative Learning Theory could help us understand the transformative learning pattern of *lectio divina*, which can be undertaken to improve the sanctification gap in the Christian life.

Research Question 1

Was there a perspective transformation in relation to Scripture reading prior to the reader engaging in *lectio divina*? If there was perspective transformation, which learning activities contributed to the transformation?

Research Question 2

What comparative changes occurred in relation to Scripture reading after the reader engaged in *lectio divina*? If there was perspective transformation, which learning activities contributed to the transformation?

Research Question 3

How did TLT help us understand the perspective transformation movements of *lectio divina* for the purpose of Christian spiritual formation?

Theoretically, this research sought to explore the same working elements for both the four circling moments of *lectio divina* (*lectio, meditatio, oratio, contemplatio*) and the four circling stages of TLT (disorienting experiences, critical reflection, discourse,

action). The main thrust of this study was to explore the dynamics of transformative change of these two.

Rationale for the Project

The first reason this study is important is that Jesus commanded His followers, “Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect” (Matthew 5:48 ESV). The second reason this study is important is that it supports the theology of the power of the Word of God and the Spirit of God which is a worthwhile task. The third reason this study is important is that findings from this study can practically help readers of Scripture to know reading methods which will help them open to the work of God and to being transformed by Him.

Definition of Key Terms

Sanctification Gap

“[The sanctification gap] is a gap between the reality of the Christian life and the goal of a spiritual life; a gap of knowledge and the practice of getting from where we are to where we are supposed to be, and of how to move from the reality of broken and hurting lives to the goal that we hear about every Sunday morning” (Lovelace 363–369).

Spiritual Formation/Spiritual Growth

“Scripture uses a number of images to emphasize that believers are meant to grow in their faith, understanding, holiness and commitment. It also provides advice on how this may be achieved” (*Zondervan Dictionary of Bible Themes*).

Transformative Learning Theory

“Transformative learning refers to the process by which we transform our taken-for-granted frames of reference (meaning perspectives, habits of mind, mind-sets) to

make them more inclusive, discriminating, open, emotionally capable of change, and reflective so that they may generate beliefs and opinions that will prove more true or justified to guide action” (Jack Mezirow, *Learning as Transformation* 8).

Meaning Perspective/Frame of Reference

“A meaning perspective is a habitual set of expectations that constitutes an orienting frame of reference that we use in projecting our symbolic models and that serves as a (usually tacit) belief system for interpreting and evaluating the meaning of experience” (Mezirow, *Transformative Dimensions of Adult Learning* 42).

“A frame of reference is the structure of assumptions and expectations (aesthetic, socio-linguistic, moral-ethical, epistemic, psychological) through which we filter and make sense of our world” (Mezirow, *Learning as Transformation* 293).

“‘Meaning perspective’ was the original term used for one’s worldview and cluster of meaning schemes; it and ‘frame of reference’ are used interchangeably” (Mezirow, *Learning as Transformation* 287).

Meaning Scheme

“This is a more specific dimension of our frame of reference. It is the constellation of concept, belief, judgment, and feeling which shape a particular interpretation (e.g., when we think of abortion, black people, the Muslim religion, free market capitalism, or liberalism)” (Mezirow, “Understanding Transformation Theory” 223).

Perspective Transformation

“Perspective transformation represents not only a total change in life perspective, but an actualization of that perspective. In other words life is not seen from a new

perspective, it is lived from that perspective” (Mezirow, *Learning as Transformation*, Kindle Locations 430-431).

Spiritual Discipline

“A repeated bodily human spirit and Holy Spirit activity: it involves your body, your human spirit and the Holy Spirit. The doing of it is in our power, and it forms a habit over time and repetition, or it opens our heart to the work of the Holy Spirit, who transforms us spiritually in cooperation with our spirit. He fills us with His presence and by so doing, in union, conforms us more and more to the image of Christ” (Lecture from John Coe’s Class in 2006 at Talbot Theological Seminary of Biola University).

Conceptual Compatibility

“As the bridge between disciplines in academia, the term conceptual compatibility involves a beneficial cross-over of ideas, or a cross-pollination across disciplines. This two-word term ‘conceptual compatibility’ essentially merges the meaning of conceptual (of, relating to, or based on mental concepts) and compatibility (state in which two things are able to exist or occur together without problems or conflict) (www.oxforddictionaries.com)” (McLaughlin 10). For the purposes of this dissertation, conceptual compatibility involves fusing ideas from *lectio divina* and Transformative Learning Theory.

Narrative Research

“The purpose of a narrative is to give meaning to the world, not to describe it scientifically. The measure of a narrative’s ‘truth’ or ‘falsity’ is in its consequences: Does it provide people with a sense of personal identity, or sense of community life, a basis for moral conduct or explanations of that which cannot be known?” (Neil Postman 6)

Delimitations

For this study, there were five delimitations that influenced the direction of this research project. First, this study was limited to adults over the age of twenty-one. Second, this study chose to use Transformative Learning Theory as the conceptual framework for exploring *lectio divina*. Third, change does not happen overnight. Also, the time it takes to develop a habit is usually at least one month. Therefore, the time frame for this intervention was four weekends. Fourth, this study was limited to Chinese Christians, the purpose of which was only to narrow down the database. Fifth, the learners who were involved in this research were self-reflective; they had both the skills and the inclination to explore their own experience.

Data Collection Method

Participants

The participants of this research were Chinese Christians from various churches in the greater Los Angeles metropolitan area, including Orange County. They were self-selected individuals who desired to learn about the *Sermon on the Mount* in a Bible study course over four weekends. They had all been believers for at least one year when they participated, so they each had experience in dealing with the chasm between biblical knowledge and transformed behavior.

Type of Research

The type of research involved was mixed method, for “the challenge is to appropriately match methods to questions rather than adhering to some narrow methodological orthodoxy” (Tim Sensing 52).

The process of the research utilized Glaser and Strauss's model of qualitative research's circular interlinking of empirical steps (Ewe Flick 95). (See Figure 3.1.)

Data Collection

The researcher sought to understand how *lectio divina*, with its transformative learning pattern, could help Scripture-reading Christians to change. Therefore, the literature review examined both the domain of *lectio divina* and the domain of Transformative Learning Theory (TLT). For *lectio divina*, there was an in-depth research of its historical and theological foundations. For TLT, there was an in-depth exploration and explanation of the theory.

To answer the first research question, a pre-intervention survey was given to all participants, the Learning Activities Survey (LAS) (Kathleen P. King 20, see Appendix A), to collect data at the beginning of the *Sermon On The Mount* course.

To answer the second research question, after *lectio divina* had been introduced, the same version of LAS was used to answer question number one (see Appendix B), and LAS Follow-Up Interviews (see Appendix C) were given to participants in order to complete a post-intervention survey (King 15).

To answer the third research question, in-depth quantitative research was done on the post-intervention survey and interviews. Through a reiteration of the qualitative literature review and research done on both *lectio divina* and TLT in Chapter Two, the researcher developed a theological grammar of transformative change of spiritual life. This was based on a study of the conceptual compatibility of the transformative learning pattern of both *lectio divina* and TLT. The method the researcher used was qualitative research's circular interlinking of empirical steps (Flick 95). Glaser makes statements

like, “All is data” (Barney G. Glaser 1), or one can use “almost everything as data – whatever is helpful to understand the process and the field you are interested in and to answer your research questions” (Flick 433).

Data Analysis

The procedure for analyzing participants’ responses given in LAS utilized a table designed by King for collecting data and calculating scores (King 285–300). Data collected from the survey was entered into a LAS_pt_prototype file published by IBM SPSS Statistics Data Editor (King 285).

Generalizability

The researcher firmly believes that someone else could repeat this research and obtain approximately the same results. This is due to the fact that all research conducted and resulting answers adhere to the biblically based method of *lectio divina* and the solid academic theoretical findings of Transformative Learning Theory.

Another researcher could also easily find the caliber of people that were interviewed for this study since all participants were volunteers and no specific qualifications were needed. They only needed to have been born again Christians for a year or more.

The process of data collection for this research has been written out like a recipe to follow. Therefore, this research can be easily duplicated.

Overview of Dissertation

For the purpose of advancing research in the domains of *lectio divina* and of Transformative Learning Theory, the researcher proposed this study. The researcher’s initial assumption is that there is conceptual compatibility between *lectio divina* and

Transformative Learning Theory. The second chapter researches the literature involved in understanding both *lectio divina* and Transformative Learning Theory. The third chapter describes the methodology of data collecting and sampling. The fourth chapter presents evidence for and summarizes major findings. The last chapter elaborates on the major findings and their ministry implications.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW FOR THE PROJECT

Overview of Chapter

This chapter looks into the history of *lectio divina* which is a Christian formational discipline and also explores the educational Theory of Transformative Learning (TLT).

With regard to *lectio divina*, first its biblical foundation will be researched, exploring how the reading and study of Scripture was practiced in the Old and New Testaments. Included in this exploration is a delineation of the way in which the movements of *lectio divina* – *lectio, meditatio, oratio, and contemplatio* – are practiced according to the teachings of Scripture. The historical and theological foundations of *lectio divina* begin with the reading habits of the desert fathers, the examination of which shows that, after biblical times, Scripture reading took on the form of *synaxis*. These habits were later developed by the Latin fathers into *lectio divina* and eventually emerged as the Scholastic *lectio divina*. Finally, the way in which contemporary Catholic and Evangelical Christians approach Scripture reading is assayed. As for Transformative Learning Theory (TLT), we start with its theoretical development and then look at the circling stages developed by Jack Mezirow.

Thereafter, this research will explore the parallel elements of both the four circling movements of *lectio divina* (*lectio, meditatio, oratio, contemplatio*) and the four circling stages of TLT (disorienting experiences, critical reflection, discourse, action). This will demonstrate the way in which TLT deepens our understanding of the respective

transformative movements of *lectio divina*. The research design of both domains and a review of this chapter will be provided in Chapter Three.

Biblical Foundations of *Lectio Divina*

Lectio divina (divine reading) has been one of the most influential spiritual disciplines in Christian history. *Lectio divina* answers the question that Jesus asked two thousand years ago, “What is written in the Law? How do you read it?” (Luke 10:26 ESV). Jesus then answered His own question with the following command, “... do this, and you will live” (Luke 10:28 ESV). This is how the Bible is supposed to be read – Jesus requires people to “read the Bible in order to live the word of God” (Eugene H. Peterson 156). Participation is required. Wittgenstein illustrated this point well when he said, “You can’t hear God speak to someone else, you can hear him only if you are being addressed” (Peterson 149).

Also, since “all Scripture is breathed out by God” (2 Timothy 3:16 ESV), and “the Spirit of truth... will guide you into all truth” (John 16:13 ESV), one’s reading of this holy book “does not always remain bent over his pages; [the reader] often leans back and closes his eyes over a line he has been reading again, and its meaning spreads through his blood” (Peterson 23). Likewise, Peterson makes the insightful conclusion that, “*Lectio divina* cultivates this personal, participatory attentiveness and thus trains us in the discipline of reading Scripture rightly. At every turn of the page it poses Jesus’ question to us: ‘How do you read?’” (Peterson 156).

Old Testament

Lectio divina’s roots can be traced back to the Old Testament. Words that denote “the concept or activity of meditating or meditation are found... in the Old Testament”

(Robert L. Saucy, Kindle Location 3248).

Hebrew words for meditation. The first and primary Hebrew word for “meditate” is הָגָה *hâgâh* (James Strong 1897). הָגָה *hâgâh* is “a word that our Hebrew ancestors used frequently for reading the kind of writing that deals with our souls” (Peterson 19). It “may be onomatopoeic, implies more than just ‘meditating’; some kind of utterance is indicated, such as ‘murmuring’ or ‘whispering’” (Peter C. Craigie 58). Strong indicates that הָגָה *hâgâh* is “the primitive root; to murmur (in pleasure or anger); by implication to ponder: imagine, meditate, mourn, mutter, roar, speak, study, talk, utter” (Strong 1897). הָגָה *hâgâh* can refer to “silent musing or pondering. But its basic idea seems to involve some kind of utterance such as muttering or whispering, like talking to oneself” (Saucy Kindle Location 3290). One example is Joshua 1:8 in which Joshua was told to not let the Law depart from his mouth and to meditate on it day and night. Hence, studying silently and reciting softly can both be involved. Regardless, the emphasis of this word is on “engaging in deep thought to the extent that it touches one’s whole being.... הָגָה *hâgâh* means that a man is ‘lost in his religion,’ that he is filled with thoughts of God’s deeds or will” (Saucy Kindle Location 3290). This is the spirit of הָגָה *hâgâh* – reading “ruminatively and leisurely, a dalliance with words in contrast to wolfing down information” (Peterson 20). Here we see the non-distinction between *lectio*, *meditatio*, *oratio*, and *contemplatio* of Scripture.

The second Hebrew word for meditation, הִגָּיוֹן *higgâyôwn* (Strong 1902), is more intensive than הָגָה *hâgâh* (Strong 1897). It is “a murmuring sound, i.e. a musical notation (probably similar to the modern *affettuoso* to indicate solemnity of movement); by implication a machination: device, Higgsaion (‘murmuring tone of a harp, a pause in the

instrumental interlude, meditation, or imagination’ (M.G. Easton)), meditation, solemn sound” (Strong 1902).

The third Hebrew word for meditation is שׂיַח *sîyach* (Strong 7878). Strong indicates that this means to ponder, implying to converse with oneself, and hence aloud. It also means to utter, meaning to commune, complain, declare, meditate, muse, pray, speak, and talk with others (Strong 7878). It “restates proclaiming and rejoicing; it suggests strong feelings outwardly expressed” (John Goldingay 388). The fourth Hebrew word for meditation is שׂיַחַח *sîychâh* (Strong 7881). Strong indicates that it is reflection, devotion to meditation, and prayer (Strong 7881).

Some examples of Scripture verses involving meditation are listed here:

Psalms. The Book of Psalms “provides the most reliable theological, pastoral, and liturgical resource given us in the biblical tradition” (Walter Brueggemann and Walter Brueggemann 1). There is no doubt that the Book of Psalms is “an important resource for spirituality.... authentic spirituality (that is, genuine communion with God) is never removed from the seasons, turns, and crises of life” (Brueggemann and Brueggemann 59). It is Israel’s prayer book and hymnal and has “guided the prayer life of God’s followers for four thousand years” (Tony Jones 45). As such, it is noteworthy that the Psalms repeatedly uphold the value of reading and meditating on Scriptures. Following are some examples.

Ps. 1:2 – “...but [the righteous man’s] delight is in the law of the Lord, and on his law he meditates” (הִגָּה *hâgâh*, Strong 1897) “day and night.” (ESV)

Psalm 1:1-3 paints a picture of the solid foundation of the righteous. The psalmist indicates that a righteous person not only avoids the way of evil company but also

delights “in the law of the Lord, and on his law he meditates (חָגַהּ hâgâh) day and night”; he constantly meditates “on [the Torah’s] meaning” (Craigie et al. 60); it is indeed a practice of “pray[ing] without ceasing” (I Thessalonians 5:17 NRSV). He is constantly practicing the “presence of God. In the Torah, [he] hears His voice, instructing, inspiring, challenging, and directing [him]” (Daniel I. Block 7).

Verse 3 of Psalm 1 uses the simile of a tree to illustrate the resulting life of the person who avoids the evil way of life but instead delights in continuous meditation on Scripture. He will be like a tree with a constant water supply; he is blessed to be under the constant guidance of God. The state “of blessedness or happiness is not a reward; rather, it is the result of a particular type of life... Living within the guidelines set down by the Creator. Thus the prosperity of the righteous reflects the wisdom of a life lived according to the plan of the Giver of all life” (Craigie et al. 61).

Ps. 19:14 – “Let the words of my mouth and the meditation” (חִינּוּחַ higgâyôwn, Strong 1902) “of my heart be acceptable in your sight, O Lord, my rock and my redeemer.” (ESV)

In order to understand the implication of “meditation” in Psalm 19:14, its context must be taken into account. Psalm 19 elaborates on the two wonderful gifts that God gives to human beings – created nature, which declares “the glory of God,” and law, which declares “the will of God for mankind... neither is dispensable” (Craigie et al. 183–184).

Faced with these two gifts, the psalmist becomes immediately aware of his unworthiness (Psalm 19:12-13, Craigie et al. 183). His subsequent response is to open his heart and offer his mouth to Jehovah in hopes that they will be found acceptable. Opening his heart to God implies that he is allowing Him to see what is lurking there – whether it is rumination on the Torah or rumination on evil. In other words, “Just as the sun

dominates the daytime sky (cf. v. 6), so too does *Torah* dominate human life (cf. vv. 7-11)” when one meditates on Scripture day and night (Psalm 1:2, Craigie et al. 183).

Ps. 63:6 – “...when I remember you upon my bed, and meditate on” (הִגָּאֵה *hâgâh*, Strong 1897) “you in the watches of the night...” (ESV)

The context of this Psalm might be a long dark night in the dry and weary wilderness. The content of David’s meditation (הִגָּאֵה *hâgâh*) might be both his thirst for God expressed in v. 1 and his remembering of God’s power, glory, and steadfast love expressed in vv. 2-3.

Psalm 77:11-12 – “I shall remember the deeds of the LORD; surely I will remember Your wonders of old. I will meditate on” (הִשִּׁיחַ *sîyach*, Strong 7878) “all Your work and muse on Your deeds.” (ESV)

These verses remind us to remember the deeds of God. As the “parallelism of the words ‘remember’ and ‘meditate’ in these verses indicates, to remember something involves meditating on it” (Saucy Kindle Location 3264).

Psalm 119. Psalm 119 demonstrates a “full flowering” of delight in the law of the Lord, and it also “gives its personal witness to the many-sided qualities of Scripture” (Derek Kidner, *Psalms 73-150* 452).

Ps. 119:15 – “I will meditate on” (הִשִּׁיחַ *sîyach*, Strong 7878) “your precepts and fix my eyes on Your ways.” (ESV)

Ps. 119:23 – “Even though princes sit plotting against me, your servant will meditate on” (הִשִּׁיחַ *sîyach*, Strong 7878) “your statutes.” (ESV)

Ps. 119:48 – “I will lift up my hands toward your commandments, which I love, and I will meditate on” (הִשִּׁיחַ *sîyach*, Strong 7878) “your statutes.” (ESV)

Ps. 119:78 – “Let the insolent be put to shame, because they have wronged me with falsehood; as for me, I will meditate on” (הִשִּׁיחַ *sîyach*, Strong 7878) “your precepts.” (ESV)

Ps. 119:148 – “My eyes are awake before the watches of the night, that I may meditate on” (הִשִּׁיחַ *sîyach*, Strong 7878) “your promise.” (ESV)

Psalm 119:15 is describing the intentions of a young man desiring to “keep his

way pure... by guarding [his way] according to [God's] word" (v. 9). He seeks God with his whole heart (v. 10) and stores up God's word in his heart (v. 11); in prayer he asks God to teach him His statutes (v. 12); he declares God's rules (v. 13); he meditates on (סִיַּח sîyach, Strong 7878) God's precepts. This is how he fixes his eyes on God's ways (v. 15).

In Psalm 119:23, even though leaders are plotting against the psalmist, he is not swayed by the threatening situation. He meditates on (סִיַּח sîyach, Strong 7878) Scripture so that God's Word "fills and occupies a potentially distracted mind" (Kidner, *Psalms 73-150* 457) for his desires are to keep God's word (v. 17) and to behold God's wondrous law (v. 18). Psalm 119:48 is the cry of one being taunted for God's sake (v. 42) who can respond to the derision by "[lifting his] hands toward [God's] commandments" (v. 48). "Lifting one's hands" usually refers to praying; here it is "a bold expression of yearning for God's revelation in Scripture" (Kidner, *Psalms 73-150* 461). The psalmist prays and meditates on (סִיַּח sîyach, Strong 7878) God's words (v. 48). Here is a distinction between praying and meditating; praying involves yearning for more of God's revelation and meditating is to have God's Word penetrating one's mind.

In 119:78, the psalmist is asking for God to "let the insolent be put to shame" (v. 78) because what they are accusing him of is not true; "the psalmist's murmuring (סִיַּח sîyach, Strong 7878) about Yhwh's orders provides evidence [that]... murmuring is also the basis for appealing to Yhwh for vindication" (Goldingay 411).

When, in 119:148, the psalmist asks God for help (v.146), he stays up the whole night and "meditates on (סִיַּח sîyach, Strong 7878) [God's] promise" (v. 148).

Ps. 119:97 – "Oh how I love your law! It is my meditation" (סִיַּח sîychâh, Strong 7881) "all the day." (ESV)

Ps. 119:99 – “I have more understanding than all my teachers, for your testimonies are my meditation” (הַיְיָ שִׁיחָהּ, Strong 7881). (ESV)

There is a presupposition here: “anyone who has been taught from the Torah, takes it seriously, and *applies it to their life (when they make Yhwh’s declarations their murmur הַיְיָ שִׁיחָהּ, becomes (at least potentially) the wisest person in the world. Mere knowledge does not make for insight, but this commitment does”* (Goldingay 418–419, italics mine).

This is a very elemental study of holy reading in the Psalms. Even with this limited study, the psalmist has presented a clear picture of the way in which meditation – הַיְיָ הַגָּה (Strong 1897), הִיגַיֹּוֹן (Strong 1902), הַיְיָ שִׁיחָהּ (Strong 7878), and הַיְיָ שִׁיחָהּ (Strong 7881) – has had an impact on his life, especially through Psalm 119. To sum up, these Hebrew words are all translated as *meditation* and all have the meaning of *lectio, meditatio, oratio, and contemplatio* in one way or another. This means that, in the mind of the psalmist, there is normally no intentional distinction between *lectio, meditatio, oratio, and contemplatio*.

Another observation of the researcher is that, according to the aforementioned study of meditation, in the mind of the psalmist, reading the Scripture involves *lectio, meditatio, oratio, and contemplatio*. Therefore, *lectio divina* is biblical and comprehensive way of reading the Scripture.

These Psalms teach that when one meditates on Scripture, he will be blessed. These blessings include the constant guidance of God (Psalm 1); the gift of spiritual discernment (Psalm 19); the capacity to remember God’s power, glory, and steadfast love even in the midst of trouble (Psalm 63:6); and the ability to fix one’s eyes on God’s ways and promises (Psalm 119).

Other books of the Old Testament.

Josh. 1:8 – “This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on” (הָגָה *hâgâh*, Strong 1897) “it day and night, so that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success.” (ESV)

This verse indicates that “unless Joshua makes meditation upon (הָגָה *hâgâh*, Strong 1897, see Psalm 1:2), and obedience to, God’s law his first priority, his leadership will fail” (Richard S. Hess 80). If one looks closely at the context of this verse, one will find that

Joshua will not be alone in striving for obedience to the law. Rather, the obedience and the success will be enjoyed in the presence of the Lord God.... Joshua will not succeed because he obeys God’s instruction; he will succeed because God is with him to enable him to obey his instruction.... Like Joshua, Christians do not succeed spiritually because they obey God’s law. Instead, God through Christ enables them to have victory over sin. (Hess 80)

Job 15:4 – “But you are doing away with the fear of God and hindering meditation” (הִתְיַשׁ *sîychâh*, 7881) “before God.” (ESV)

When Job’s friend, Eliphaz, accuses him of impiety, he says that his complaints are “hindering *meditation* before God” (italics mine). This kind of meditation comes from a different Hebrew word, הִתְיַשׁ *sîychâh*, and its meaning is a contemplation, an utterance, reflection, meditation, and prayer (Strong 7881). Again there is a non-distinction between *lectio*, *meditatio*, *oratio*, and *contemplatio* of Scripture.

There are other verses in the Old Testament which only hint at the act of meditating without specifically mentioning it. For example:

Deut. 6:5-7 – “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. And these words that I command you today *shall be on your heart*. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them *when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when*

you rise.” (ESV, italics mine)

Deut. 11:18 – “You shall therefore lay up these words of mine in your heart and in your soul, and you shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes.” (ESV)

God reminds the Israelites to meditate on His Word at a very wide variety of times and by using a wide variety of methods.

Prov. 2:1 – “...treasure up my commandments with you...” (ESV)

Prov. 3:3 – “...bind them around your neck; write them on the tablet of your heart.” (ESV)

Prov. 6:20-21 – “Bind [the Scripture] on your heart always...” (ESV)

Prov. 15:28 – “The heart of the righteous ponders” (חָגַח *hâgâh*, Strong 1897) “how to answer...” (ESV)

These teachings in Proverbs also “allude to meditation.... The result of such actions, as the context shows in each of these instances, is a life of wisdom” (Saucy Kindle Location 3255).

New Testament

We don’t find “the words meditate or meditation... in many modern translations of the New Testament (e.g., NASB, NIV)” (Saucy Kindle Location 3300). Although the specific words “meditate” or “meditation” are not found in many modern translations of the New Testament, the concept is there. This is elaborated as follows.

Isaiah 55:10-11 pictures beautifully the concept that God’s Word shall not return to Him empty, but it shall accomplish that which He purposes and succeed in the thing for which He sends it. His Word has true power to accomplish His will. This truth echoes Hebrews 4:12, “Indeed, the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing until it divides soul from spirit, joints from marrow; it is able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart” (NRSV). The Word is sharper than any two-edged sword, “because it exposes the intentions of the heart and renders one defenseless before

God's scrutinizing gaze" (William L. Lane 102). This is especially evident in the description of His word as "ζῶν ... καὶ ἐνεργής, 'living and effective,' [because it] signifies that it is performative; it possesses the power to effect its own utterance" (Lane 103).

However, Luke 8:4-15 shows that reader has to respond to God's Word in order for the seed/Word to bear fruit. One may observe that Luke here uses "four prepositions to describe the different seed: παρά (*para*, by the road), ἐπί (*epi*, upon the rock), ἐν μέσῳ (*en mesō*, in the midst of the thorns), and εἰς (*eis*, into good soil)" (Darrell L. Bock, *Luke* 726). Contrary to the other seed/Word, only the last seed/Word penetrates the soil and bears fruit. The whole parable pictures that the "kingdom message will spread despite obstacles in its way" (Bock, *Luke* 726). At the end of the parable, Jesus calls out, "Let anyone with ears to hear listen (ἀκούετω)!" (Luke 8:8 NRSV) Bock reminds us that Jesus often "uses this call to stress the importance of reflecting on his teaching" (Bock, *Luke* 727). Readers of the Word are called and challenged to respond to and meditate on His message so that His Word "shall not return to [Him] empty" (Isaiah 55:11 NRSV).

In Luke 8:15, Jesus elaborates further on what kind of response should be elicited by the hearing of the Word – one should "hold it fast in an honest and good heart, and bear fruit with patient endurance." What is an honest and good heart? It is one which has a single focus on God; a contemplative attitude. This should be one's attitude throughout *lectio divina*.

When one responds to God's Word, he needs to understand that whoever "searches" sincerely, "asks"/prays, and "knocks"/pursues God's way continuously and persistently, will receive, find, and have the door opened for him (Matthew 7:7-8 ESV).

Likewise, the parallel message in Luke 11:13 is that the source of all these graces is the Holy Spirit.

Hence, from all five of these Scripture passages – Isaiah 55:10-11, Hebrew 4:12, Luke 8:4-15, Matthew 7:7-8, and Luke 11:13 – it is clear that he who *lectio/meditatio/oratio/ contemplatio*'s on the Word under the leading and gift of the Holy Spirit, will be given a profound religious experience. This is in response to God's invitation: "When you search for me, you will find me; if you seek me with all your heart, I will let you find me, says the Lord" (Jeremiah 29:13 NRSV). According to Casey in his book *Sacred Reading: The Ancient Art of Lectio Divina*, when we do *lectio divina*, "we are seeking God. We are hoping to hear God's voice and do God's will" (Michael Casey 8); this is truly religious experience – Christians' encounters with the Holy Spirit.

In sum, biblical "meditation means to think, to think to yourself, even to talk to yourself, or sing, about some concept until it gets into your inner being and your behavior" (Saucy Kindle Location 3310). This is what *lectio divina* is about. Whatever a person meditates on long enough, becomes "part of [his] life; ... [and] embedded in [his] mind" (Saucy Kindle Location 3321).

Evangelicalism's Perception of Experience

At this point, it is appropriate to analyze evangelicalism's perception of personal experience. Many evangelicals view personal experience as subjective and often times it can distort the truth. Carson, in his book *Becoming Conversant with the Emerging Church*, reminds us "the Bible itself appeals to experience in various ways" (D.A. Carson, *Becoming Conversant with the Emerging Church: Understanding a Movement and Its Implications* / D. A. Carson. 218). Carson reminds us that, to those Gentile

Christians who thought by being obedient to Mosaic Law one could be a good Christian, the Apostle Paul asks these questions: “Did you receive the Spirit by doing the works of the law or by believing what you heard? Are you so foolish? Having started with the Spirit, are you now ending with the flesh? Did you experience so much for nothing? — If it really was for nothing” (Galatians 3:2-4 NRSV). Carson also mentions that the Psalms reflect all kinds of human experiences, “hope, despair, fear of death, friendship, adoration, love, indignation, betrayal, and wonder” (Carson, *Becoming Conversant* 219). He succinctly explains the difference between truth and experience:

- Truth can correct experience, but experience cannot correct truth.
- Mere knowledge of truth does not necessarily save us.
- Memories of one’s experience may become idolatrous, but knowledge may puff oneself up. (Carson, *Becoming Conversant* 219)

Carson made a conclusion according to chapter one of 2 Peter where Peter elaborates on and emphasizes the importance of both truth and experience. Scripture also has other passages which stress the importance of experience in one’s spiritual growth, e.g. 1 Corinthians 6:11; Ephesians 3:16-19. Carson’s conclusion was that opposing truth and experience is a misstep because Jesus Christ is “Lord of all—of the truth and of our experience. The Bible insists that we take every thought captive to make it obedient to Christ (2 Cor. 10:5)” (Carson, *Becoming Conversant* 234). Neither the tendency that evangelicalism has to set up camp in truth and downplay any spiritual experience in one’s life nor the tendency of the emergent church to uphold new experiences and leave the truth behind is biblical. If practiced properly, the essential movements of *lectio divina*

will help us embrace both truth and experience with the Holy Spirit in daily Scripture reading.

Musings on Biblical Bases for Contemplation

Now that the biblical perspective of the necessity of experience and truth in one's spiritual reading has been substantiated, there is still one movement within *lectio divina* that calls for attention – what does Scripture say about contemplation?

The Latin *contemplatio*, “like its Greek equivalent (θεωρία), primarily means looking at things, whether with the eyes or with the mind; in either sense it can be contrasted with doing things (πραξις)” (F.L. Cross and Elizabeth A. Livingstone 412). *θεωρία* appears only once in the Scriptures in Luke 23:48. Apart from this instance and some other verses that use the word “meditation” with the meaning of contemplation in its Hebrew root, there is no mention of contemplation specifically in the Scriptures. Therefore, it is very difficult to pin down what the Scriptures say about contemplation.

Several Christian scholars have provided their views on the meaning of contemplation, but there is a noticeable bifurcation in terms of how they define contemplation. Basically, there are two different definitions.

The first type of definition.

The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church defines “contemplation” as “the Lat. *Contemplatio*, like its Gk. equivalent (θεωρία), primarily means looking at things, whether with the eyes or with the mind; in either sense it can be contrasted with doing things (πραξις). . . . But *θεωρία* also retains the important sense of ‘study of the Scriptures,’ with particular emphasis on the spiritual sense.” (Cross and Livingstone 412)

Concise Oxford English Dictionary defines “to contemplate” as to “look at thoughtfully. Think about. Think profoundly and at length. Have as a probable intention. Origin: 16th century: from Latin *contemplat-*, *contemplari* ‘survey, observe, contemplate,’ based on *templum* ‘place for

observation” (Angus Stevenson and Maurice Waite). (*Templum* is Latin for temple.)

If this is what “to contemplate” means, then, as Peterson writes, Christians need to “recover the words of Scripture as a *templum*, and then live these words that [they] read in the presence of [God]” (Peterson 202). Christians are to live what they *lectio, meditatio*, and *oratio* in the presence of God. This is *contemplatio*.

“Contemplating what we will carry forward into our lives [i.e. obeying].” (Saucy Kindle Location 3951)

Saucy’s definition supports the previous definition given by both the *Concise Oxford Dictionary* and the *Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*.

“Contemplation . . . means living the read/meditated/prayed text in the everyday, ordinary world.” (Peterson 198)

Peterson’s definition also agrees with both *Concise Oxford Dictionary* and the *Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*. Contemplation means “living what we read, not wasting any of it or hoarding any of it, but using it up in living. It is life formed by God’s revealing word, God’s word read and heard, meditated and prayed” (Peterson 204). Christian life has to be a contemplated life. This is to obey Jesus’ teaching in Matthew 7:24-27 and Luke 8:15 in which Christians are called to act on what they’ve heard in the Scriptures. Hence, it is a way of life not just for the privileged few like monks or nuns, it is for all Christians – the normal Christian life.

The second type of definition. As discussed a few paragraphs ago, Abba Moses exhorts his readers that their main effort should be on “the contemplation of heavenly things . . . [so that] the soul may ever cleave to God” (Sulpitius Severus, Vincent of Lerins, and John Cassian 298). This mental gaze is how contemplation can be unceasing and thus how one can pray unceasingly. This kind of contemplation is supported by Scripture.

Paul commanded Christians at Colosse to “Set [their] minds on the things above, not on the things on earth” (Colossians 3:2 ESV) which is a way of godly living.

There is also another definition of contemplation which is upheld mainly by Keating and Merton that can be put under this category:

Contemplative Prayer is ‘the development of one’s relationship with Christ to the point of communing beyond words, thoughts, and feelings; a process of moving from the simplified activity of waiting upon God to the ever-increasing predominance of the gifts of the Spirit as the source of one’s prayer.’ (Thomas Keating 186)

Contemplative Prayer speaks in language strikingly similar to that of *The Cloud of Unknowing*, which confides that to penetrate the deep dread that the presence within the Cloud of unknowing throws us into, we must ‘(strike with a sharp dart of longing love – and do not leave it no matter what happens).’ (Thomas Merton 14)

Contemplation is more mysticism for both Keating and Merton. Their definitions of contemplation are very similar to that of the *Cloud of Unknowing* – to contemplate is to “smite upon that thick cloud of unknowing with a sharp dart of longing love; and go not thence for thing that befalleth” (Anonymous 31). For them, contemplation is a posture of waiting before God, an attitude supported by the psalmist:

Ps. 37:7 – “Be still before the LORD, and wait patiently for him...” (ESV)
 Ps. 130:5 – “I wait for the LORD, my soul waits, and in his word I hope...” (ESV)
 Ps. 131:2 – “I have calmed and quieted my soul, like a weaned child with its mother; my soul is like the weaned child that is with me.” (ESV)

Cassian’s definition of *contemplatio* is the same as that of Keating and Merton when he taught that *contemplatio* is “a loving gaze of human spirit directed toward God” (Bruce A. Demarest 164). He also taught that this “is conditioned by the ceaseless meditation upon Scripture in the background, and anchored in ejaculatory prayers consisting of scriptural texts” (Cheslyn Jones, Geoffrey Wainwright, and Edward

Yarnold 148). The researcher is very supportive of this definition by Cassian and deems it biblical. For Paul, in Romans 5:5, tells us that “Now this hope will not put us to shame, because the love of God has been poured out into our hearts by the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.” (Douglas J. Moo 296). In Douglas Moo’s *The Epistle to the Romans*, he comments that “God’s love has been poured into our hearts in the past, and that this love is now within us. And this love is conveyed to our sensations by the Holy Spirit, who resides in every believer” (Moo 305). This would be a very solid reason why we, as Christians, should be able to respond to the God who resides in us and who constantly conveys His love to our sensations!

Mulholland, in his *Invitation to a Journey*, uses Psalm 131:2 to draw a picture of contemplation:

The unweaned child is at its mother’s breast for what it wants – milk. The weaned child, however, is content to rest in its loving mother’s arms and receive whatever she desires to give. *Contemplatio* is the posture of the weaned child. We abandon ourselves to God and to whatever God wants to do with us. (M. Robert Mulholland 115)

Therefore, Keating and the anonymous author of the *Cloud of Unknowing* always include a forewarning such as the following in their literature:

I charge thee and I beseech thee, with as much power and virtue as the bond of charity is sufficient to suffer, whatsoever thou be that this book shalt have in possession, . . .that in as much as in thee is by will and advisement, neither thou read it, nor write it, nor speak it, nor yet suffer it be read, written, or spoken, of any or to any but if it be of such one, or to such one, that hath by thy supposing in a true will and by an whole intent purposed him to be a perfect follower of Christ not only in active living, but in the sovereignest point of contemplative living the which is possible by grace for to be come to in this present life of a perfect soul yet abiding in this deadly body; and thereto that doth that in him is, and by thy supposing hath done long time before, for to able him to contemplative living by the virtuous means of active living. (Anonymous 15)

Contemplation is for mature Christians only, according to this view. Truly, very young Christians may fall into the trap of Eastern, non-Christian meditation if they don't understand very deeply the true contemplation for which Christ calls.

The researcher embraces both types of definitions. However, there are a few things that the researcher would like to muse upon regarding the second kind of contemplation, specifically for Keating, Merton, and the *Cloud*. First of all, should we have both types of *contemplatio* throughout the movements of *lectio*, *meditatio*, and *oratio*? Don't we have to have an attitude of loving God and desiring to live the text while we are in those three movements?

Secondly, Christ declares in the Gospel of John, "If you love me, you will keep my commandments," (John 14:15 ESV) and, "As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Abide in my love. If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love..." (John 15:9-10 ESV). As a matter of fact, "Love is not a thing of enthusiastic emotion. It is a rich, strong, manly, vigorous expression of the whole round Christian character—the Christlike nature in its fullest development. And the constituents of this great character are only to be built up by ceaseless practice" (Henry Drummond 13). Biblically, to reside in God's love is to reside in and live out God's Word. When we desire to respond to His love and to love Him, the most pleasing thing to Him is to give the weakest brother a glass of water.

Thirdly, for *lectio divina* to be really transformative, other than keeping the Word of God in one's heart, it must be understood that "[a person's] actions are not only the result of the change of heart that has taken place through the change of [his] thought and emotion. [His] actions contribute to heart change and, in fact, are necessary to it" (Saucy

4021). The Scriptures explain that “God is love and the one who abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him.... If someone says, ‘I love God,’ and hates his brother, he is a liar; for the one who does not love his brother... cannot love God” (1 John 4:16, 20 ESV). This means that “the transformation of our hearts requires our active obedience to God’s truth... When we hear truth and receive it in our mind and emotions, it enters our heart, but only to a certain depth.... if [we] don’t actually do anything in relation to this belief... [our] belief will weaken and the attached emotion will fade... [we] will not really change” (Saucy 4348-4356).

Therefore, *contemplatio* has to include the definition of “living what we read” as indicated by *The Concise Oxford Dictionary*, *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church* and Peterson as well as the notion put forth by Paul, Abba Moses, Cassian, Keating, and Merton of lovingly gazing to our Lord and “on things that are above” (Colossians 3:2 ESV).

Conclusion of Biblical Foundations of *Lectio Divina*

The second half of the book of Ephesians talks about Christians’ life on earth. Paul begins with an admonishment to his readers that they live a life worthy of the calling they have received (4:1). Then again in 4:17 Paul asks his readers to no longer live as the Gentiles do. These two verses set the stage for Paul’s calling that Christians put off their old self with regard to their former way of life and put on the new self. There must be a transformation of life after being born again. How does this putting off and putting on happen?

In Ephesians 4:20-21, Paul emphasizes that Christians who had both heard of Him and been taught in Him in accordance with the truth that is in Jesus need to “come to know Christ,” which means:

Christ himself is the content of the teaching... when the readers accepted Christ as Lord, they not only welcomed him into their lives but also received traditional instruction about him... Learning Christ means welcoming him as a living person and being shaped by his teaching. This involves submitting to his rule of righteousness and *responding* to summons to standards and values completely different from what they have known. (Peter T. O’Brien 324, italics and emphasis mine)

In verse 21, readers are told, “you... were taught in him,” and in verse 22 readers are told again that with regard to their former way of life, “to *put off* your old self, ... to be *made new* in the attitude of your minds; and to *put on* the new self.” To put off one’s old self “signifies a fundamental break with the past” (O’Brien 327). The imperatival force implies that Christians are to continue living a life that makes a break with the past. The hortatory force here in Ephesians more strongly emphasizes “the ‘already’ and ‘not yet’ in putting off the old person” (O’Brien 328). This implies the continuous struggles in putting off the old person even though Christians are no longer ruled by sin. Paul, in verse 23, tells his audience that, “when [they] were instructed in Christ, they were urged to be made new. They are to yield themselves to God and allow themselves to be renewed in their inner person. [He makes a] similar point [when he says]... ‘Be transformed by the renewal of your mind’ (Rom. 12:2)” (O’Brien 329). This transformation is the work of the Spirit (Titus 3:5); through Him, believers are progressively transformed into the image of Christ (2 Corinthians 3:18). To put on the new self means Christians should live their lives according to the change God made when

they were born again. They are to be like God in righteousness and holiness which result from truth. God is truth.

This whole discussion of putting off the old self, renewing the mind, and putting on the new self is very much related to the truth, to the Word of God. Transformation happens when there is reading of the Word and letting God be God in one's life. Therefore, we can say that *lectio divina* is a discipline which opens us to God for transformation. The Christian does need to put off his old self which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires (Ephesians 4:22). Paul's admonishment here is in the context of truth. That means the way Christians put off their old self has to be in the context of the Word. This is also the teaching of John Cassian in his *Conferences*. (This will be further elaborated on in "Historical/Theological Foundations of *Lectio Divina*.") To put off the corrupted old self is actually a "problem of mnemonic praxis rather than one of the complete obliterating of one's memory" (Mary J. Carruthers 88). To reform one's character, one has to have a renewing of mind and to put on a new self; to forget those deceitful desires of the old self in one's memory, one has to put on (or replace the old self with) the new self. We all know how difficult it is to forget our past. Perseverance in practicing *lectio divina* can open the door for us to depend on God for the Word to transform our inner life so that the virtues of righteousness and holiness from God will be formed in us.

To conclude this part of the discussion, I concur with Petersen that "*Lectio divina* is not a methodical technique for reading the Bible. It is a cultivated, developed habit of living the text in Jesus' name. This is the way, the only way, that the Holy Scriptures

become formative in the Christian church and become salt and leaven in the world”
(Peterson 210).

Historical/Theological Foundations of *Lectio Divina*

Reading Habits of Desert Fathers

What is known today as *lectio divina* was developed during the era of the desert fathers and mothers. Around the late third and early fourth century, one of the most significant historical movements occurred – the retreating to the desert of many Christians and the start of monasticism in Egypt and other places. There were many reasons for this movement, but one of the major reasons was that they desired to pursue holiness:

Many of the desert monks refused to participate in the growing establishment of the church under Constantine, choosing instead to live on the margins of society under the direct guidance of the Spirit and the Word of God. (Burton-Christie 3)

This retreating to the desert movement lasted until the fourteenth century. The monks’ withdrawal into the wild and uncivilized desert implied their rejection of current culture. These men sought to create a new society, a society that showed it was possible to “break the bonds which tied human beings to the dominant powers of the world... to achieve a profound level of freedom” (Burton-Christie 55); a society with a new culture of devoting itself to Scripture reading and solitude. Therefore, their spirituality “reflected that aim, catering to relationships as well as personal goals” (Jones, Wainwright, and Yarnold 120). The means of arriving at this profound level of freedom “included a long and careful rumination of Scripture [which] provides a key to understanding the significance of the monastic quest for holiness” (Burton-Christie 55).

The Sayings of the Desert Fathers is a collection of patristic texts of those desert monks living in Egypt, Syria and Palestine. *The Sayings* preserve the “unstructured wisdom of the desert in simple language” (Benedicta Ward XX). Unlike other major monastic documents, *The Sayings*’ simple language preserves “more of the primitive quality of early monasticism” (Burton-Christie 94). It is a very good source for looking into the stories and sayings of the desert fathers. From *The Sayings* we are able to understand why and how the “fame of their piety and prayer spread,” and why “over that millennium (300 AD-1300 AD), thousands of pilgrims traveled to see the desert dwellers and learn from them” (Jones 47).

Desert monks strived to embody what they knew about the Word. *The Sayings* reveal that Scripture shaped the growth and development of early monasticism and that there was a “consistent struggle on the part of the monks to realize in their lives the holiness to which they felt called by Scripture... a hermeneutic that [demanded], ultimately, that the meaning of a text be expressed in a life” (Ward vii).

Since the level of illiteracy among the monks was very high, the primary means of accessing Scripture for the desert fathers were through weekly *synaxis*. A *synaxis* was a gathering which could consist of either a select group or a public gathering. During public gatherings, the elders read the sacred texts to the monks. After they heard the reading, the monks were encouraged “to prolong the encounter with the Word beyond the time of the *synaxis* through memorization, continual recitation, meditation, and rumination, [and] appropriating the Word at the deepest level of their being” (Burton-Christie 117) privately during the week in their own cells or in small groups.

For desert monks, Scripture came through listening. Through hearing, they were trained to memorize what was heard. This reading, listening, and memorization made them a community of Scripture. For the oral-aural culture of desert monks, “memorization was the foundation” (Simon Chan 163). Desert monks would often develop the habit of meditating and praying while they worked. Therefore, they memorized the Scripture text that they recited so that they could meditate on it while working.

The Sayings reveals that readings were important for the monks since it contains frequent mention of it. They normally observed the ritual at least twice a day, “in the early evening and during the night” (Burton-Christie 117). Groups or individuals would recite either Psalms or other books of Scripture. If done at a set time, the sound of their recitation of the Holy Scripture would proceed from all the cells. It must have been heavenly. Generally speaking, the time and manner of reciting the Scriptures was not followed rigidly or universally; some monks would have their own routine fitted to their own temperament. They realized that Scripture could be recited at any time so that there could be “the continual presence of the Word in the heart of the monk” (Burton-Christie 120).

The main point of reading Scripture was that by reciting assiduously the world of the texts would be absorbed. Therefore, the readers would be able to move beyond the surface meaning of Scripture reading and gain a deeper understanding. This was the desire of the monks. The monks felt that reciting Scripture would have a lot of practical spiritual benefits, for instance, to safeguard against sin, ward off evil, or nourish the soul. Of course this was not a guarantee. The desert was a place full of spiritual warfare from

demons. One could learn about the kind of struggles monks faced living in the desert from the life of Antonius, vividly described by Richard Foster in *Streams of Living Water* (Richard J. Foster 25-32).

It was also believed that reciting Scripture aloud could strengthen the reader's ability to comfort or persuade others. Monks could also recite to comfort those who were too sick to recite, meditate, or attend *synaxis*. Desert monks gave reading a very prominent role in their daily life, finding it useful for gaining biblical knowledge, avoiding temptation, giving encouragement, and helping with interpersonal relationships.

The desert fathers often used the phrases "reciting of Scripture" and "meditating on Scripture" interchangeably; there was no distinction between the two. This proves to be biblically derived from the aforementioned literature review of the biblical foundation of *lectio divina*. Meditating on Scripture usually involved "saying the words of a particular text, mulling them over in the mind, chewing on and slowly digesting the words, and it was a predominantly oral phenomenon" (Burton-Christie 122). This was done in solitude in one's cell. They would usually ruminate over only one or two verses of Scripture. This practice was commonly accepted in early monasticism. It was one of the indispensable disciplines practiced in the life of the monk.

Drawing upon their meditation, the monks would have insightful comments to give those who sought their counsel. It also helped them to "draw disparate thoughts and energies into a contemplative union.... Meditation is described as one of the foundations of the monastic life" (Burton-Christie 122).

It is very important to note that meditation then was not the meditation that we think of today, namely an "interior reflection on the meaning of certain words." Rather,

“It was first and foremost the utterance, or exclamation of words, which were gradually digested and interiorized” (Burton-Christie 123). Monks would move their lips when they recited the words. When one meditated on Scripture, it was an oral phenomenon.

The desert fathers firmly believed in the importance of integrity between words and lifestyle or behavior. Therefore, the question of “how to bring one’s life into conformity with Scripture became a burning question. They were convinced that only through *doing* what the text enjoined could one hope to gain any understanding of its meaning” (Burton-Christie 135). The desert fathers’ spirituality was mainly the daily practice of “prayerful rumination on biblical texts” (Sandra M. Schneiders 139-140). In the “acts of memorization, rumination, and meditation of Scripture, words penetrated the deepest recesses of the soul and created new possibilities and challenges” (Burton-Christie 299).

The desert fathers understood that interpreting Scripture correctly and ruminating on that was a “means to transformation and holiness... and [the journey] to embark upon a deeply personal drama that the monks referred to as the quest for purity of heart” (Burton-Christie 299). *Lectio divina* was, “for them, a disciplined hermeneutic not only for developing a theology or a prayerful spirituality, but it was a way of life” (John V. Van Dyk 2). Transformation and holiness for them were the result of allowing Scripture to “strip away the accumulated layers of self-deception, self-hatred, fear, and insecurity that were exposed in the desert solitude and in the tension of human interaction” (Burton-Christie 299).

The desert fathers’ spirituality was fundamentally based on the belief that the “aim of interpretation was moral purity and integrity and through this, the experience of

God. Holiness for the desert fathers was expressed as personal transformation arising from the realization of Scripture within oneself” (Burton-Christie 299). Therefore, it was common to see:

Scripture on the lips of the monks during prayer in the solitude of the desert, in the context of conversations between master and disciple, during battle with demons, and in encounters with prostitutes, pagan priests, and local villagers. Its use [was] almost always practical, spontaneous, informal, and full of vitality... [The] hermeneutical approach of... the desert fathers: it was a pastoral-ethical-ascetical approach to the interpretation of Scripture. (Burton-Christie 61-62)

Latin Fathers’ Reading Tradition

John Cassian. Before going further, Latin father John Cassian must be mentioned. His thoughts and writings are important not only in “the role and discipline of reading... for understanding *lectio divina*” (Mary Agnes Edsall 22) but also as one of the “most important links between Eastern and Western monasticism for over a millennium” (Bernard McGinn 61). In responding to an expressed need during the flourish of monasticism in Gaul (M. Basil Pennington 17), he wrote two bodies of work – the *Institutes* and the *Conferences* – “to explain the monastic ideal to the Gauls and so became a fundamental source for our knowledge of Egyptian spirituality” (Jones, Wainwright, and Yarnold 145). These two works are the only collection of the desert fathers’ sayings other than *The Sayings of the Desert Fathers*.

The first work, the *Institutes*, which consists of twelve books, taught monks the customs and rules of daily life in monasteries. The customs and rules include both the outward life and the interior life; the interior life would include teachings of prayers and readings. In this work, Cassian instructs the renunciants to hear how easy it is to reach perfection:

‘The beginning’ of our salvation and ‘of wisdom’ is according to Scripture, ‘the fear of the Lord.’ From the fear of the Lord arises salutary compunction. From compunction of heart springs renunciation, i.e. nakedness and contempt of all possessions. From nakedness is begotten humility; from humility the mortification of desires. Through mortification of desires all faults are extirpated and decay. By driving out faults virtues shoot up and increase. By the budding of virtues purity of heart is gained. By purity of heart the perfection of apostolic love is acquired. (Severus, Lerins, and Cassian 233)¹

He continues by saying that it is through praying that the monks should “approach the struggle against the eight principle faults” (Severus, Lerins, and Cassian 233) which are gluttony, fornication, covetousness, anger, dejection, acedia, vainglory, and pride. Cassian writes that he longed for “the word of the Lord [to] go before us... and... may bring low... these evil passions... which terribly inflame our minds...” (Severus, Lerins, and Cassian 234). Cassian teaches that “reading is linked with fasting, vigils and prayer as one of the good practices that will help the monk overcome vices” (Charlene M. Kellsey 18). While he does not specifically mention *lectio divina*, there is a shadow of it.

After finishing the *Institutes*, Cassian went on to write his second famous work which is comprised of “three books of *Conferences*, totaling in all twenty-four *Collationes*, in the form of reports of the addresses given in Egypt to him and Germanus by Egyptian hermits or cenobites” (Jones, Wainwright, and Yarnold 146):

These *Conferences*, especially the first two parts (I-XVII), contain the essence of his spiritual teaching. The work makes as a whole the greatest corpus of teaching on spirituality to come out of the ages of the Fathers. (Jones, Wainwright, and Yarnold 146)

Right from the beginning of the *Conferences*, through the dialogue between Cassian, Abba Germanus, and Abba Moses, we come to know that the ultimate goal of

¹ Cassian might uphold semi-Pelagian doctrines in terms of grace and human will. This dissertation has this understanding and will work with this in mind. I don’t agree with Pelagian doctrines. Therefore, the *Institutes* and *Conferences* are to be read with caution whenever Cassian touches on the subject of free will.

monks is the kingdom of heaven and the immediate goal is purity of heart (*Conferences* 1.1.2-4). Abba Moses further defines “purity of heart” as “charity” based on 1 Corinthians 13:3. He makes a very interesting point that we need this immediate goal of purity of heart because “the mind, which has no fixed point to which it may return, and on which it may chiefly fasten, is sure to rove about from hour to hour and minute to minute in all sorts of wandering thoughts” (Severus, Lerins, and Cassian 297). Thus, the immediate goal keeps the mind on track to reach the ultimate goal of the kingdom of heaven.

Abba Moses exhorts his readers that their main effort should be “the contemplation of heavenly things... [so that] the soul may ever cleave to God” (Severus, Lerins, and Cassian 298). Abba Germanus asks Abba Moses about how one’s mind can cling to a God who is neither visible nor comprehensible to which Abba Moses responds with, first, an acknowledgement that doing this is indeed not possible for a human while still in fragile human flesh. He says,

[We] ought to be aware on what we should have the purpose of our mind fixed, and to what goal we should ever recall the gaze of our soul... considering that even a momentary departure from gazing on Christ is fornication. (Severus, Lerins, and Cassian 300)

This mental gaze is how contemplation can be unceasing, and thus how one can pray unceasingly. Abba Germanus then asks another very important question: can a mind hold its mental gaze continuously upon the Lord and remain free from idle thoughts, never being attacked by illusions of evil thoughts? (Severus, Lerins, and Cassian 303) To this, Moses answers that it is not possible.

In the *Conferences*, monks are encouraged to be “prepared for the conflict and strengthened against their daily struggle with the devil by the practice of nocturnal vigils

and spiritual meditation” (Severus, Lerins, and Cassian 216). For them, “the instancy of reading equals fasts and vigils as a weapon in the monastic combat” (Beryl Smalley 28). Particularly, for early Christians who had received a traditional Roman education as children, the “continuing emotional hold on their memories of the pagan literature they had learned by rote as children” (Carruthers 88) could be a struggle in their spiritual life when they couldn’t forget that sinful value system. Hence, Cassian’s priority, when the educated new beginners came in to the desert, was to help them to forget the old way. He was more concerned about forgetting the pagan literature since it would “prevent the mind from absorbing the new ethos of the Scriptures” (Jones, Wainwright, and Yarnold 58). Cassian consulted the Egyptian monk Abba Nesteros on this who counseled him to “‘re-place’ his memory network, blocking one set of locations by another” (Carruthers 89). Because of how human memory works, “the mind of man cannot be emptied of all thoughts, and so as long as it is not taken up with spiritual interests, is sure to be occupied with... what it learnt in childhood” (Severus, Lerins, and Cassian 441). The memories that were stirred up could take many forms – one’s former life before conversion, family members or loved ones that had been left behind by the monks, lifetime struggles, or persons who had been wounded by them. All these memories could come up during a monk’s meditation on Scripture.

Then Abba Nesteros goes on to discuss how daily *lectio* of the Scriptures can truly help believers remove the dross from their memory which is what is nowadays called transformation:

In order then that this spiritual knowledge [of Scripture] may be strengthened in you with a lasting steadfastness, ...the words of salvation which we are longing for ought to be constantly poured into our *ears* or should ever proceed from our *lips*... the narration of holy things be often

repeated... received every day as if it were something new... and from the repetition of these things [you] will gain confirmation of the knowledge [that the soul] already possesses.... And so if these things have been carefully taken in and stored up in the recesses of the soul and stamped with the seal of *silence*, ...[they will] be brought forth from the jar of your heart with *great fragrance*, and like some perennial fountain will flow abundantly from the veins of experience and irrigating channels of virtue and will pour forth copious streams as if from some deep well in your heart. (Severus, Lerins, and Cassian 442, italics and emphasis mine)

Indeed, for this to happen, monks who had been well-educated as children needed to be humble and realize that their learning had to start over in the desert. Therefore, Cassian recommended that his monks read only the Scriptures. It was amidst this kind of culture that Abba Moses' warning about all spiritual disciplines was so timely that "fasting, vigils, meditation on Scripture, self-denial, and the abnegation of all possessions are not perfection, but aids to perfection" (Severus, Lerins, and Cassian 298).

Cassian taught that contemplation "brings union with God, by union of wills, though not in essence. The soul... is [so] filled by the Holy Spirit... that it begins to share in the love of the Blessed Trinity, to reach a state 'where God shall be all our love'" (Jones, Wainwright, and Yarnold 147-148). This is when transformation of the soul really happens! All this "is conditioned by the ceaseless meditation upon Scripture in the background, and anchored in ejaculatory prayers consisting of scriptural texts" (Jones, Wainwright, and Yarnold 148). His view of contemplation echoed the Latin father Augustine's view of the prayer of contemplation which was "as a loving gaze of the human spirit directed toward God" (Demarest 164). One important point worth noting is that for Cassian "'contemplation' itself is an elastic term... his real interest is in contemplation conceived of as the progressive conformation of the soul to God" (McGinn 72-73). This concept of contemplation is particularly helpful for those who seek to

embrace an attitude of humbleness toward God and others since spiritual disciplines often puff one up with haughtiness when the intention of one's practice is not pure.

Benedict of Nursia. Generally speaking, the desert fathers, although very disciplined in their personal devotional lives, had no formally organized community. They were practically on their own. Because of the hostility of desert life, some communities of monks started forming. One of them was Monte Cassino built by the Latin father Benedict of Nursia. Whenever the growth of the population of Monte Cassino reached more than twelve, Benedict would send them out to build more monasteries. Eventually, “while it was every monk for himself in the caves of the East, the Benedictine monks had a structure and organization that tied them together” (Jones 49).

Eventually Benedict “the great law-giver of Western monasticism” (Hans G. Furth V) drew upon Cassian's *Institutes* and “compiled his *Rule* (aka. *The Rule of Saint Benedict*) for monasteries in the first part of the sixth century” (Casey 3). He distinguished his rule from the *Institutes* and the *Conferences* by pointing out that his rule was only for beginners whereas the other rules of Cassian's were for more advanced monks (Jones, Wainwright, and Yarnold 148). Therefore, Cassian's view of reading Scripture was continuously practiced in Western monasticism since the Rule of Benedict was the rule of Western monasticism. It is worth noting that most books about *lectio divina* are silent about the influence of Cassian on Benedict. Perhaps this is because of some of Cassian's semi-Pelagian doctrines.

In Benedict's *Rule*, he specifically mentions that “idleness is the enemy of the soul” (Jones, Wainwright, and Yarnold 155) and that monks should be self-supporting by

working six hours a day, spending another four hours on the practice of *lectio divina*. Adalbert de Vogüé's commentary on the Rule of Saint Benedict describes a monastic day as usually consisting of "manual work accompanied by 'meditation' and interspersed with prayers" (Adalbert de Vogüé 135). *Meditatio* is oral repetition of those Scriptural texts that they memorized from reading. Monks would do *meditatio* when they worked with their hands. This continual recitation of Scripture has a biblical background which is to "pray without ceasing" (1 Thessalonians 5:17 ESV). The basic structure of *lectio divina* "corresponds to this life of Scripture read, recollected, and responded to in prayer" (Edsall 20).

Since the Benedictines spent so much time reading Scripture, the *Rule* specifically elaborates on what Benedict's view of *lectio divina* is:

Lectio was termed *divina* because it was the reading of Scripture. Meditation in antiquity was conceived essentially as an effort to digest and assimilate the biblical text through repeated recollection of it. And *contemplation* was to attain the steady vision of those realities presented by Scripture. (Benedict 467-468)

Further, according to this view, *lectio* of Scripture

was intended to lead to *meditatio*, the turning over in the mind if not also on the lips of the texts read and often memorized during the *lectio*: the time of work was normally also time for *meditatio*. Private prayer is hardly envisaged at all in the *Rule*, at least not in a sense clearly distinguishable from *meditatio*. (Jones, Wainwright, and Yarnold 155)

Therefore, *lectio divina* was unstructured and was not "compartmentalized into" (Keating 142) the linear process we know it to be now. During that time, "as a monk read or heard Scripture, his mind alternated between reading, meditation, contemplation, and prayer, in no particular order" (Jones 50).

Table 2.1 summarizes this discussion of *lectio divina* as practiced by the desert fathers.

Table 2.1. The reading, meditating, praying, and contemplating movements of the desert fathers

Unstructured Movements *The dotted line means in actuality these movements are not compartmentalized *No particular order	How?	Why?	Where?	When?
Synaxis Reading <i>Lectio</i>	The manner of reciting/chanting Scripture was not to be followed rigidly, rigorously, or universally. They practiced recitation with great care, a prayerful disposition and with humility, compassion, and discernment. The core essence of the manner of reciting would be to recite Scripture assiduously so that one would become absorbed in the world of the text.	First of all, to ponder the words in simplicity and humility. Secondly, to become absorbed in the world of the text.	<i>Synaxis</i> : Can either be in a public gathering, in a small group or in one's own cell.	Public Synaxis : On Sunday, a commonly accepted ritual was to do it publicly once a week. Daily Synaxis : There was no set routine, but at least twice a day, for small group or for individual; it was to be observed at any time.
Meditation <i>Meditatio</i>	Meditation is a private, oral recitation of Scripture. No distinction between practice of reading and meditation. Meditation did not involve chanting. It involved saying one or two verses of Scripture, mulling them over in the mind, chewing on and slowly digesting the words and interiorizing them. It was an effort to digest and assimilate the biblical text through repeated recollection. It	To aid monks in their spiritual battle; to heal and encourage; to take them into con-templative union.	In one's cell.	As a monk read or heard Scripture, his mind alternated between reading, meditation, prayer and contemplation.

	was an oral phenomenon, the utterance or exclamation of words.			
Prayer <i>Oratio</i>	Not clearly distinguishable from meditation			
Contemplation <i>Contemplatio</i>	Mental gaze of heavenly things; steady vision of those realities presented by Scripture. Contemplation is not clearly distinguishable from meditation	To attain the steady vision of those realities presented by Scripture		

Source: Douglas Burton-Christie, *The Word in the Desert Scripture and the Quest for Holiness in Early Christian Monasticism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993) 117-23. *Open WorldCat*. Web. 22 Nov. 2014.

Tony Jones, *Divine Intervention: Encountering God through the Ancient Practice of Lectio Divina* (Colorado Springs, CO: TH1NK Books, 2006) 50. Print.

Benedict, *RB 1980: The Rule of St. Benedict in Latin and English with Notes* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1981) 467-8. Print.

Guigo the Second. In about 1150, the Carthusian Guigo II, the ninth Prior of the Grand Chartreuse (Casey 58), “finally supplied a carefully articulated ‘method’ for the practice of *lectio divina* in his spiritual classic, *The Ladder of Monks (Scala Claustralium)*, which has been adapted by contemporary spiritual teachers for our own time” (Schneiders 140). It is often referred to as *Scholastic lectio divina*. In it he illustrates prayer as having four spiritual steps, “like Jacob’s ladder (Gen. 28:12), the foot rests on lower earth, whereas the top penetrates the hidden heights of heaven” (Casey 59):

One day... I began to think about our spiritual work, and all at once four stages in spiritual exercise came into my mind: reading (*lectio*), meditation (*meditatio*), prayer (*oratio*), and contemplation (*contemplatio*). This is the ladder of monastics by which they are lifted up from the earth into heaven. ...[T]he lower part is fixed on the earth and its top passes through the clouds to lay bare the secrets of heaven. (Guigo 67-68)

Guigo continues, in *The Ladder of Monks*, elaborating on what these four stages are:

Reading (*lectio*) is the careful study of the Scriptures, concentrating all one's power on it. Meditation (*meditatio*) is the busy application of the mind to seek with the help of one's own reason for knowledge of hidden truth. Prayer (*oratio*) is the heart's devoted turning to God to drive away evil and obtain what is good. Contemplation (*contemplatio*) is when the mind is in some sort lifted up to God and held above itself, so that it tastes the joys of everlasting sweetness. (Guigo 68)

Table 2.2. The functions of the four stages of *lectio divina*

Stages	The Sweetness of a Blessed Life	Food	Outside In
Reading <i>Lectio</i>	<i>Lectio</i> seeks it.	<i>Lectio</i> puts it whole into the mouth.	<i>Lectio</i> works on the outside.
Meditation <i>Meditatio</i>	<i>Meditatio</i> perceives it.	<i>Meditatio</i> chews it and breaks it up.	<i>Meditatio</i> works on the pith.
Prayer <i>Oratio</i>	<i>Oratio</i> asks for it.	<i>Oratio</i> extracts its flavor.	<i>Oratio</i> asks for what we long for.
Contemplation <i>Contemplatio</i>	<i>Contemplatio</i> tastes it.	<i>Contemplatio</i> is the sweetness itself which gladdens and refreshes.	<i>Contemplatio</i> gives us delight in the sweetness which we have found.

Source: Guigo, *The Ladder of Monks: A Letter on the Contemplative Life and Twelve Meditations* (Kalamazoo, MI: Cistercian Publications, 1981) 68-69. Print. Cistercian Studies Series no. 48.

Table 2.2 helps to show Guigo's insights better. These four stages of *lectio divina*, according to Guigo, "are joined to each other. One precedes another, not only in the order of time but of causality" (Guigo 79). Table 2.3 helps to further show how these four stages join each other.

Table 2.3. How the four stages of *lectio divina* join to each other

Stages	Joined Stages	Focus
Reading <i>Lectio</i>	<i>Lectio</i> is the foundation; it provides the subject matter we must use for meditation.	Exercise of outward senses .
Meditation <i>Meditatio</i>	<i>Meditatio</i> considers more carefully what is being sought; it digs for treasure which it finds and reveals... it directs us to <i>oratio</i> .	Concerned with the inward understanding .
Prayer <i>Oratio</i>	<i>Oratio</i> lifts itself up to God with all its strength, and begs for the treasure it longs for, which is the sweetness of contemplation.	Concerned with desire .
Contemplation <i>Contemplatio</i>	<i>Contemplatio</i> when it comes rewards the labors of the other three; it inebriates the thirsting soul with the dew of heavenly sweetness.	Outstrips every faculty .

Source: Guigo, *The Ladder of Monks: A Letter on the Contemplative Life and Twelve Meditations* (Kalamazoo, MI: Cistercian Publications, 1981) 79-80. Print. Cistercian Studies Series no. 48.

Guigo, in his treatise, tries to describe “how it is possible for us to experience contemplative communion with God” (Casey 58). He elaborates on how *contemplatio* happens when the soul,

by such burning words inflames its own desire ... seeks to call... the Lord... does not wait until the longing soul has said all its say, but... runs to meet it in all haste, sprinkled with sweet heavenly dew, ...and He restores the weary soul, He slakes its thirst, He feeds its hunger, He makes the soul forget all earthly things; by making it die to itself He gives it new life in a wonderful way, and by taking it back to its true senses... in this exalted contemplation all carnal motives are so conquered and drawn out of the soul that in no way is the flesh opposed to the spirit, and man becomes, as it were, wholly spiritual. (Guigo 73-74)

Thus, the remark that Casey made in his *Sacred Reading: The Ancient Art of Lectio Divina* about Guigo’s view on *contemplatio* is very proper when he writes, “Contemplation can never be seen as the outcome of a process. It remains a gift from God that is not automatically associated with particular human acts. It is given in God’s time not as a ‘reward’ for work well done, but as an energizing component within the

total context of life” (Casey 59). It means that the preceding stages of *contemplatio* serve as an attempt to “increase our receptivity; their outcome will depend on what we are and the reality of our life” (Casey 59). It might happen very quickly for some people, and for others, it can be a lifetime struggle.

He also writes about how the four stages of *lectio divina* link to each other: “reading without meditation is sterile, meditation without reading is liable to error, prayer without meditation is lukewarm, meditation without prayer is unfruitful, prayer when it is fervent wins contemplation, but to obtain it without prayer would be rare, even miraculous” (Guigo 82). His remarks actually reveal that all four stages of *lectio divina* are needed, we cannot do one without the others since every one of them has effects in spiritually forming us. He declares, “Blessed is the man whose heart is not possessed by any other concern and whose desire is always to keep his feet upon this ladder” (Guigo 83); therefore, he also declares that “the perfection of the blessed life is contained in these four degrees, and that the spiritual man ought to occupy himself in them continually” (Guigo 84). He made the following remark, perhaps with a very sad tone – “There are many who desire it, but few who achieve it” (Guigo 84). Again he followed this with perhaps a rather a wishful tone – “Would that we were among these few” (Guigo 84)! What are the obstacles to keeping one’s feet on the ladder? Guigo named four – unavoidable necessity, the good works of the active life, human frailty, and world follies (Guigo 84).

Guigo in his treatise reveals that “the system he expounds is one developed over the centuries as a result of experience. It is not simply a theoretical construct. It makes no claim to being the only way to God. He simply sets forth in greater detail how it has

come about that many monks have found contemplation” (Casey 58). It is not a recipe book nor rigid or prescriptive. It is also not a method of prayer.

So far we’ve discussed the desert fathers’ *synaxis* reading, the Benedictine Rule of *lectio divina*, and the *lectio divina* of Guigo II; it is not hard to notice that “the meaning and function of *lectio divina* changed from time to time and place to place” (Van Dyk 17). With this in mind, it would be interesting to further muse upon the emergence of scholastic *lectio divina*.

Emergence of Scholastic *Lectio Divina*

After reading primary resources like the *Sayings of the Desert Fathers*, the *Institutes*, the *Conferences*, and the *Rule of Saint Benedict*, one could observe that little is said about *lectio divina*. There are many mentions of meditation and prayer; although most of the times these terms are not defined. During the twelfth century, there was a change in Europe regarding the place of learning: it moved “from the cloister to the school and university with a concomitant shift from monastic to scholastic intellectual models” (Edsall 1). The schools had a different basic method of *lectio divina* than that found in monastic circles. In *The Love of Learning and The Desire for God*, Leclercq reveals that, “Originally, *lectio divina* and *sacra pagina* [the sacred page] are equivalent expressions... During the Middle Ages, this expression [*lectio divina*] was to be reserved more and more for the act of reading, ‘the reading of Holy Scripture.’ In the school it refers most often to the page itself, the text which is under study, taken objectively” (Jean Leclercq 72). The process of “monastic meditation encouraged the monk to relive the events and the emotional content of Scripture in his imagination, turning him into a type

of ‘scriptural self’” (Edsall 1). Leclercq makes this distinction between scholastic *lectio* and monastic *lectio*:

The scholastic *lectio* takes the direction of the *quaestio* and the *disputatio*. The reader puts questions to the text and then questions himself on the subject matter: *quaeri solet*. The monastic *lectio* is oriented toward the *meditatio* and the *oratio*. The objective of the first is science and knowledge; of the second, wisdom and appreciation. (Leclercq 72)

From the fourth century to the fourteenth century, “the monastic approach to prayer prevailed.... Until the prevalence of scholastic thinking in the Western Christian community... brought about a divorce between theology and spirituality” (Pennington 19-20).

After researching monastic *lectio divina* and scholastic *lectio divina*, here is the researcher’s observation. With monastic *lectio divina*, the focus of *lectio* and *meditatio* is to recite prayerfully (see Table 2.1). During *lectio* and *meditatio*, prayer flows and unites one’s heart and mind. As for scholastic *lectio divina*, *lectio* and *meditatio* are concerned more about understanding. It is not until *oratio* that one turns his/her eyes to God with all its strength (see Table 2.3). Just like Leclercq said, scholastic *lectio* and *meditatio* seek question and debate while monastic *lectio* and *meditatio* seek wisdom and appreciation since they are prayerfully seeking God. For the desert monks, *lectio divina* was just one continuous moment there was no distinction between *lectio*, *meditatio*, *oratio*, or *contemplatio*. When monks did *lectio divina*, “there was just one simple movement of response to a God who had spoken” through Scripture (Pennington 20).

With this development, starting around the Middle Ages, when new monks joined religious orders they “associated study with the technique of the schools, not with the

prayerful, meditative reading of the monasteries. Therefore, they had to learn a new way of reading” (Kenneth C. Russell 70). Russell writes:

From this time on, monks would emphasize the affective and moral dimensions of the text and pay less attention to its intellectual content. That was left to the schools. Monastic *lectio* – which had demanded a vigorous, intellectual, and emotional grappling with a text – now gave way to ‘spiritual reading.’ (Russell 70)

This divorce of theology and spirituality led to “purely cerebral theology and a doctrinally weak, sentimental spirituality” (Russell 70). This continues to be the case in Christianity hence the chasm between spiritual life and spiritual knowledge. The point that the researcher is trying to drive home is that *lectio divina* will become a problematic spiritual practice when mind and heart, or theology and spirituality, are separated. In other words, to successfully do *lectio divina*, “the grappling with the meaning of the text as it stands will be part of *lectio divina*, not a preliminary to it” (Russell 75).

Contemporary Catholicism’s *Lectio Divina*

Schneiders is a professor of New Testament Studies and Christian Spirituality in the Jesuit School of Theology/Graduate Theological Union. Her description of the movements of *lectio divina*, which has been adapted from Guigo, is representative of Roman Catholics. In order for us to have a clear picture, her view is to be summarized in the form of a table:

Table 2.4. Contemporary Catholic *lectio divina* as adapted from Guigo II

Stages	Four-Step Practices
Reading <i>Lectio</i>	<i>Lectio</i> is the first step. It is re-reading of a biblical text. Often the text is committed to memory in the process.
Meditation <i>Meditatio</i>	<i>Meditatio</i> is the second step. After the text is internalized during <i>lectio</i> , the reader passes on to a rumination on its meaning. Nowadays, this step might involve study of the text through the consultation of commentaries. The purpose of <i>meditatio</i> is deepened understanding of the text's meaning in the context of the person's own life and experience.
Prayer <i>Oratio</i>	<i>Oratio</i> is response to God, who speaks in and through the text.
Contemplation <i>Contemplatio</i>	<i>Contemplatio</i> is the fourth step. Fervent prayer may reach that degree of interiority and union with God. In this context it indicates the full flowering of prayer <i>in imageless and wordless union with God in the Spirit</i> (emphasis and italics mine).

Source: Sandra M. Schneiders, "Biblical Spirituality," *Interpretation* 56.2 (2002) 140. Print.

Schneiders believes that *lectio divina* can “transform a person into the image of Christ encountered in Scripture” (Schneiders 140).

Evangelicalism’s Reading Tradition

Except in monastic practice, at the end of the Middle Ages *lectio divina* gradually faded out of the picture of the spiritual disciplines especially in the practice of evangelicals. For evangelicals nowadays, contemplation has been looked upon as a dangerous discipline that borders on heresy. But has it always been like this? It would be good to explore all four elements of *lectio divina* using evangelicalism’s spectacles.

Reading. Evangelicals assume that Christians read Scripture devotionally on a daily basis. They also assume that the exegesis of Scripture is usually done by scholars, theologians, pastors, or Sunday school teachers. Reading in the “modern period, unlike the patristic and medieval monastic cultures, was largely silent. One simply read the day’s passage silently and then proceeded to meditation” (Evan Howard 67).

Meditating. Meditation is used by evangelicals as in the classical *lectio divina* – “[it] essentially described a period of interior reflection and repetition, at times employing particular mental processes, with the aim of bridging the horizons of text and reader” (Howard 67). Evan Howard in his article *Lectio Divina in The Evangelical Tradition* reveals that quite a few renowned evangelicals were very supportive of meditation, namely, Martin Luther, Charles Hodge, Charles Finney, Jonathan Edwards, William Law, and Richard Baxter. Following are some of their comments on meditation:

You should meditate, that is, not only in your heart, but also externally, by actually repeating and comparing oral speech and literal words of the book, reading and rereading them with diligent attention and reflection, so that you may see what the Holy Spirit means by them. (Martin Luther)

We cannot make progress in holiness unless we devote much time to the reading, hearing, meditating upon the Word of God, which is the truth whereby we are sanctified. (Charles Hodge)

We must pause and pray over it, verse after verse... dwell on it, digest it, and get it into our minds, till we feel that the Spirit of God has filled us with the spirit of holiness. (Charles Finney)

Be still and imagine to yourself that you saw the heavens open and the glorious choirs of cherubims and seraphims about the throne of God... Help your imagination with such passages of Scripture as these. (William Law) (Howard 67-69)

All these quotations show that those renowned evangelicals were supportive of meditation and believed that its spiritual fruit manifests to us its importance.

Praying. For evangelicals, personal devotions always combine Scripture study with prayer. Theologians like George Herbert, John Wesley, George Whitefield, Charles Spurgeon, William Law, and Edward Bickersteth all encourage readers of Scripture to pray before, during, and after Scripture reading:

“Praying over every line and word” (George Whitefield), and

“Read the Bible in a spirit of continual prayer” (Edward Bickersteth).

One can actually observe from the above analysis that, due to the way evangelicals read, meditate, and pray when they do devotional reading, any attempt to distinguish reading, meditating, and praying is difficult. When one reads, one prays; when one meditates, one reads and prays; and when one prays, one prays the text. In this aspect, it is very similar to monastic *lectio divina*. Evan Howard is right when he writes that “in the evangelical devotional reading of Scripture – as in *lectio divina* – the external word becomes an inner word and text becomes prayer” (Howard 70).

Contemplating. The subject of contemplation is always complicated. Some evangelicals today hold a very hostile position toward contemplation and treat it as a heresy or a practice from another religion. As Richard Baxter describes, “the Reformers overreacted to Rome by vilifying certain spiritually edifying disciplines” (Demarest 165-66). Baxter writes:

We are fled so far from superstitious solitude, that we have cast off the solitude of contemplative devotion... it opens the door between the head and the heart. (Baxter and John Thomas Wilkinson 421, 429)

It is such a pity to have lost this practice and thereby created a sanctification gap as described in Chapter One of this dissertation.

More recently, evangelical groups have begun to have a more positive attitude toward *lectio divina*. Eugene H. Peterson, a very devout Presbyterian Christian and a seminary professor, wrote “Eat This Book,” and devoted most of its pages to *lectio divina*. His understanding of *lectio divina* can probably be accepted by most evangelicals:

“*Lectio divina* comprises four elements: *lectio* (we read the text), *meditatio* (we meditate the text), *oratio* (we pray the text), and *contemplatio* (we live the text)” (Peterson 166).

Transformative Learning Theory (TLT)

Overview

Mezirow’s Transformative Learning Theory (TLT) is a leading theory and the most often cited work dealing with transformation in the field of adult and higher education (Elizabeth J. Tisdell 205). This is one of the reasons the researcher adopted this theory to explore the conceptual compatibility of TLT with *lectio divina*. Mezirow’s theory is “the most developed of the adult learning theories based on changes in consciousness” (Mary Sharon Herbers 14) rather than mere momentary superficial behavior responding to the current context, i.e. the Pharisees in Scripture. The other reason it is a valuable addition to this study is that, as Richard J. McLaughlin points out, there is a “strong compatibility between transformative theory and... Christian spiritual renewal” (McLaughlin, abstract). It is noteworthy that we are fully aware that Mezirow’s theory is not without critics. His theory has been criticized for its “cognitive and rational orientation... echoing [a] need for wider application of Transformative Learning Theory, and [exploring] cultural, gender, social, and spiritual implications of transformative learning theory” (McLaughlin 26). It is worth mentioning that this research includes some recently updated versions of TLT that include more relational elements published in Mezirow’s book *Learning as Transformation* which “grew out of the First National Conference on Transformative Learning held at Teachers College, Columbia University, in April 1998” (Mezirow, *Learning as Transformation* xi).

Exploring and Understanding TLT

The following remark made by Jack Mezirow sets the tone for the importance of understanding the meaning making process of adult learning that entails transformation:

A defining condition of being human is our urgent need to understand and order the meaning of our experience, to integrate it with what we know to avoid the threat of chaos. If we are unable to understand, we often turn to tradition, thoughtlessly seize explanations by authority figures, or resort to various ... [non-biblical] mechanisms..., *to create imaginary meanings.* (Mezirow, *Transformative Dimensions of Adult Learning* 3, italics mine)

This demonstrates another reason Mezirow's theory to help explain the transformation movements of *lectio divina* for the purpose of Christian spiritual formation. It tacitly matches with the theological idea that Scriptures are absolute truth as Jesus said, "For truly, I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not an iota, not a dot, will pass from the Law until all is accomplished. Therefore, whoever *relaxes* one of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do the same will be called least in the kingdom of heaven..." (Matthew 5:18-19 ESV, italics mine).

Thirty-eight years ago, Jack Mezirow introduced his work on Transformative Learning Theory at Columbia Teacher's College. It is a theory of adult learning: "it helped explain how adults changed the way they interpreted their world" (Edward W. Taylor 5) when adult learners are "seriously challenged to assess their value system and worldview and are subsequently changed by the experience" (Timothy William Quinnan 42).

According to Mezirow, one of the major limitations of adult learning is that, "as adult learners, we are caught in our own experiences" (Mezirow, *Transformative Dimensions* 1); our formative learning through schooling and socialization during our childhood set limits to our future learning. Since we can never be entirely free from our

past, what was formative learning during our childhood has to “become transformative learning in adulthood” (Mezirow, *Transformative Dimensions 2*) because there is a need to change habits, perspectives, and expectations as adults. It is a task that seems next to impossible at times.

The following remark of Robert Kegan is very interesting and right to the point on what is not transformative change:

Changes in one’s fund of knowledge, one’s confidence as a learner, one’s self-perception as a learner, one’s motives in learning, one’s self-esteem – these are all potentially important kinds of changes, all desirable, all worthy of teacher’s thinking about how to facilitate them. But it is possible for any or all of these changes to take place without any transformation because they could all occur within the existing form or frame of reference. (Mezirow, *Learning 50-51*)

People tend to narrowly define learning as “efforts to add compatible ideas to elaborate our fixed frames of reference. However, this disposition may be changed through transformative learning” (Mezirow, *Learning 19*). As a matter of fact, learning can be transformative or informative. Both transformative and informative learning are important. Informative learning focuses on changes in *what* we know; it brings “valuable new contents into the existing form of our way of knowing” (Mezirow, *Learning 49*).

Transformative learning focuses on changes in *how* we know. Here is the essential difference between informative learning and transformative learning:

“Informative” learning involves a kind of leading in, or filling of the form. Trans-form-ative learning puts the form itself at risk of change (and not just change but increased capacity)... Both kinds of learning are expansive and valuable, one within a preexisting frame of mind and the other reconstructing the very frame... But only the latter would I call transformative or transformational. (Mezirow, *Learning 49*)

These two kinds of learning “are each honorable, valuable, meritable, dignifiable activities. Each can be enhancing, necessary, and challenging for the teacher to facilitate” (Mezirow, *Learning* 51).

What, then, is transformative learning? Transformation refers to “a movement through time of reformulating reified structures of meaning by reconstructing dominant narratives” (Mezirow, *Learning* 19). Mezirow’s definition of transformative learning is “the process by which we transform our taken-for-granted frames of reference (meaning perspectives, habits of mind, mindsets) to make them more inclusive, discriminating, open, emotionally capable of change, and reflective so that they may generate beliefs and opinions that will prove more true or justified to guide action” (Mezirow, *Learning* 8). Action, therefore, is based “on the resulting insight” (Mezirow, *Learning* 8).

Transformative learning focuses on “how we learn to negotiate and act on our own purposes, values, feelings, and meanings rather than those we have uncritically assimilated from others to gain greater control over our lives as socially responsible clear-thinking decision makers.... [Its purpose is] to improve our understanding and the quality of our action through meaningful learning” (Mezirow, *Transformative Dimensions* 8).

Therefore, transformative learning describes, “experiences that adult learners may have as they

- examine previously unquestioned assumptions,
- try out new strategies, views and approaches, and
- begin to and ultimately transition to a significantly new place in their understanding of values, beliefs, assumptions, themselves and their world. (King 4)

This theory articulates powerfully the “critical steps and reasoning process adults experience as they wrestle with such changes” (King 4).

Meaning Structures

Making meaning “is central to what learning is all about” (Mezirow, *Transformative Dimensions* 11). When we encounter a learning experience which causes in us a disorienting dilemma or incurs in us a feeling of “fear, anger, guilt, or shame” (Mezirow, *Transformative Dimensions* 22), we start to reflect on our acquired (current) frame of reference. The meaning of our experience is construed by our acquired (current) frame of reference. Therefore, as adult learners, “we are caught in our own histories” (Mezirow, *Transformative Dimensions* 1). When we assimilate an acquired (current) frame of reference uncritically, it will distort “our ways of knowing... our ways of believing ... our ways of feeling” (Mezirow, *Transformative Dimensions* 5).

Our frames of reference are formed by the way in which we construe our experiences from our cultural paradigms, from the idiosyncrasies of our primary caregivers, and from our worldviews (Mezirow, *Transformative Dimensions* 17). One’s frame of reference is “the structure of assumptions and expectations (aesthetic, socio-linguistic, moral-ethical, epistemic, psychological) through which we filter and make sense of our world” (Mezirow, *Learning* 293). A frame of reference is a meaning perspective. As a matter of fact, meaning perspective and frame of reference are usually used interchangeably. Within the structure of our assumptions, our “past experience assimilates and transforms new experience” (Mezirow, *Learning* 42).

Frames of reference have “cognitive, affective, and conative dimensions that bind our thoughts, emotions, acts, and relationships in a meaningful way” (Steven Hodge 172),

and all these dimensions are not to be separated from each other since they are all integrated in the concept of meaning. In other words, our frames of reference “selectively shape and delimit perception, cognition, feelings, and disposition by predisposing our intentions, expectations, and purposes” (Mezirow, *Learning* 16).

Our frames of reference, which can be “either within or outside of our awareness” (Mezirow, *Learning* 16), provide “the context for making meaning with which we choose what and how a sensory experience is to be construed and/or appropriated” (Mezirow, *Transformative Dimensions* 16). “Appropriated” means “to accept an interpretation as our own” (Mezirow, *Transformative Dimensions* 11).

Frame of reference is “indicative of a ‘habit of mind’ that is expressed as a point of view. A point of view is made up of meaning schemes” (Mezirow, *Learning* 293). A meaning scheme is a more specific “dimension of our frame of reference. It is the constellation of concept, belief, judgment, and feeling which shape a particular interpretation (e.g., when we think of abortion, black people, the Muslim religion, free market capitalism, or liberalism)” (Mezirow, “Understanding Transformation Theory” 223). They are “habitual, implicit rules for interpreting” (Mezirow, *Fostering Critical Reflection in Adulthood: A Guide to Transformative and Emancipatory Learning* 2). Meaning schemes manifest our meaning perspectives and “translate these general expectations into specific ones that guide our actions” (Mezirow, *Transformative Dimensions* 44).

Clusters of meaning schemes tacitly and arbitrarily determine “what we see and how we see it – cause-effect relationships, scenarios of sequences of events, what others will be like, and, and our idealized self-image” (Mezirow, *Learning* 18). That is, a

meaning scheme may pertain to “how to do something (instrumental learning), how to understand what others mean (communicative learning), or how to understand oneself” (Mezirow, *Transformative Dimensions* 44). It is during this process that our general expectations are translated “into specific ones that guide our actions” (Mezirow, *Learning* 44). Our meaning schemes will suggest “a line of action that we tend to follow automatically unless brought into critical reflection” (Mezirow, *Transformative Dimensions* 18).

How do we differentiate the transformation in meaning scheme and the transformation in meaning perspective of a learner? This really depends upon what he/she has reflected. Transformation in meaning scheme happens when one reflects on context and process. Transformation in meaning perspective happens when one reflects on context, process, and premises (Mezirow, *Learning* 295). (More elaboration on this can be found under “Critical Reflection.”) There is also another indication when transformation of perspective happens – “a change in perspective is indicative of not only developing a revised frame of reference but a willingness to act on the new perspective. Several recent studies reveal that action is inherent in a perspective transformation (Pope, 1996; Saavedra, 1995). Saavedra states that ‘action, acting upon redefinitions of our perspectives, is the clearest indication of a transformation’” (Mezirow, *Learning* 297).

It is important to have a dependable frame of reference because this will produce “interpretations and opinions that are more likely to be justified... or true... than those predicated on a less dependable frame of reference” (Mezirow, *Learning* 19). What kind of frame of reference is more dependable? One that is “more inclusive, differentiating,

permeable (open to other viewpoints), critically reflective of assumptions, emotionally capable of change, and integrative of experience” (Mezirow, *Learning* 19).

Hence, it can be said that, “at its root, a frame of reference is a way of knowing. [And ‘epistemology’] refers to precisely this... our way of knowing” (Mezirow, *Learning* 52). There are two kinds of epistemological processes. One is *meaning-forming* process in which “our perceiving is simultaneously an act of conceiving, of interpreting... what we make of what happens to us” (Mezirow, *Learning* 52). The other is “*reforming our meaning forming*... [in which we] do not only form meaning, and we do not only change our meaning; we change the very form by which we are making our meaning. We change our epistemologies” (Mezirow, *Learning* 52-53).

Understanding the habits in making meaning is extremely important in understanding the nature of adult learning. The most important and crucial mode of making meaning is to become “critically aware of one’s own tacit assumptions and expectations and those of others and assessing their relevance for making an interpretation” (Mezirow, *Learning* 4).

Outline of the Transformative Learning Process

In terms of learning, most of us have a tendency to “attribute an old meaning to a new experience.... In transformative learning, however, we reinterpret an old experience (or a new one) from a new set of expectations, thus giving a new meaning and perspective to the old experience” (Mezirow, *Transformative Dimensions* 11).

Perspective transformation is “the process of becoming critically aware of how and why our assumptions have come to constrain the way we perceive, understand, and feel about our world; changing these structures of habitual expectation to make possible a

more inclusive, discriminating, and integrative perspective; and finally, making choices or other acting upon these new understandings” (Mezirow, *Transformative Dimensions* 167). In other words, the term “perspective transformation” includes all the four phases/movements of TLT from disorienting dilemma of the problematic frame of reference to the final phase, reflective action.

Originally, Mezirow suggested that the process of personal transformation that adult learners undergo involves ten phases (Mezirow, *Transformative Dimensions* 168-169). These ten phases “represent the full cycle of perspective transformation. They describe the emotions and efforts that adult learners make to accommodate new information and understanding” (King 6). There are ten “phases of meaning becoming clarified” (Mezirow, *Transformative Dimensions* 22) which transformations often follow with some variation. These ten phases are:

1. A disorienting dilemma
2. Self-examination with feelings of fear, anger, guilt or shame
3. A critical assessment of assumptions
4. Recognition that one’s discontent and the process of transformation are shared
5. Exploration of options for new roles, relationships, and actions
6. Planning a course of action
7. Acquiring knowledge and skills for implementing one’s plans
8. Provisional trying on of new roles
9. Building competence and self-confidence in new roles and relationships
10. A reintegration into one’s life on the basis of conditions dictated by one’s new perspective (Mezirow, *Transformative Dimensions* 22).

These ten phases originally defined “by Mezirow (1978, 1995) as a linear though not always step-wise process” (Mezirow, *Learning* 290). However, later studies find “the process of perspective transformation to be more recursive, evolving, and spiraling in nature (Coffman, 1989; Elias, 1993; Holt, 1994; Laswell, 1994; Neuman, 1996; Saavedra, 1995; Taylor, 1994)” (Mezirow, *Learning* 290). Mezirow observes that the phases of transformative learning “are not invariant stages of development” (Mezirow, *Transformative Dimensions* 152) and in his later publications, even “concur... that the process does not always follow the exact sequence of phases but generally includes some variation of the identified phases” (Mezirow, *Learning* 290). In nature, transformation processes are more recursive than linear; phases tend to repeat during the process. For example, the feelings and emotions inflicted during the disorienting dilemma may continually reoccur during succeeding phases. Therefore, the transformative process may not necessarily be “sequential nor [may] successful completion of one stage [be] contingent upon the previous stages” (Mezirow, *Learning* 291).

One other thing about the transformative process is the time factor – the process of these phases may be long term, i.e. it may take years for phases one through nine to develop before phase ten, reflective action, happens since there are hurdles and difficulties that learners have to overcome. (This point will be elaborated on under the title “Action.”) This long process may be due to “the sometimes cumulative nature of transformative learning, whereby many meaning schemes change over time culminating in a perspective transformation” (Mezirow, *Learning* 291-292). With this long process of transformation, steps/phases will “lose relevance and [be] forgotten” (Mezirow, *Learning*

291). Therefore, we can arrive at this conclusion that the process of transformation “is... individualistic, fluid, and recursive” (Mezirow, *Learning* 292).

These ten phases were condensed “to four fundamental ingredients: the disorienting dilemma, critical reflection, rational (and relational) dialogue/(discourse), and action” (Herbers 17) by “some researchers (Herbers, 1998; Gliszinski, 2007)... [They] have found it helpful in terms of theory and consequently in terms of research design to boil these phases into four” transformative learning phases, or quadrants (McLaughlin 23). For the aforementioned reasons, this researcher has conducted her research upon the framework of four transformative learning phases – disorienting dilemma, critical reflection, discourse and action, rather than the ten phases originally proposed by Mezirow.

Disorienting experiences/dilemma. The process of effecting change in a frame of reference is usually triggered by “a significant personal event.... A disorienting dilemma, an acute internal and personal crisis” (Mezirow, *Learning* 298). It could be an experience or situation that throws their usual perspective off balance and that cannot be “resolved by applying previous problem-solving strategies... this [is] often accompanied by unpleasant or undesirable emotions” (Janet Groen and Jeffrey Jacob 80). That is when “meaning schemes are inadequate to explain facets of our experience... we are faced with areas or dimensions of apparent meaninglessness. Our most common reaction to meaninglessness is to become anxious” (Mezirow, *Transformative Dimensions* 44). Not all disorienting dilemmas lead to perspective transformation. There is very little understanding why some do and other don’t (Mezirow, *Learning* 300). This disorienting experience is described by Mezirow as follows: “Rather than merely adapting to

changing circumstances by more diligently applying old ways of knowing, they discover a need to acquire new perspectives in order to gain a more complete understanding of changing events” (Mezirow, *Transformative Dimensions* 3). The conflictual consequence of a disorienting experience/dilemma very possibly triggers reflection.

Van Manen’s description of what happened at a research conference when a text was read aloud can serve as an example of what a disorienting dilemma is like:

When a text is successful, and when the reader is open to it, then the text may have an effect that is almost inexplicable. The words literally take the reader... into a wondrous landscape, evoking a feeling of disorientation, causing confusion that tends to accompany the experience of strangeness, of being struck with wonder. This effect of the text is contingent not only on the text itself, it may also be contingent on the reader, the mood, or the context within which it is encountered. (Max Van Manen, *Phenomenology of Practice* 359)

Subsequently, individuals “begin to critically reflect on and question the validity of their inherited meaning perspective” (Linda Morrice 253).

Critical reflection/perspective reflection/reframing. People often think that, whenever thoughtful action is involved, it must imply reflection. This is not necessarily the case according to the Transformative Learning Theory. Mezirow acknowledged in 1998 that the term critical reflection “might have better been called *perspective reflection* or *reframing*, because critical reflection implies the use of exclusively cognitive functions; rather, he was referring to the use of all dimensions including emotional and spiritual elements, context, other ways of knowing, and relationships” (Sabra E. Brock 123, italics mine). It is the “process of doubting, validating, and interpreting, based on assumptions and new knowledge gained via experience” (Jung Ja Kang 18).

Reflection makes “enlightened action and reinterpretation possible” (Mezirow, *Transformative Dimensions* 100). In Locke’s *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*,

reflection “was simple awareness of our own process of thinking and writing. A man was reflective when he was conscious to himself when he thinks... reflection as having both cognitive and conative dimensions: [It] is the perception of the operation of our own mind within us” (Mezirow, *Transformative Dimensions* 100). All “reflection is inherently critical” (Mezirow, *Transformative Dimensions* 105), and through the “process of critical reflection, people [can] learn to see from perspectives other than their own, existing viewpoint. Mezirow calls the change of perspective *transformative learning experience*” (Kang 18).

Throughout our lives, we have to accommodate continuous and rapid changes; in fact, “most of what we learn is the result of our efforts to solve problems, from the infant’s problem of how to get fed to the adult’s problem of how to understand the meaning of life” (Mezirow, *Fostering Critical Reflection* 5). When we try to interpret and give meaning to an experience within the context of problem solving, we may reflect. Reflection is critically assessing the following:

- The content of the problem; focusing on the assumptions made about the content
- The process of problem-solving
- The premise of the problem (Mezirow, “Understanding” 224)

Failing to differentiate these three functions – content reflection, process reflection, premise reflection – will cause confusion about the nature of critical thinking.

Table 2.5 elaborates on these three kinds of reflection.

Table 2.5. Three Kinds of Reflection

	Each involves critique and reflection...	What happens when one reflects...	
		When one reflects on content, process and premises...	When one reflects on content and process only...
Content Reflection	<i>What</i> we are perceiving, thinking, judging, feeling, and acting.	When one reflects on the <i>What, How, and Why</i> , the dynamic by which our <u><i>belief systems</i></u> – meaning perspectives – become transformed. Our <u><i>belief systems</i></u> – meaning perspectives – are more developed: more inclusive, discriminating, permeable (open), and integrative of experience. Transformative learning is more possible when one asks <i>why</i> .	When one reflects on the <i>What</i> and <i>How</i> only, the dynamic by which our <u><i>beliefs</i></u> – meaning schemes – are transformed which effects transformative learning. Our <u><i>beliefs</i></u> – meaning schemes – become reinforced, elaborated, created, negated, conformed, or identified as problems (problematized), and then become transformed.
Process Reflection	<i>How</i> we are perceiving, thinking, judging, feeling, and acting.		
Premise Reflection	<i>Why</i> we are perceiving, thinking, judging, feeling, and acting.		

Source: Jack Mezirow, *Transformative Dimensions of Adult Learning*, 1st ed. (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1991) 106-111. Print. The Jossey-Bass Higher and Adult Education Series.

Content reflection and process reflection of our problems “is the way we change our minds and transform our meaning schemes, an everyday phenomenon” (Mezirow, “Understanding” 224).

Premise reflection is essential to transformations in meaning perspectives/frames of reference in adulthood. Through premise reflection we “see through the habitual way that we have interpreted the experience of everyday life in order to reassess rationally the implicit claim of validity made by a previously unquestioned meaning scheme or

perspective” (Mezirow, *Transformative Dimensions* 102). When we critique premises or presuppositions, we pose a problem, thus making “a taken-for-granted situation problematic, raising questions regarding its validity” (Mezirow, *Transformative Dimensions* 105).

In the 1998 Conference on Transformative Learning, Mezirow reported that “the Taylor study (1997) found agreement that critical reflection is central to transformation processes, but that it must ‘centrally include elements beyond cognition: intuition, feelings, empathy, spirituality and other factors outside of focal awareness” (Mezirow, *Learning* 334).

There are actually two kinds of reframing through which transformative learning may occur; one is objective reframing and the other is subjective reframing. Objective reframing involves “critical reflection on the assumptions of others... Subjective reframing involves critical self-reflection of one’s own assumptions” (Mezirow, *Learning* 23). For subjective reframing, one engages in critical self-reflection often involving “intensive emotional experiences, particularly grieving the loss of old meaning structures and the acquiring of new ones” (Mezirow, *Learning* 23). One overarching characteristic of transformation is that it seems that most transformation “deals with subjective reframing... as opposed to objective reframing” (Mezirow, *Learning* 298). There is another thing worth noting: in the 1998 Conference on Transformative Learning, Cranton presented the idea that “intuitive people reflect in their own way and that intuition is one way of learning transformatively” (Mezirow, *Learning* 335).

Discourse. Other than using a different perspective to redefine their problems, learners need “to participate effectively in discourse. Discourse is necessary to validate

what and how one understands, or to arrive at a best judgment regarding a belief” (Mezirow, “Transformative Learning: Theory to Practice” 10). In the context of Transformative Learning Theory, discourse “is that specialized use of dialogue devoted to searching for a common understanding and assessment of the justification of an interpretation or belief” (Mezirow, *Learning* 10), “by giving and defending reasons” (Mezirow, “Understanding” 225).

In order to effectively participate in discourse, one needs to have “emotional maturity ... as well as clear thinking” (Mezirow, *Learning* 11). We live in an argumentative culture, “a cultural paradigm that conditions us to approach anything we need to accomplish together as a fight between opposing sides” (Mezirow, *Learning* 12). Discourse is different; it is not based on trying to win an argument. It involves “finding agreement, welcoming difference, ‘trying on’ other points of view, identifying the common in the contradictory, tolerating the anxiety implicit in paradox, searching for synthesis, and reframing” (Mezirow, *Learning* 12-13). Reflective discourse involves “what the Greek Skeptics call *epoche*, a provisional suspension of judgment about the truth or falsity of, or the belief or disbelief in, ideas until a better determination can be made” (Mezirow, *Learning* 13). It is open-mindedness.

The ideal conditions of discourse are referred to as “really talking, in which emphasis is placed on active listening, domination is absent, reciprocity and cooperation are prominent, and judgment is withheld until one empathically understands another’s point of view.... Discourse is the process in which we have an active dialogue with others to better understand the meaning of an experience” (Mezirow, *Transformative Dimensions* 14).

The original Transformative Learning Theory gave very little attention “to the role of relationships” (Mezirow, *Learning* 306). According to later studies of TLT, discourse should be both rational and relational. There are already quite a few studies about the notion that relational discourse involves friendship, trust, and support. For example, to name just a few: friendship, (First and Way, 1995; Taylor, 1993), trust (Saavedra, 1995), and support (Van Nostrand, 1992) (Mezirow, *Learning* 306). Rational discourse is different from everyday discussion. It is used when we have “reason to question... what is being asserted or to question the credibility of the person making [the assertion]” (Mezirow, *Learning* 306).

There is also the relational knowing of transformative learning which is “the role that relationship with others plays in the transformative process” (Mezirow, *Learning* 306). To have discourse, one has to have trustful relationships so that questioning and discussion can happen “wherein information can be shared openly and mutual and consensual understanding be achieved” (Mezirow, *Learning* 307). The importance of relationships contradicts “the autonomous... and instead reveals a learning process that is much more dependent on the creation of support, trust, and friendship with others” (Mezirow, *Learning* 307). We cannot underestimate the importance of this, because it is through “building trusting relationships that learners develop the necessary openness and confidence to deal with learning on an affective level, which is essential for managing the threatening and emotionally charged experience of transformation” (Mezirow, *Learning* 307). Taylor is so right when he says:

Without the medium of healthy relationships, critical reflection would seem to be impotent and hollow, lacking the genuine discourse necessary for thoughtful and in-depth reflection. And it would seem that through relationships, emotions and feelings could be safely explored in the

process of transformative learning. (Mezirow, *Learning* 307)

Action. The journey of transformation involves the transformation of a person's frame of reference/meaning perspective which often starts with responding to his disorienting dilemma through "a three-part process: critical reflection on one's assumptions, discourse to validate the critically reflective insight, and action" (Mezirow, "Transformation Theory Out of Context" 60). By critically reflecting on assumptions, one's beliefs can be supported. With discourse, one's beliefs can be validated. With the insights resulting from the transformation of meaning structures, there can be reflective action (Mezirow, "Understanding" 226).

Mezirow defines reflective action as "making decisions or taking other action predicated upon the insights resulting from reflection" (Mezirow, *Transformative Dimensions* 108). Reflective action starts with "posing a problem and ends with taking action" (Mezirow, *Transformative Dimensions* 108). Action includes "making a decision, making an association, revising a point of view, reframing or solving a problem, modifying an attitude, or producing a change in behavior. Action in TLT is not only behavior, the effect of a cause, but rather 'praxis,' the creative implementation of a purpose" (Mezirow, *Transformative Dimensions* 12).

Psychologist Ellen Langer called habitual action *mindlessness* (Steven R. Yussen 267-285) which is nonreflective and passive in terms of involvement with experience (Mezirow, *Transformative Dimensions* 116). Its contrast is *mindfulness* which is "described as being aware of content and multiple perspectives. It is what TLT calls *reflective action*.... People are more likely to be mindful and to have accurate perceptions when they are attending to the unfamiliar and the deviant than when they are dealing with

the familiar” (Mezirow, *Transformative Dimensions* 114-115, italics mine).

When we are mindful of a transformative learning experience, there is a need to make “an informed and reflective decision to act on [our] reflective insight. This decision may result in immediate action, delayed action, or reasoned reaffirmation of an existing pattern of action” (Mezirow, *Learning* 24). As to when the action will be taken to respond to reflective insights, it often involves “overcoming situational, emotional, and informational constraints” (Mezirow, *Learning* 24). Difficulties like “difficult negotiation, compromise, stalling, backsliding, self-deception, and failure” may occur (Mezirow, *Transformative Dimensions* 171). Any of these constraints or difficulties could happen at two points during the transformation process: one is at “the beginning, when the learner is exposing to critical analysis his or her established ideas, values, and sense of order, as well as the feelings that he or she has about these assumptions. The other is the point at which a commitment to reflective action logically should follow insight but is so threatening or demanding that the learner is immobilized” (Mezirow, *Transformative Dimensions* 171).

It is crucial to understand that “backsliding in the process of transformation may be explained by the learner acquiring an insight that results in a transformation in meaning scheme that may contribute over time toward a change in meaning perspective but at the moment comes to conflict with the established meaning perspective and is overwhelmed by it” (Mezirow, *Transformative Learning* 171). The result is that the learner then “becomes unable to act upon his or her new insight” (Mezirow, *Transformative Learning* 171).

How can one overcome these constraints or difficulties? To take action and move

forward, there needs to be both sufficient “emotional strength and an act of will” (Mezirow, *Transformative Dimensions* 171). It is not enough only “to understand intellectually the need to change one’s action” (Mezirow, *Transformative Dimensions* 171). Therefore, we can summarize that to complete the process of transformation involves cognition, emotion, and conation. Mezirow’s comments on the following quote from Paprock shed insight:

Freedom involves not just the will and insight to change but also the power to act to attain one’s purpose. As Novak claims: ‘Perspective transformation represents not only a total change in life perspective, but an actualization of that perspective. In other words, life is not seen from a new perspective, it is lived from that perspective’ (quoted in Paprock, 1992, p. 197). (Mezirow, *Learning* 24)

And Mezirow confirms that when an action is taken, transformation is fully completed:

Once our understanding is clarified and we have committed ourselves fully to taking the action it suggests; we do not regress to levels of less understanding. Reaching this point of full understanding and commitment can be extremely difficult, however, and many people do regress before they reach this point. (Mezirow, *Transformative Dimensions* 152)

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY FOR THE PROJECT

Nature and Purpose of the Project

According to Paul as he advocates in the book of Ephesians, there must be a transformation of life after being born again; Christians are to put off their old self, to be renewed in their minds, and to put on the new self. In reality, often Christians fall into the chasm between knowledge and practice called the sanctification gap. Thus, the purpose of this study was to explore how *lectio divina*, with its transformative learning pattern, helps Christians open to God's transformation, sending them on the journey of transformation which improves the sanctification gap and, therefore, shapes both belief and behavior. Additionally, the study included Mezirow's Transformative Learning Theory (TLT) for the purpose of helping better explain *lectio divina*'s technique of learning which further proves the effectiveness of its transformative learning pattern. This chapter is a road map of how this research was actually carried out.

This research on *lectio divina* was very much experientially based, hence the researcher needed to observe learners' disorienting experiences, critical reflections, and discourse that brought about the transformative learning. Therefore, in the field of Transformative Learning Theory (TLT), qualitative research methods like interviews and focus groups are the norm. Also, this kind of research "produces culturally specific and contextually rich data critical for the design, evaluation, and ongoing health of institutions like churches" (Sensing 58).

Since this research was focused heavily on qualitative research, a definition is called for:

Qualitative research is multi-method in focus, involving an interpretative, naturalistic approach to its subject matter. This means that qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them.... Qualitative research involves the studied use and collection of a variety of empirical materials – case study; personal experience; introspection; life story; interviews; artifacts; cultural texts and productions; observational historical, interactional, and visual texts – that describe routine and problematic moments and meanings in individuals’ lives. Accordingly, researchers deploy a wide range of interconnected interpretive practices hoping always to get a better understanding of the subject matter at hand. (Sensing 57)

Thus, mixed methods, which include narrative research, qualitative interview, and quantitative survey, was utilized in this research.

Research Questions

This study focused on the need to understand whether or not *lectio divina* applies the concept of Transformative Learning Theory (TLT); that is, whether or not applying the theory could be a redemptive action to improve Christians’ sanctification gap. The first phase was to implement and evaluate the transformative learning experience of engaging in *lectio divina* at a Chinese Christian Bible class to see if there were any changes in sanctification gap.

Research Question 1

Was there perspective transformation in relation to the Scripture reading prior to the experience of *lectio divina*? If there was perspective transformation, what were the learning activities that contributed to the transformation?

This research question attempted to acquire a baseline for gathered data. The instrument used to collect data for this research question was the Learning Activities Survey (LAS) (King 20, see Appendix A). There were two major purposes for using LAS. The first purpose was to identify whether the Scripture-reading adult learners had

experienced a perspective transformation “and if so, determining what learning activities [had] contributed to it” (King 14).

LAS is a “robust mixed methods data gathering and analysis approach to help delve deeply into these life changing experiences (Onwuegbuzie & Teddlie, 2003; Tashakkori & Teddlie, 1998)” (King 14). There are four parts to LAS illustrated by Table 3.1.

Table 3.1. LAS compared with Mezirow’s ten stages and Herbers’ four stages

The Learning Activities Survey (King 14-17)		Mezirow’s Original Ten Stages	Herbers’ Condensed Version	
Item 1: Identifies the stages of perspective transformation	Transformation in Meaning Transformation in	Item 1a, 1b	Stage 1	Disorienting Dilemma
		Item 1c, 1d	Stage 2	
		Item 1g	Stage 3	Critical Reflection
		Item 1e	Stage 4	
		Item 1f	Stage 5	
		Item 1i	Stage 6	Discourse
		Item 1j	Stage 7	
		Item 1h	Stage 8	
		Item 1k	Stage 9	
			Item 1l	Stage 10
For diagnostic and interpretation purposes.	Item 1m			
It focuses the items on one experience of perspective transformation. If respondents have not had a perspective transformation experience, they are directed in Item 2 to go directly to the last two sections of the assessment tool.	Item 2			
It seeks a basic description of the perspective transformation experience.	Item 3			
It verifies that the perspective transformation was in fact related to the respondent’s educational experience.	Item 5			
Summary: Items 1, 2, 3, and 5 guide the respondent to reflect on an experience of change and delve into what exactly it was, how it happened, and what contributed to its occurrence.				

Individual learning activities are examined. Learners are to select any of the items that contributed to their perspective transformation.	Item 4	
This item is to verify that the perspective transformation was in fact related to the respondent's learning experience.	Item 5	
This item provides information about reflection among adult learners.	Item 6	
The results of this item show how frequently specific learning activities are used in adult learning and reveal whether some of the learning activities are available less often than others. All participants answer this item whether or not they had a perspective transformation experience.	Item 7	
This information allows adult educators to see whether the results of the study vary with different groups of people or different conditions.	Item 8-9	

Research Question 2

What comparative changes occurred in relation to the Scripture reading after the experience of *lectio divina*? If there was perspective transformation, what were the learning activities that contributed to that transformation?

To answer this question, the researcher introduced participants to *lectio divina*. The instrument which was used to answer Research Question 1, LAS, is used here to answer Research Question 2 with only one revision to the heading, changing it from pre-intervention to post-intervention (see Appendix B). Other than LAS, the researcher also used the LAS Follow-Up Interviews afterwards (see Appendix C). These LAS Follow-Up Interviews are a critical part of the survey and are not optional. The interviews will help

those randomly selected participants to “describe and explain their response to the assessment tool items in more depth” (King 19).

Research Question 3

How did TLT help us understand the perspective transformation movements of *lectio divina* for the purpose of Christian spiritual formation?

This research question attempted to ascertain the conceptual compatibility of *lectio divina* with transformative learning, and the focus was on transformative change.

Table 3.2, compiled by the researcher, was used to analyze and see how *lectio divina*, the intervention introduced, helps Christians open to and experience God’s teaching and the transforming power of His Word. This table was also used to analyze and see how TLT’s transformative pattern helps to explain the transformative learning pattern of *lectio divina*.

Table 3.2. LAS compared with *lectio divina*

The Learning Activities Survey (King 15)		Herbers’ Condensed Version	Movements of <i>Lectio Divina</i>
Item 1: Identifies the stages of perspective transformation	Transformation in Meaning Transformation in	Item 1a, 1b	Disorienting Dilemma
		Item 1c, 1d	
		Item 1g	Critical Reflection
		Item 1e	
		Item 1f	
		Item 1i	Discourse
		Item 1j	
		Item 1h	
		Item 1k	
For diagnostic and interpretation purposes.		Item 1l	
It focuses the items on one experience of perspective transformation.		Item 2	
If respondents have not had a			

perspective transformation experience, they are directed in Item 2 to go directly to the last two sections of the assessment tool.		
It seeks a basic description of the perspective transformation experience.	Item 3	
It verifies that the perspective transformation was in fact related to the respondent's educational experience.	Item 5	
Summary: Items 1, 2, 3, and 5 guides the respondent to reflect on an experience of change and delve into what exactly it was, how it happened, and what contributed to its occurrence.		
Individual learning activities are examined. Learners are to select any of the items that contributed to their perspective transformation.	Item 4	
This item is to verify that the perspective transformation was in fact related to the respondent's learning experience.	Item 5	
This item provides information about reflection among adult learners.	Item 6	
The results of this item show how frequently specific learning activities are used in adult learning and reveal whether some of the learning activities are available less often than others. All participants answer this item whether or not they had a perspective transformation experience.	Item 7	
This information allows adult educators to see whether the results of the study vary with different groups of people or different conditions.	Item 8-9	

Cassian, Benedict and Guigo II were key figures in the history of *lectio divina*.

The researcher utilized qualitative historical narrative methodology for the purpose of understanding how the transformative experience of Cassian, Benedict, and Guigo II echoes with the concept of TLT when practicing *lectio divina*.

“[Through] narrative, a researcher can explore the ways practical theologians

come to know and practice their craft in tacit and unmeasurable ways” (Sensing 158). This research utilized narrative research which reflected on the tacit knowledge of historical/theological research done on the *lectio divina* experiences of Cassian, Benedict, and Guigo II and translated this tacit data into implicit knowledge, allowing it to be integrated with the perspectives of TLT. Narrative research enabled the *lectio divina* experiences of Cassian, Benedict, and Guigo II to inform, shape, and enrich the researcher’s experience, hence, the researcher’s theology.

The researcher collected the stories of Cassian, Benedict, and Guigo II and weaved together these stories so that they became part of the *lectio divina* community story that the researcher presented in this study (Sensing 158). Looking at the experiences of these key figures in *lectio divina* history, the researcher interpreted these experiences, and the interpretation pointed to meaning and gave rise to theory. After the intervention of *lectio divina* was introduced to the participants and the post-intervention survey and interviews were done, there was another round of collecting narratives. These post-intervention narratives were participants’ lived experiences which confirmed the lived experiences of those key historical figures; it was what Van Manen calls “the validating circle of inquiry” (Van Manen, *Researching Lived Experience* 27). This result confirmed the conceptual compatibility of TLT with *lectio divina* both now and in history.

Participants

The ministry context observed was that of Chinese Christian immigrants from overseas, i.e. China, Taiwan, Hong Kong, currently permanently residing in both Los Angeles and Orange Counties, California. The researcher has to mention that the philosophies of Confucianism (premodern), materialism (modern), and

secularism/consumerism (postmodern) have all influenced modern Chinese culture. The way in which these cultural influences have complicated the spiritual formation of modern Chinese people is beyond the scope of this paper. However, mentioning it draws attention to the complexity of the culture of Chinese churches globally since there are Chinese immigrants all over the world. Furthermore, it seems that most of these Christians were not aware of the effect their culture has had on their spiritual lives. In short, this kind of cultural complex will, in the long run, form a life that is not spiritually abundant (John 10:10).

Adding to the aforementioned cultural context is the world hypothesis/root metaphor of pragmatism. Pragmatism is implied by the cultural text of many Chinese churches and accepted by most Christians. Pragmatism is “the notion that meaning or worth is determined by practical consequences” (John MacArthur 12). Pragmatism is “closely akin to utilitarianism, the belief that usefulness is the standard of what is good” (MacArthur 12). This is often manifested in how Christians nowadays gauge the success of their ministry; attendance figures are the chief criteria instead of the presence or absence of Christ-like virtue. Therefore, for most churches, “theology now takes a back seat to methodology” (MacArthur 13) and spiritual formation also takes a back seat as a result.

With all these contextual influences in the background, this research was done through an adult Bible course that the researcher offered as a half-day-weekend course. Because of the nature of enrollment, participants were self-selected. The only qualification was that they had to be a believer for at least one year. This is because that amount of time probably would have allowed them to have plenty of experiences of the

sanctification gap. Therefore, this was not a Bible study course for new believers.

For the sake of privacy and to simplify the research, the researcher purposely left out gender, age, marital status, and education in the demographic profile of participants. The focus was only on spirituality which was the purpose of the research. Only the number of years since conversion was asked for during the survey which put the minds of the participants somewhat at ease since the researcher did not probe into their personal lives. The researcher avoided talking about any personal things during the post-intervention interviews.

Of the twenty participants, four (20 percent) of the participants have been Christians for about one year, two (10 percent) two to three years, four (20 percent) four to six years, six (30 percent) seven to fifteen years, and four (20 percent) for more than sixteen years (Table 4.1 and Graph 4.1).

Table 3.3. Years since conversion of participants (Item 8 of the Survey)

Years Since Conversion	n	%
1 year	4	20
2-3 years	2	10
4-6 years	4	20
7-15 years	6	30
16+ years	4	20
Total	20	100

Ethical Considerations

The researcher upheld academic research ethical standards in the course of this research. Here were the ethical safeguards that the researcher utilized to protect the

research participants. To guide the researcher's research practices, there were four core ethical principles that are typical:

- Non-maleficence: "that researchers should avoid harming participants" (Paul Atkinson 339). This means that the researcher should avoid harming the research participants. Each participant was given a participant number at the registration to protect his or her anonymity. The researcher did not name them in this dissertation. None of the surveys, interviews, or notes would be revealed to anyone but the researcher. All the data collected would be shredded after completion of the research.

- Beneficence: "that research on human subjects should produce some positive and identifiable benefit rather than simply be carried out for its own sake" (Atkinson 339)

- Autonomy or self-determination: "that the values and decisions of research participants should be respected" (Atkinson 339). To this end, the researcher verbally informed all the participants that joining this Bible study course meant consenting to participate in doctoral research. The researcher further informed them of the subject of the research and asked their permission to use their words, actions, and insights as part of the research. Also, the researcher told them that they had the freedom to refrain from this research anytime if they wanted to.

- Justice: "that people who are equal in relevant respects should be treated equally" (Atkinson 339; Sensing 32; Tom L. Beauchamp 18-19).

Procedure for Collecting Evidence from Participants

Since there are always limitations to any one single approach, this research effort used a triangulation of qualitative and quantitative research methods. These two research methods are complementary to each other. They were done autonomously and whenever

there were meeting points, those were the issues to be scrutinized to establish theory.

The research of what overlap may or may not exist between the domains of *lectio divina* and TLT is still in an early stage; therefore, the process of this research to answer the third research question was based on grounded research theoretical practices.

The research started with preliminary assumptions rather than with theory. This research utilized Glaser and Strauss’s model which suggested qualitative research’s circular interlinking of empirical steps (Anselm L. Strauss and Juliet M. Corbin 34; Flick 94). Flick’s model vividly graphed the process (see Figure 3.1). Since the processes were interlinked, it was difficult to “divide [them] into clearly separated phases” (Flick 95).

Flick mentions that “grounded theory methodology is not linked to a preferable method for collecting or producing” (Flick 433). Glaser makes statements like, “All is data” (Glaser 1); or one can use “almost everything as data – whatever is helpful to understand the process and the field you are interested in and to answer your research questions” (Flick 433).

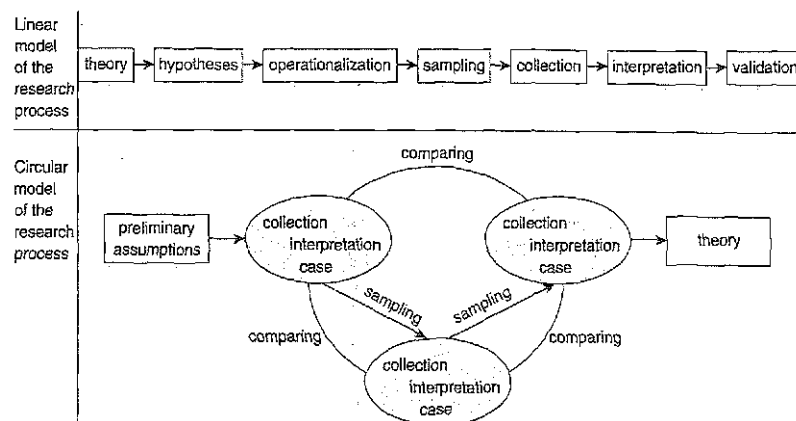


Figure 3.1. Glaser and Strauss’s models of process and theory (qualitative research’s Circular Interlinking of Empirical Steps) (Flick 95)

In this qualitative model—which is circular research, the process of research starting with preliminary assumptions—the preliminary assumption is that there is conceptual compatibility between *lectio divina* and TLT. No theory was established. This was the first phase of the research.

The starting point of this research was to answer the first research question. To do that, a Bible study course was begun, studying the Sermon on the Mount; also known as the *Sermon On The Mount Course*. It was a four half-day-weekend course. This course lasted sixteen hours – four hours per session for four sessions. Therefore, there were four four-hour sessions altogether. The process of collecting data in this phase included both quantitative and qualitative methods via survey and interviews developed by King (King 20-23; Brock 126).

Pre-Intervention Survey

The researcher started the first hour of the first session by introducing herself, the nature of the research and the purpose of the course, as well as ethical considerations; this took about fifteen minutes. After this introduction, the researcher asked participants to read and sign the Informed Consent Form (Appendix D). At the same time, the researcher assigned each one of the participants a number so that they could be anonymous in all future work. Then the researcher asked them to group themselves for future discussions; five persons to a group.

After this, the researcher asked all participants to read *Sermon on the Mount*. They were given forty-five minutes to do so. They were encouraged to take notes while they were reading. There was a ten-minute break after this. When they came back from break, the researcher asked them to pick one teaching of the Sermon on the Mount that

touched their hearts during their reading and with which they had always had trouble living out in the past—either because it had not made sense to them or because they had not been able to live it out in their daily lives. The reason we narrowed the scope of the text they would focus on is because it is impossible for Christians to live their lives in perfect obedience to all of the teachings of the whole Bible. However, this can be overwhelming. Instead, it is more constructive to explore one particular aspect of our lives at a time. If they had more than one question or problem with the text, which is very possible, they were instructed to just pick the one that concerned them the most. The other reason we narrowed the scope of the text to be experienced is that this is how *lectio divina* was practiced traditionally in ancient times and even now. Benedictine monks would memorize certain scriptural texts they had read and do their *meditatio* while working with their hands. In the Book of Common Prayer, instructions for formative reading are divided up under four headings: Hear, Read, Mark, Inwardly Digest. Regarding the instruction to Mark, the instruction is as follows: “On first reading, mark what we want to return to on second reading as food for journaling, meditation, and prayer” (Susan Muto 111).

After they finished reading and selecting the text, they were asked to read the selected text once more for thirty minutes. Participants were to keep their choice of text confidential so that their privacy would not be violated. When they were doing this part of the exercise, they were allowed to do it privately in another area of the room. They had a ten-minute break before the next class started.

Afterwards, the researcher asked all participants to complete a pre-intervention survey (Appendix A). This survey is an adaptation of King’s Learning Activities Survey

(LAS) (King 20-23; Brock 126) which is “the main instrument tool for measuring perspective transformation. This instrument has been tested across various disciplines and at various scales ranging from entire programs of study to individual courses” (Mark Nichols and Rosemary Dewerse 48). The awareness or recognition of one’s perspective transformation does not always happen immediately. The findings of LAS and interview instrument were helpful in answering the question, “What learning activities have you participated in during your education as an adult that have contributed to a perspective transformation?” (King 33). After the researcher collected the pre-intervention survey, a ten-minute break was given.

Intervention—*Lectio Divina*

After the break, the lecture started with an exposition of the Sermon for the purpose of correctly understanding the Word. Christians often cannot live the Word because they misunderstand what the Bible says. This causes contradictory beliefs about truths throughout the Bible which lessens their faith in God’s Word.

After the lecture, the researcher introduced the concept of *lectio divina* to the participants. The researcher answered questions and allowed them time to process the information in a quiet setting. They practiced *lectio divina* there with the researcher. During the week, participants practiced *lectio divina* on a daily basis, reading, meditating, praying, and contemplating the Scriptures. In addition to *lectio divina*, there were group discussions during the Bible study as well. At subsequent teaching sessions, further exposition of and reflections on the text were provided.

Post-Intervention Survey

At the end of the fourth session of the course, after all lectures were delivered, to answer the second research question, a post-intervention survey was conducted. The researcher again used LAS but with a further revision which factored in the experience of *lectio divina* (Appendix B).

Follow-Up Interview

After the four sessions of the Sermon On The Mount Course, participants were allowed one week to reflect on the entire experience and a post-intervention follow-up interview was scheduled and performed (Appendix C).

The last part of the data collection was to answer the third research question and this via qualitative study. After literature review of the theoretical study of both domains of *lectio divina* and TLT was done, data collection took place using a method of qualitative historical narrative for the purpose of understanding what were Cassian's, Benedict's, and Guigo II's experience of transformation when they did *lectio divina* and how those experiences echoed with the concept of TLT. The information in the literature review was organized, interpreted, and charted; prepared for comparison and analysis with that data collected from the learning activities surveys and interviews that were done with the *Sermon On The Mount Course*.

Procedure for Analyzing the Evidence Collected

In order to answer the first research question, the data collected in the pre-intervention LAS, which was designed by King, was analyzed; the researcher used the information from Items 1, 2, 3, and 5 from LAS. This collected data scored "each participant [on] a scale of one to three. This 'PT-Index' scale indicates whether learners

had a perspective transformation (meaning perspective) experience in relationship to their education, PT-Index = 3; or whether they... [had a meaning scheme transformation experience], PT-Index = 2; or whether they did not have [any]... transformation experience, PT-Index = 1” (King 15-16). Data collected from the survey was entered into the LAS_pt_prototype file published by IBM SPSS Statistics Data Editor (King 285). (The link for the IBM SPSS software from IBM is <http://www-03.ibm.com/software/products/en/spss-stats-gradpack>). Each response on LAS “has a variable code assigned to it as recorded in the Variables and Assignments List” (King 292-300). These variable codes are listed on pages 292 to 300 in King’s *Handbook of the Evolving Research of Transformative Learning*.

The result of the PT-Index score provided three “concise categories for representing the responses. The question, ‘How can adult educators identify perspective transformation?’ may be uniformly answered. The PT-Index is the foundation of the comparison between adult learners who have experienced [meaning] perspective transformation, [meaning scheme transformation,] and those who have not” (King 16).

Data collected for the second research question was gathered post-intervention by the same instrument but with only the revision on the title from pre- to post-. The analysis procedure was done the same way as for the second research question. Then the data collected from the first research question was compared with the data collected from the second research question.

At the end of this study, the data collected from the literature review was compared with surveys done on the first and second research questions; this “analyzing and comparing [of] the data allowed the development of a theoretical model” (Flick 94)

which was used to answer the third research question. The method used for this qualitative analysis was the “Constant Comparative Method” (Barney G. Glaser and Anselm L. Strauss 101-113) which echoed the qualitative research’s circular interlinking of empirical steps mentioned earlier.

This process of collecting and analyzing data was done in order to develop “theoretically relevant insights from a series of... studies and their comparison. Here theory was not a starting point, as there was no theory available at that time... [Rather,] theory was the end product of the research and it was developed out of empirical material and the analysis of this material” (Flick 94).

Reliability and Validity of Project Design

The validity of the qualitative research can be summarized “as a question of whether the researchers see what they think they see” (Flick 387). Mistakes could be made in three ways: “to see a relation, a principle, and so on where they are not correct... to reject them when they are indeed correct... and finally to ask the wrong question” (Flick 387). To avoid making the aforementioned mistakes, multiple methods were used to collect and analyze the data. Also, for interviews, the researcher repeated to the interviewee what she wrote down to confirm that the content was correct.

Several procedures were done to validate the instrument of transformative learning designed by King:

1. Pilot studies
2. A panel of experts critiqued the tool and made suggestions
3. Information was gathered by several means
4. “During the developmental stages, both LAS and follow-up interviews were matched by having respondents identify themselves by name.” (King 41-42)

The key for reliability in qualitative research offered by Flick is synchronic reliability which “is the consistency of results obtained at the same moment but by using different instruments” (Flick 385). Therefore, in order to increase the reliability of this research, the researcher had more than one way to collect data – survey, interview, and literature review. For analyzing the data, the researcher used different means as well – constant comparative method and scoring. The reliability of LAS is enhanced when “several individual evaluations are used to arrive at the final evaluation. ... Through the process of evaluating each of [the items in the instrument] separately and then developing a composite PT-Index determined, the reliability of the Learning Activities Survey are strengthened” (King 42).

Review of the Chapter

This chapter introduced the research design and procedures used to explore the conceptual compatibility between *lectio divina* and TLT. The research design utilized was triangulation of qualitative and quantitative research. The qualitative research method was mainly grounded theory. The quantitative research was the Learning Activities Survey and Interview designed by King. The process of the research was Glaser and Strauss’s model of qualitative research’s circular interlinking of empirical steps. Ethical considerations were also discussed.

CHAPTER 4

EVIDENCE FOR THE PROJECT

Introduction

Throughout the history of Christianity, the sanctification gap has always been a painful experience of born-again Christians, especially devout Christians. Professed Christians often make claims of biblical knowledge but fail to participate in means of grace or discipleship activities. The daunting chasm between stated beliefs and expressed behavior seems unbridgeable at times.

The purpose of this study was to explore how *lectio divina*, with its transformative learning pattern, helps Christians open to God's transformation, starting them on the journey of transformation which improves the sanctification gap and, therefore, shapes both belief and behavior. Additionally, the study included Mezirow's Transformative Learning Theory (TLT) for the purpose of better understanding *lectio divina*'s technique of learning which further proved the effectiveness of its transformative learning pattern.

Participants

Twenty Mandarin-speaking Chinese Christians who are residents of both Los Angeles and Orange Counties participated in this training in a Bible study setting. It was conducted every Saturday afternoon from 1pm to 5pm in an art studio. Altogether, four sessions were held over the course of four weekends. Twenty participants took the pre-intervention survey. One student dropped out of the class after taking the pre-intervention survey due to personal reasons. Nineteen took the post-intervention survey and participated in LAS follow-up interviews.

The nineteen students that participated in the research attended all four sessions. A 110-page study guide about the Sermon on the Mount, written by the researcher, was given to all participants. In addition to the teaching material, the study guide also contained questions to be reflected on and some blanks to be filled in with important theological concepts taught through the lecture. Overall, participants were very curious about what answers to fill in and they had to concentrate to listen for the answers. The teacher often challenged participants to suggest answers as a way to solicit their critical thoughts and reflections which often induced dialogues. This succeeded in breaking the traditional Chinese learning habit in which the teacher does all the talking and the students listen attentively and obediently, receiving whatever is given.

Research Question 1—Description of Evidence

Was there a transformation of participants' perspectives in relation to the Scripture reading prior to the experience of *lectio divina*? If there was such a transformation, what were the learning activities that contributed to that transformation?

The perspective transformation index (PT-Index) is “a single score derived from Items 1, 2, 3 and 5 of [the pre-intervention LAS]” (King 38) and from post-intervention LAS Follow-Up Interviews. The PT-Index indicates whether participants have experienced: transformation in meaning scheme (which is informative learning), transformation in meaning perspective (perspective transformation, which is transformative learning), or no transformation at all (King 38). Table 4.1 exhibits the number and percentage of participants who experienced transformative change through engagement with the text of the Sermon on the Mount before the intervention of *lectio divina*.

Table 4.1. Estimated perspective transformation index (PT-Index) and years since conversion cross-tabulation (N=20)

Years Since Conversion	Before Intervention						
	PT-Index is an indication of participants' perspective transformation estimated by the researcher's observation derived from Items 1, 2, 3 and 5 of the survey and LAS Follow-Up Interviews.			Participant's Own Observation Of Their Perspective Transformation			
				Item 2 P/T Yes/No (Transformative Learning)		Item 3 Describe Transformative Experience (Transformative Learning)	
	No *T	Yes **S/T (Informative Learning)	Yes ***P/T (Transformative Learning)	No P/T	Yes P/T (Transformative Learning)	Not Answered	Yes P/T (Transformative Learning)
	# %	# %	# %	# %	# %	# %	# %
1 year (4 people)	2 50%	2 50%	0 0%	2 50%	2 50%	2 50%	2 50%
2-3 year (2 people)	2 100%	0 0%	0 0%	2 100%	0 0%	2 100%	0 0%
4-6 year (4 people)	4 100%	0 0%	0 0%	3 75%	1 25%	3 75%	1 25%
7-15 year (6 people)	4 67%	2 33%	0 0%	2 33%	4 67%	2 33%	4 67%
16+ year (4 people)	4 100%	0 0%	0 0%	2 50%	2 50%	2 50%	2 50%
Total (20 people)	16 80%	4 20%	0 0%	11 55%	9 45%	11 55%	9 45%

P/T: Participants' Own Observation of transformation in meaning perspective

*T: Any Forms of Transformation

** S/T: Transformation in Meaning Scheme (Informative Learning)

***P/T: Transformation in Meaning Perspective (Transformative Learning) which includes transformation in meaning scheme (Informative Learning)

The left column of Table 4.1 indicates that, after reading the selected text from the Sermon on the Mount, none of the participants experienced perspective transformation (transformative learning, about context, process, and premises), 20 percent of the participants experienced a transformation in meaning scheme (informative learning, about context and process) and 80 percent of the participants experienced no kind of transformation whatsoever. This was the judgment made by the researcher. How did the researcher arrive at these decisions? The PT-Index is an indication of participants' perspective transformation estimated by the researcher's observations derived from Items

1, 2, 3 and 5 of the survey and LAS Follow-Up Interviews. Therefore, the process the researcher used to arrive at her decisions was as follows.

First of all, Table 4.2a shows where the participants were before intervention with reference to TLT's perspective transformation stage:

Table 4.2a. Percentages of each perspective transformation stage before intervention (N=20)

Perspective Transformation Stage (Item 1 of the survey)		No Transformative Experience		Yes Transformative Experience	
		#	%	#	%
PT-Index a	Disorienting Dilemma	0	—	20	100
PT-Index b		4	20	16	80
PT-Index c		15	75	5	25
PT-Index d		20	100	0	—
PT-Index e	Critical Reflection	20	100	0	—
PT-Index f		5	25	15	75
PT-Index g		0	—	0	—
PT-Index h	Discourse	0	—	0	—
PT-Index i		0	—	0	—
PT-Index j		0	—	0	—
PT-Index k		0	—	0	—
PT-Index l	Action	0	—	0	—

Table 4.2a exhibits the transformative stages that the twenty participants experienced while they were reading the selected text in the first class (pre-intervention). Derived from Item 1 of the survey, Table 4.2a shows that, with respect to the Disorienting Dilemma, twenty participants started to question the way they normally act, sixteen participants started questioning their social roles, and five participants realized that they no longer agree with their previous beliefs or role expectations (King 20-23). With regard to Critical Reflection, fifteen participants thought about acting in a different

way from their usual beliefs and roles. This was as far as their transformative experience went.

According to Table 4.1a, zero percent of participants experienced both Discourse and Action. The outcome of zero percent in Action was not a surprise, since no participant indicated on their survey that they had any experience with Discourse. Discourse is when one dialogues within himself about how to put a new concept into action or plans how to integrate it into his life. The outcome of this pre-intervention survey shows that no participants experienced any Discourse; therefore, zero percent Action was not surprising. In this case, there will be no Action when there is no Discourse regardless of how much more one reads or how much he knows. Table 4.2a paints a very clear picture of this for us.

Table 4.2b. Analysis of participants who had transformation experience before the intervention (N=20)

Participants who experienced transformative phases	Participants' Transformative Phases According to TLT (Item 1 on the Survey)											PT-Index is an indication of participants' perspective transformation estimated by the researcher's observation derived from Items 1, 2, 3 and 5 of the survey and LAS Follow-Up Interviews.				
	Disorienting Dilemma				Critical Reflection			Discourse				Action	No *T	Yes **S/T	Yes ***P/T	
	Phase Ia	Phase Ib	Phase Ic	Phase Id	Phase Ie	Phase If	Phase Ig	Phase Ih	Phase Ii	Phase Ij	Phase Ik	Phase Il				
A1	✓	✓				✓								✓		
A2	✓	✓												✓		
A3	✓	✓	✓			✓								✓		
A4	✓													✓		
A5	✓	✓												✓		
A6	✓	✓				✓								✓		
A7	✓	✓				✓								✓		
A8	✓	✓	✓			✓									✓	
A9	✓													✓		
A10	✓	✓												✓		
A11	✓	✓	✓			✓									✓	
A12	✓					✓								✓		
A13	✓	✓	✓			✓								✓		
A14	✓	✓				✓								✓		
A15	✓	✓				✓								✓		
A16	✓	✓				✓									✓	
A17	✓	✓	✓			✓									✓	
A18	✓	✓	✓			✓								✓		
A19	✓	✓	✓			✓								✓		
A20	✓		✓			✓								✓		

*T: Any Forms of Transformation

** S/T: Transformation in Meaning Scheme (Informative Learning)

***P/T: Transformation in Meaning Perspective (Transformative Learning) which includes Transformation in Meaning Scheme (Informative Learning)

Table 4.2b lists where each participant was in terms of TLT transformative stages for the purpose of providing more evidence of how the researcher arrived at her decision that no participant underwent a perspective transformation. One thing that stands out in Table 4.2b is the high frequency of Phase 1f which is, “I thought about acting in a different way from my usual beliefs and roles,” exhibiting that participants desired to live the selected text. According to Table 4.2a, 75 percent of participants answered “yes,” they did experience PT-Index f. This outcome tells us that mere *desire* doesn’t bring about change. Transformation only happens when one’s frame of reference is changed no matter how much he desires to change.

To substantiate this further, the researcher interviewed each of the nineteen participants (participant A9 dropped out) in the LAS Follow-up Interviews performed after participants filled out the post-intervention survey. One of the questions was about their first in-class experiences. It is from these interviews, coupled with Items 1, 2, 3 and 5 of the pre-intervention survey, that the researcher arrived at the conclusion that sixteen of the participants experienced no transformation at all. The content shared during the interviews of those sixteen participants could be summed up in two categories: (1) The selected text didn’t make sense to him/her ever in the past, nor presently at the time of taking the survey (participants A1, A2, A4, A5, A6, A10, A13, A14, A18, A19 and A20), or (2) Participants understood the text well already before reading, but were unable to live out the selected text (participants A3, A7, A12, A15). Clearly these sixteen participants did not experience a change of their frame of reference which is composed of “values, beliefs, opinions or expectations” (King 20-23) and which is essential for a perspective transformation.

There were four participants who experienced a transformation in meaning scheme (informative learning): A8, A11, A16 and A17. A8 and A11 experienced a sudden understanding of the text during the reading. A16 and A17 read the Sermon on the Mount for the first time ever in their lives and were very receptive to the new teachings of Jesus. During the interviews, A16 and A17 kept on saying that they loved the teachings of Jesus, and they would not question Jesus' teaching.

Further evidence of how the researcher arrived at her decision that no participants underwent a perspective transformation is one observation made in Table 4.1. This table shows that there is a chasm between participants' recognition of having experienced a perspective transformation, listed in the right column, and the researcher's observation that they did, in the left column, which was derived from Items 1, 2, 3, and 5 on the survey and post-intervention interviews.

For Item 2 of the survey, nine participants marked "yes" they did experience a perspective transformation and eleven participants marked "no." For Item 3 of the survey, participants were asked to explain their experiences of the transformation; again nine participants did explain and eleven participants simply left it blank. The researcher could not find any of the nine explanations to be sound when examined critically. In the answers, there was no indication of a change of assumptions or expectations regarding the selected text these participants chose at the first class; in other words, there was no change of frame of reference, something that is required for perspective transformation. Thus, it must be concluded that there were simply no participants who experienced perspective transformation. Apparently, those nine participants inadvertently confused the experience of agreement with the text with the experience of perspective

transformation. Most often, Christians with this paradigm are satisfied with where they currently are in their spiritual journey. They think they have arrived. This is also one of the reasons for the sanctification gap.

In order to answer Research Question 2 which searches for evidence of comparative change in relation to the Scripture reading before and after the experience of *lectio divina*, table 4.3 lists some of the learning activities that contributed to participants' transformation experiences.

Table 4.3. Learning activities which contributed to transformation (N=20)

Learning Activities Which Contributed to Transformation (Items 4 & 7 of the survey)	No		Yes	
	N	%	N	%
Class Teaching Content	20	100%	0	0%
Personal Journal Writing	20	100%	0	0%
Small Group Prayer	20	100%	0	0%
Reading Scripture in Class	20	100%	0	0%
Reflection on Scripture Verses	14	65%	6	35%
Personal Learning Assessment	20	100%	0	0%
Discussion Within Small Group	20	100%	0	0%
In-Class Student-Teacher Dialogue	20	100%	0	0%
Personal Reflection on Teachings in Class	20	100%	0	0%
Scripture Exposition in Class	20	100%	0	0%
Lectio (reading Scripture)	0	0%	20	100%
<i>Meditatio</i> (mediating on Scripture)	20	100%	0	0%
<i>Oratio</i> (praying Scripture)	20	100%	0	0%
<i>Contemplatio</i> (living Scripture)	20	100%	0	0%
Other Activities: Activities listed on Item 7 that are 'not on Item 4 (Other Person's Support)	20	100%	0	0%

Two of the possible learning activities contributed to participants' transformative experience: reflecting on Scripture verses and *lectio* (reading Scripture). Here the researcher assumed the broadest sense of the definition of *lectio* which includes both vocal and non-vocal reading. This assumption was conveyed to participants when they

took the pre-intervention survey.

Therefore, all participants marked on the survey that they engaged in *lectio* because all of them read the Bible right before the survey. Another learning activity was the reflection they did on the Scripture verses for which six participants marked “yes” on the survey. Since no teaching activities were involved yet, only personal reading habits were involved in this part of the survey.

These results led to another tabulation of the possible relationship between the learning activities and the transformation experience:

Table 4.4. Analysis of participants who had transformation experience before the intervention (N=20)

Participants who marked on the survey that they did movements of <i>lectio divina</i> before intervention of <i>lectio divina</i> was introduced.	Learning Activities That Contributed to Transformation (Listed on Items 4 and 7 of the survey)					PT-Index is an indication of participants' perspective transformation estimated by the researcher's observation derived from Items 1, 2, 3 and 5 of the survey and LAS Follow-Up Interviews		
	<i>Lectio Divina</i>				Reflecting on the Bible verses	No *T	Yes **S/T (Informative Learning)	Yes ***P/T (Transformative Learning)
	<i>Lectio</i> (reading the Bible)	<i>Meditatio</i> (meditating on the Bible)	<i>Oratio</i> (praying the Bible)	<i>Contemplatio</i> (living the Bible)				
A1	✓					✓		
A2	✓					✓		
A3	✓					✓		
A4	✓				✓	✓		
A5	✓				✓	✓		
A6	✓				✓	✓		
A7	✓				✓	✓		
A8	✓						✓	
A9	✓				✓	✓		
A10	✓					✓		
A11	✓						✓	
A12	✓					✓		
A13	✓					✓		
A14	✓					✓		
A15	✓					✓		
A16	✓						✓	
A17	✓						✓	
A18	✓				✓	✓		
A19	✓				✓	✓		
A20	✓					✓		

*T: Any Forms of Transformation

** S/T: Transformation in Meaning Scheme (Informative Learning)

***P/T: Transformation in Meaning Perspective (Transformative Learning) which includes Transformation in Meaning Scheme (Informative Learning)

Table 4.4 lists the two learning activities that participants marked on the survey and compared them with the researcher's estimated observations of S/T and P/T. There are a few notable observations to be made here. All participants read the Bible yet there

was no resulting transformation except in the cases of A8, A11, A16 and A17 for whom there was a transformation in meaning scheme (change of information/knowledge). This reveals that mere reading of and/or reflecting on Scripture did not guarantee understanding or transformation. There needed to be a response to that reading. In order for transformation to be possible, Scripture must be read with this purpose in mind – to live out the principles found in it; cf. Luke 10:26-28.

In the first class when the students read through the entire Sermon on the Mount within an hour and then completed the pre-intervention LAS immediately afterwards, there was no time for discourse and action. Therefore, there was no perspective transformation.

Research Question 2—Description of Evidence

What comparative changes occurred in relation to the Scripture reading after participation in *lectio divina*? If there was a perspective transformation, what were the learning activities that contributed to that transformation?

After the last session of the *Sermon* course, a post-intervention survey (Appendix B) was done in class using the same survey form used for the pre-intervention survey. Nineteen participants completed the survey, one participant (A9) having dropped out of the course due to personal reasons. Within a month of the post-intervention survey, Follow-up Interviews (Appendix C) were done to help the researcher and the participants understand the survey responses in more depth. The results of these interviews were used to answer Research Question 2.

Table 4.5. Estimated perspective transformation index (PT-Index) and years since conversion cross-tabulation (N=19)

Years Since Conversion	After Intervention							
	PT-Index is an indication of participants' perspective transformation estimated by the researcher's observation derived from Items 1, 2, 3 and 5 of the survey and LAS Follow-Up Interviews			Participant's Own Observation Of Their Perspective Transformation				
				Item 2 P/T Yes/No (Transformative Learning)		Item 3 Describe Transformative Experience (Transformative Learning)		
	No *T	Yes **S/T (Informative Learning)	Yes ***P/T (Transformative Learning)	No P/T	Yes P/T (Transformative Learning)	Not Answered	Yes P/T w/ Education (Transformative)	Yes P/T w/o Education (Transformative)
	# %	# %	# %	# %	# %	# %	# %	# %
1 year (3 people)	0 0%	3 100%	0 0%	0 0%	3 100%	2 67%	1 33%	0 0%
2-3 year (2 people)	1 50%	1 50%	0 0%	0 0%	2 100%	2 100%	0 0%	0 0%
4-6 year (4 people)	0 0%	4 100%	2 50%	0 0%	4 100%	0 0%	4 100%	0 0%
7-15 year (6 people)	1 17%	5 83%	5 83%	0 0%	6 100%	1 17%	4 66%	1 17%
16+ year (4 people)	1 25%	3 75%	2 50%	0 0%	4 100%	0 0%	3 75%	1 25%
Total (19 people)	3 16%	16 84%	9 47%	0 0%	19 100%	5 26%	12 63%	2 11%

P/T: Participants' Own Observation of transformation in Meaning Perspective

*T: Any Forms of Transformation

** S/T: Transformation in Meaning Scheme (Informative Learning)

***P/T: Transformation in Meaning Perspective (Transformative Learning) which includes Transformation in Meaning Scheme (Informative Learning)

The PT-Index shows that after the intervention, sixteen out of the nineteen participants (84 percent) underwent a transformation in meaning scheme (Informative Learning), and nine of these sixteen participants (47 percent of the total group) experienced a transformation in meaning perspective (Transformative Learning). That means nine out of sixteen (47 percent of all participants) who had prior knowledge of the Scripture went through a perspective transformation and the other 53 percent, seven out

of the sixteen, don't live out what they know. This may account for the sanctification gap: the chasm between one's knowledge of the faith and one's life. This idea will be explored more later. The ratio of perspective transformation experiences to number of participants before intervention, which was zero percent, changed to 47 percent after intervention. What caused this change will be analyzed by looking at learning activities later.

Participants in the survey indicated in Item 2 whether or not they experienced a perspective transformation, and in Item 3 they indicated whether or not this was due to learning activities (education). The percentage for Item 2 was 100 percent, indicating that all participants thought they underwent a perspective transformation. Responses to Item 3 show that 26 percent did not give any description of that transformation, 53 percent indicated that the change was due to education, and 21 percent indicated that the change was caused by something other than education. Upon further inspection of the interview notes of the six participants who did not put down any description of their transformation experience (A1, A11, A15, A16, A17), only A11 indicated that his/her lack of response was because there wasn't enough time to answer the question; he/she went on to verbally disclose the experience which proved the existence of his/her perspective transformation. However, all the rest couldn't pinpoint any exact transformation experience that happened, hence the blank.

The transformative experiences described by participants in Item 3 of the survey were grouped into two groups: educational (63 percent, twelve out of nineteen participants) and non-educational (11 percent, two out of nineteen participants). The two participants indicating non-educational experiences were A7 and A10. Table 4.10 shows

that A7 only did one learning activity, but on Table 4.9 he/she indicated that he/she experienced all the transformative phases when engaging with the selected text. Thus it is unclear which set of indications A7 experienced. However, a review of A7's post-intervention interview record reveals that he/she had experiences of both failure and success of action: sometimes he/she could pull through and succeed in living the text, but at times he/she would fail badly. When A7 was asked if he/she knew the reason for this, he/she blurted out with tears streaming down his/her face, "I just couldn't pray anymore. And I don't think I believe the selected text any more." Thus, it seems that A7 experienced no transformation from his/her encounter with the selected text at all or at the least the researcher can say that A7 had transformation, but it was not a positive transformation. This outcome seems to be related to Research Question 3. Although TLT can help to explain the movements of *lectio divina*, it cannot take the place of *lectio divina* in being spiritually transformative. One can go through the motions of Disorienting Dilemma, Critical Reflection, Discourse, and Action, but without the work of the Holy Spirit there is no spiritual transformation pleasing to the Lord.

A10's case was much simpler. Not only did A10 not experience any learning activities, but he/she also did not complete the TLT phases. Therefore, it is clear why there was no transformation for A10.

If these post-intervention results are compared with the pre-intervention results of Table 4.1, the apparent improvement in the PT-Index is 47 percent rather than zero percent. This is due to participants' engagement with learning activities (which will be analyzed in Tables 4.7, 4.8, 4.9 and 4.10), rather than the mere reading of Scripture.

Having read something is not equivalent to knowing it, and knowing something is not equivalent to being transformed by it.

One other interesting point worth noting: When Table 4.1 is compared with Table 4.5, it is obvious that the PT-Index provided by participants in Item 2 makes a big jump from 45 percent to 100 percent. This 100 percent indicates that after the learning intervention, *all* of the participants believed that they had experienced a perspective transformation. As a matter of fact, according to the PT-Index estimated by the researcher, the perspective transformation after intervention was 47 percent rather than 100 percent. According to Table 4.5, after the learning intervention, there was a big increase in transformation of meaning scheme from 20 percent pre-intervention to 84 percent post-intervention. One would think that since there was teaching involved, a learner would know better if he/she had perspective transformation or not. Again, an increase in knowledge leads almost all Christians to think they are better or more devout than before, hence their sense that they have become a more mature Christian even though the knowledge didn't transform their lives. Sadly, the motto that knowledge is power is silently chanting inside the minds of those who think knowledge equals transformation. No wonder there is a sanctification gap.

There does not seem to be much relationship between years-since-conversion and transformation in meaning scheme (informative learning); on the contrary, it seems quite random. However, perspective transformation (transformative learning) seems to be related to years-since-conversion: according to Table 4.5, of those who converted more than four years ago, over 50 percent of them had perspective transformation; meanwhile,

for those who converted three years ago or less, zero percent had perspective transformation.

Table 4.6. Percentages of each perspective transformation stage after intervention (N=19)

Perspective Transformation Stage (Item 1 of the survey)		No Transformative Experience		Yes Transformative Experience	
		#	%	#	%
PT-Index a	Disorienting Dilemma	2	11	17	89
PT-Index b		0	—	19	100
PT-Index c		1	5	18	95
PT-Index d		16	84	3	16
PT-Index e	Critical Reflection	18	95	1	5
PT-Index f		0	—	19	100
PT-Index g		15	79	4	21
PT-Index h	Discourse	4	21	15	79
PT-Index i		6	32	13	68
PT-Index j		7	37	12	63
PT-Index k		8	42	11	58
PT-Index l	Action	8	42	11	58

Table 4.6 (post-intervention) shows that eleven participants indicated in their post-intervention surveys that they took action (PT-Index l). According to TLT, when a person takes action, he should experience perspective transformation. Therefore, there should be eleven participants who had perspective transformation. On Table 4.5, there were only nine participants who had perspective transformation. The apparent discrepancy lies in the fact that the data collected for Table 4.6 was participants' own observation about themselves, whereas the data on the left-hand column of Table 4.7 was the researcher's estimation based on Items 1, 2, 3 and 5 of LAS and follow-up interviews.

It is amazing that 100 percent of the participants indicated in the post-intervention survey that they “thought about acting in a different way from their usual beliefs and roles” (King 20-23). This shows that the desire to live what they know is strong in all of the participants. As a matter of fact, during the post-intervention interview, participants confirmed this fact.

Table 4.7. Did learning activities contribute to the transformation? (N=19)

Learning Activities Influenced the Change (Item 4 of the survey)	n	%
No	2	10
Yes	17	90
Total	19	100

Ninety percent of participants indicated on the survey that the learning activities in the course aided their transformation. During the post-intervention interview, the majority of participants expressed that the learning activities in this course helped open their hearts to change. This will be elaborated on more hereafter.

Table 4.8. Learning activities that contributed to the transformation (N=19)

Learning Activities That Influenced the Change (Item 4 & 7 of the survey)	No		Yes	
	N	%	N	%
Class Teaching Content	4	21%	15	79%
Personal Journal Writing	19	100%	0	0%
Small Group Prayer	17	90%	2	10%
Reading Scripture in Class	12	63%	7	37%
Reflecting on Scripture Verses	11	58%	8	42%
Personal Learning Assessment	15	79%	4	21%
Discussion Within Small Group	13	68%	6	32%
In-Class Student-Teacher Dialogue	10	53%	9	47%
Personal Reflection On Scripture Exposition in Class	9	47%	10	53%
Scripture Exposition in Class	7	37%	12	63%
<i>Lectio</i> (reading Scripture)	10	53%	9	47%
<i>Meditatio</i> (mediating on Scripture)	5	26%	14	74%
<i>Oratio</i> (praying Scripture)	10	53%	9	47%
<i>Contemplatio</i> (living Scripture)	11	58%	8	42%
Other Activities: Activities listed on Item 7 that are not on Item 4	9	47%	10	53%

Participants indicated on Items 4 and 7 of the post-intervention survey those activities that contributed to their transformation. With both the intervention of learning activities that involved the exposition of Bible verses and the exercise of *lectio divina*, learning became active. The high percentage of positive response regarding the impact on transformation of “Class Teaching Content,” 79 percent, and “Scripture Exposition in Class,” 63 percent, is not a surprising outcome since most Northern American Chinese love to listen to Bible exposition more than to the mere sharing of insights without strong hermeneutic support. Table 4.10 shows that out of the nine participants who had perspective transformation experiences, eight of them, which is 89 percent, marked that the in-class exposition of Scripture was a learning activity which contributed to their transformative experience. The post-intervention interviews with those who had

perspective transformation confirmed that the careful exposition of Scripture helped them become convinced of the truth and encouraged them to act accordingly.

“*Lectio divina*” comes in second in popularity is a surprise because this spiritual discipline is clouded in mysticism and most Chinese Christians shy away from association with it. When this practice was introduced to the class, it was not clear whether the participants would accept or reject it. However, as it turned out, the practice was accepted by around 50 percent of the participants and they were willing to practice it. During the post-intervention interviews, some participants shared that although they were not totally sure if they had done the spiritual discipline correctly (despite the process being explained to them both during class and over the phone when requested), still those four phases indeed helped to deepen their learning of the Bible in terms of getting those truths into their hearts and involving their cognition, emotion, and conation.

“In-Class Student-Teacher Dialogue” was influential in the transformation of 53 percent of participants, and “Discussion Within a Small Group” was influential in the transformation of 32 percent of participants. This suggests that dialogue/discourse should not only be done with oneself but also in connection with others, as TLT includes both rational and relational discourse. In a way, the *oratio* in *lectio divina*, as a dialogue between the self and God, is similar to the classroom activities of dialogue between teacher and student and amongst the students. All these things helped participants to learn and to approach transformation. The same analogy can be used regarding the learning activities of “Reflecting on Scripture Verses” (influential for 37 percent of participants) and “Personal Reflection about Scripture Exposition in Class” (influential for 53 percent).

Reflection plays a very important role in transformation since all reflection is critical no matter whether the reflection is on content, process, or premise.

Looking further, all these learning activities are in sync with *lectio divina* even though they have different names. For example: “Reading Scripture in Class” and *lectio*. One is done publicly and the other can be done either publicly or privately. All the learning activities which make a significant contribution to the transformation of the participants are either helpful or are actually a part of the *lectio divina* approach to the Bible.

Research Question 3—Description of Evidence

How did TLT help clarify the perspective transformation movements of *lectio divina* as they relate to the purpose of Christian spiritual formation?

Theoretically, this research sought to explore the same working elements for both the four circling movements of *lectio divina* (*lectio, meditatio, oratio, contemplatio*) and the four circling stages of TLT (disorienting experiences, critical reflection, discourse, action). The main thrust of this study was to explore the dynamics of transformative change for each approach, how they are compatible with each other, and how the circling stages of TLT actually help to explain the circling movements of *lectio divina*.

This required a review of a previously performed analysis of the learning activities which contributed to participants’ transformation which meant more quantitative research. Then, further qualitative research had to be done, reexamining the literature review in Chapter Two to support the outcome of the case and establish the theory.

To learn more about how the learning activities contributed to the transformation of each participant, another tabulation was done, Table 4.10. Those activities which have higher ratios are further elaborated on for each participant in the left-hand column of Table 4.10. In order to understand Table 4.10, Table 4.9 is necessary because it lists all the transformative phases for all participants. As a matter of fact, during the process of understanding how the learning activities contributed to the transformation of any one participant—and each individual participant is somewhat representative of other participants in the same scenario—Research Question 3 was also answered; namely, how TLT helps in understanding the perspective transformation movements of *lectio divina*.

Table 4.9. Analysis of participants who underwent a transformation experience after the intervention (N=19)

Participants who experienced transformative phases	Participants' Transformative Phases According to TLT (Item 1 on the Survey)												PT-Index is an indication of participants' perspective transformation estimated by the researcher's observation derived from Items 1, 2, 3 and 5 of the survey and LAS Follow-Up Interviews.		
	Disorienting Dilemma				Critical Reflection			Discourse				Action			
	Phase Ia	Phase Ib	Phase Ic	Phase Id	Phase Ie	Phase If	Phase Ig	Phase Ih	Phase Ii	Phase Ij	Phase Ik	Phase Il	No *T	Yes **S/T	Yes ***P/T
A1		✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓					✓		
A2	✓	✓	✓			✓	✓							✓	
A3	✓	✓	✓			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓
A4	✓	✓	✓			✓			✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓
A5	✓	✓				✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓
A6	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓		✓	✓			✓		✓	✓
A7	✓	✓	✓			✓		✓		✓		✓	✓		
A8	✓	✓	✓			✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓
A10		✓	✓			✓			✓		✓		✓		
A11	✓	✓	✓			✓		✓	✓	✓		✓		✓	✓
A12	✓	✓	✓			✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓
A13	✓	✓	✓			✓	✓	✓						✓	
A14	✓	✓	✓			✓		✓	✓	✓	✓			✓	
A15	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓		✓	✓	✓	✓			✓	
A16	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓		✓						✓	
A17	✓	✓	✓			✓								✓	
A18	✓	✓	✓			✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓
A19	✓	✓	✓			✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓
A20	✓	✓	✓			✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	

*T: Any Forms of Transformation

** S/T: Transformation in Meaning Scheme (Informative Learning)

***P/T: Transformation in Meaning Perspective (Transformative Learning) which includes Transformation in Meaning Scheme (Informative Learning)

The tabulation in the left-hand column of Table 4.9 helps to explain the right-hand column of Table 4.9 and 4.10. This table will be analyzed together with Table 4.10.

Table 4.10. Analysis of participants who had transformation experience after the intervention (N=19)

Participants who marked on the survey about their learning activities	The Learning Activities Contributed to the Transformation (Listed on Item 4 and 7 of the survey)										PT-Index is an indication of participants' perspective transformation estimated by the researcher's observation derived from Items 1, 2, 3 and 5 of the survey and LAS Follow-Up Interviews (TLT)			
	<i>Lectio Divina</i>				T E A C H I N G C O N T E N T	C L A S S I B L E R E A D I N G	R E F L E C T I O N B I B L E	G R O U P D I S C U S I O N	D I A L O G U E O T H E R S	R E F L E C T I O N T E A C H I N G	B I B L E E X P O S I T I O N	No *T	Yes **S/T	Yes ***P/T
	<i>Lectio</i> (We read the Bible)	<i>Meditatio</i> (We meditate the Bible)	<i>Oratio</i> (We pray the Bible)	<i>Contemplatio</i> (We live the Bible)										
A1		✓			✓		✓	✓	✓		✓	✓		
A2		✓			✓		✓		✓		✓		✓	
A3	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓	✓			✓	✓
A4	✓		✓	✓	✓		✓	✓		✓	✓		✓	✓
A5	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓
A6	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓	✓				✓	✓
A7		✓										✓	✓	
A8	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓				✓	✓		✓	✓
A10												✓	✓	
A11	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓
A12		✓			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓
A13		✓				✓			✓	✓			✓	
A14		✓			✓						✓		✓	
A15						✓				✓	✓		✓	
A16			✓		✓								✓	
A17					✓						✓		✓	
A18	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓		✓	✓	✓		✓	✓
A19	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓	✓		✓	✓
A20	✓	✓			✓								✓	

*T: Any Forms of Transformation

** S/T: Transformation in Meaning Scheme (Informative Learning)

***P/T: Transformation in Meaning Perspective (Transformative Learning) which includes transformation in meaning scheme (Informative Learning)

The column on the left was derived independently from the column on the right. The column on the left was derived from Items 4 and 7 of the survey done by participants. The column on the right was derived mainly from Items 1, 2, 3, and 5 on the survey and the post-intervention interview; the index was derived by the researcher according to participants' input. Additionally, the researcher selected some participants for whom to analyze some important points manifest through the two tables.

In the post-intervention survey, A1 indicated that he/she was in the process of transformation phase 1h which is to “try out new roles so that he/she would become comfortable or confident in them.” A1 was struggling, having a conversation inside of his/her mind. This is confirmed in Table 4.9, indicating that A1 was in Phase 1h which belongs to the Discourse stage. During the post-intervention interview, A1 told the researcher that he/she still could not accept the teaching of the text that he/she selected from the *Sermon on the Mount*. A1 told the researcher that he/she believes that the Bible is the truth and cannot be altered, but he/she couldn't force him/herself to accept this specific concept. Therefore, A1 did not experience any transformation from encountering the selected text, not even a transformation in meaning scheme (Informative Learning). Table 4.10 reveals that none of the learning activities A1 undertook were active: only *meditatio* was engaged in with few other activities. The left-hand column of Table 4.9 lists the four phases of TLT which help to explain the left-hand column of Table 4.10 which lists mainly the four phases of *lectio divina*. Table 4.10 indicates that A1 did not engage in *contemplatio* at all (a fact which A1 indicated in the survey), and Table 4.9 shows that A1 did not take “action” at all (which A1 also indicated in the survey). There was no consummating activity of the *contemplatio* phase of *lectio divina* and no

consummating activity of the “action” phase of TLT. Therefore, there was “no perspective transformation” for A1.

The next participant to be analyzed was A11, who could be labeled a model student among this group of participants. A11 indicated on Item 4 of the survey that he/she engaged in all the movements of *lectio divina* and also indicated that he/she participated in all of the in-class activities except the class reading of the Scripture which could be compensated for by *lectio*. In Item 1, A11 went so far as to mark answer 11, “I took action and adopted these new ways of acting” (King 20-23). During the post-intervention survey, he/she was very enthusiastic about the change. All this can be found in Table 4.9 and 4.10. When we put Table 4.9 and Table 4.10 next to each other, it is obvious that the TLT phases on the left-hand column of Table 4.9 unmistakably spell out and explain the learning activities connected to this change, mainly *lectio divina*, on the left-hand column of Table 4.10.

Moving on to participant A12, Table 4.10 demonstrates that he/she undertook only the *meditatio* phase of *lectio divina* but all the learning activities. In Table 4.9, A12 indicates that he/she experienced all the transformative phases. During the interview, he/she was asked if he/she really experienced perspective transformation from the selected text, and why he/she didn’t do the *lectio divina*. A12 indicated that he/she felt that *meditatio* and all the other learning activities had helped him/her to live out the selected text already; there was no need for him/her to go through the other disciplines. A12 told the researcher, “I did understand the text before I came to the class, but the only problem was that I couldn’t live it. Through this month, I made up my mind that I desired to live the text. And I prayed and reflected often. And somehow it happened – my

perspective is different now and the action isn't that hard for me anymore. I feel so free.” The researcher told A12 that although he/she did not consciously engage in *lectio divina*, he/she was effectively doing it. (This will be elaborated on in Chapter Five.) It was the essence of *lectio divina* that A12 executed more than the form. This corresponds with the fact that, in the Old Testament, the Hebrew word for *meditatio* includes all four of the movements of *lectio divina*; there is no distinction between the disciplines. A12 clearly experienced perspective transformation; TLT helped confirm it.

Much more could be said using this case to prove that TLT can help in understanding the perspective transformation movements of *lectio divina*. Through these processes, the researcher developed theoretically relevant insights about the aforementioned premise. The purpose of all this “analyzing and comparing [of] the data” (Flick 94) was to allow us to develop a theory by which TLT can help explain the learning experiences of *lectio divina*. At this moment, the researcher would like to further strengthen this theory using a qualitative research method, to reiterate the important points of the literature review in Chapter Two regarding the ways in which the perspective transformation movement of *lectio divina* is instrumental for Christian spiritual transformation and how TLT helps to explain these phenomena.

Even though Christians are no longer ruled by sin, there are continuous struggles in putting off the old person. Clearly, the Ephesians 4 ideas of putting off the old self, renewing the mind, and putting on the new self, all have to do with the Word of God. *Lectio divina* is a discipline that opens the person to God for transformation; transformation takes places when he/she reads the Word and lets God be the god in his/her life. It may be difficult to forget one's past, his/her worldviews, culture, and

influences from his/her primary caregiver which are “either within or outside of [his/her] awareness” (Mezirow, *Learning as Transformation* 16). Persevering in practicing *lectio divina* will open the door for him/her to depend upon God to replace the deceitful desires of the old self with His words for His words to form him/her in righteousness and holiness (Ephesians 4). When this happens, a person’s frame of reference – the structure of his/her assumptions and expectations – changes and his/her perspective is transformed.

How is the Disorienting Dilemma helpful in understanding *lectio*? In the early stages of *lectio divina* history, people only encountered the Scripture through listening. Monks recited Scripture constantly so that there would be a continual presence of the Word in their hearts (Douglas Burton-Christie 117). They believed it would help them in their engagement in spiritual warfare, in bringing comfort to their souls, in gaining biblical knowledge, in avoiding temptation, and in encouraging others. Later on, Guigo defined reading (*lectio*) as “the careful study of Scripture, concentrating all one’s power on it” (Guigo 68). In whatever way *lectio* is practiced, most readers must have those experiences grouped by Mezirow under the heading Disorienting Dilemma. When one reads the Bible, its teachings are often counter-cultural, i.e. the Sermon on the Mount. This is when the deceitful desires of one’s old self are challenged. This is when his/her usual perspective is put off-balance. He/she will probably experience unpleasant emotions or even become anxious. The serious reader might start to engage in “self-examination with feelings of fear, anger, guilt or shame” (Mezirow, *Transformative Dimensions* 22). All these are aspects of the Disorienting Dilemma which helps explain what happens when one reads the Bible (*lectio*).

Critical Reflection can help in understanding *meditatio*. In the early history of *lectio divina*, reciting Scripture and meditating on Scripture were often interchangeable. Oftentimes, monks recited when they meditated. This usually involved saying Scripture verses and mulling those verses over in their minds. Later in history, Guigo gave *meditatio* a clear definition: “the busy application of the mind to seek with the help of one’s own reason for knowledge of hidden truth” (Guigo 68). Or, as Saucy puts it, “meditation means to think, to think to yourself, even to talk to yourself, or sing, about some concept until it gets into your inner being and your behavior” (Saucy Kindle Location 3310). Whatever one meditates on long enough, becomes “part of [his] life; ... [and] embedded in [his] mind” (Saucy Kindle Location 3321). All these types of reflection are what TLT would categorize under the heading of Critical Reflection, and it is the “process of doubting, validating, and interpreting, based on assumptions and new knowledge gained via experience” (Kang 18). According to TLT, reflection can focus on the content, process, or premise of the problem. It is through premise reflection that we “see through the habitual way that we have interpreted the experience of everyday life in order to reassess rationally, [intuitively, empathically and spiritually] the implicit claim of validity made by a previous unquestioned meaning scheme or perspective” (Mezirow, *Transformative Dimensions* 102). This should happen when one meditates on Scripture; when done often enough, the old habits of one’s old self in his memory, which he often takes for granted and never questions, will be replaced by the new premises in Scripture. We need this kind of subjective reframing, this critical self-reflection of the assumptions and expectations of our life, so that by the help of the Spirit our perspectives can be transformed (Mezirow, *Learning* 23).

Discourse can help in understanding *oratio*. In the early history of *lectio divina*, *oratio* was not distinguishable from *meditatio*. Later on, Guigo defined it as “the heart’s devoted turning to God” (Guigo 68), a prayer concerned with one’s desires. According to TLT, the ideal conditions of Discourse/Dialogue are “really talking, in which emphasis is placed on active listening, domination is absent, reciprocity and cooperation are prominent, and judgment is withheld until one empathically understands another’s point of view. . . . Discourse is the process in which we have an active dialogue with others to better understand the meaning of an experience” (Mezirow, *Transformative Dimensions* 14). This beautifully describes what prayer is about, painting a picture of a dialogue between God and the psalmist. Through prayer, the psalmist is planning courses of action or trying out new roles which paves the way to Action.

Action can help in understanding *contemplatio*. Richard Baxter claimed that contemplative devotion “opens the door between the head and the heart” (Baxter and Wilkinson 429). There are two types of contemplation: one means to live the text that is read (*lectio*), meditated on (*meditatio*), and prayed (*oratio*), in everyday life. The other is a posture of waiting before God. Both of these types of contemplation are necessary for all movements of *lectio divina*. This is how monks in the early history of *lectio divina* practiced it. The *lectio divina* practiced then was unstructured, it was not compartmentalized. Monastic *lectio divina* emphasized the contemplative movement, but this movement started at the beginning of *lectio*. For monastic readers, the whole practice of *lectio divina* was contemplative. Therefore, there was no point in mentioning it as a special movement. For the desert monks, *contemplatio* is the necessary mode for *lectio*, *meditatio*, and *oratio*. The Rule of St. Benedict (RB) explains *contemplatio* as having a

“steady vision of those realities presented by Scripture,” but the development of the RB was not in existence till around the year 540 AD. Therefore, it seems that the most biblical *lectio* discipline would be the one practiced during the era of the early desert Fathers. This point is further clarified under the heading of Biblical Foundations for *Lectio Divina*.

According to the aforementioned analysis, the entire process of *lectio divina* is contemplative, and that means that all of *lectio divina* should be done with Action in mind, starting with *lectio*. In terms of TLT, this means starting at Disorienting Dilemma. The journey of transformation involves a transformation of frame of reference/meaning perspective which often starts with responding to one’s Disorienting Dilemma through “a three-part process: critical reflection on one’s assumptions, discourse to validate the critically reflective insight, and action” (Mezirow, “Transformation Theory Out of Context,” 60).

There is one last point that TLT can help explain regarding the movements of *lectio divina* and that is that “the process of perspective transformation [is] more recursive, evolving, and spiraling in nature (Coffman, 1989; Elias, 1993; Holt, 1994; Laswell, 1994; Neuman, 1996; Saavedra, 1995; Taylor, 1994)” (Mezirow, *Learning* 290). The movements of monastic *lectio divina* were also recursive, evolving, and spiraling in nature; the *lectio* they practiced was unstructured. This point is discussed in the literature review of Chapter Two.

Summary of Major Findings

Throughout the process of both qualitative and quantitative research, several major findings emerged. They are listed here in summary form and will be further

elaborated on and discussed in the next chapter.

1. Commitment to biblical exposition of Scripture should be part of *lectio divina* for truly transformative *lectio divina*.

2. Examining *lectio divina* through the lens of TLT reveals that its practice opens the door for Christians to depend upon God to release them from the trap of common misconceptions and habitual ways of learning Scripture.

3. There are two significant effects of the ongoing momentum of learning activities inherent in both *lectio divina* and TLT; namely, first, the non-dichotomization of theology and spirituality, and second, the recursive, evolving, spiraling movements lead the reader to be open with and dependent on God.

CHAPTER 5

LEARNING REPORT FOR THE PROJECT

Overview of the Chapter

It has always puzzled the researcher that Christians can know so much about the Bible yet still sin. Research in this area, especially that of Richard Lovelace, suggests that there is a sanctification gap – a gap between the way one knows he should live and the way he actually lives (Lovelace 363-369). To close the sanctification gap is one of the most pressing pursuits for many believers. It is recognized that Scripture reading is important for forming Christians to be like Christ. It is also true that “reading Scripture must begin with a deep commitment to growing in the knowledge of biblical information, but information by itself is never enough to form healthy disciples of Jesus Christ. True and lasting transformation of lives comes only through a formative engagement” (Schwanda and Wilhoit 3).

The purpose of this study was to explore how *lectio divina* with its transformative learning pattern helps Christians open to God’s transformation, setting them on the journey of transformation which improves the sanctification gap and, therefore, shapes both belief and behavior. Additionally, the study included Mezirow’s Transformative Learning Theory (TLT) for the purpose of better understanding *lectio divina*’s technique of learning which will further prove the effectiveness of the transformative learning pattern of *lectio divina*.

Major Findings

Commitment to biblical exposition of Scripture should be part of *lectio divina* for truly transformative *lectio divina*

Christians know all too well that Scripture reading forms Christians and, therefore, is important. Hence, the cause for the gap between what Scripture teaches and the way Christians live most likely lies in the way that Christians read Scripture. Therefore, the researcher ventured to look into *lectio divina*, Latin for divine reading, hoping to understand better how it influences life.

One of the reasons for evangelicals' avoidance of the practice of *lectio divina* is the impression that whenever it is practiced, there is a tendency to “undermine the importance of intentional study and exegetical wrestling with the biblical text” (Schwanda and Wilhoit 4). Most Evangelicals misunderstand *lectio divina* to be a mystical practice only suitable for monks and nuns. However, in-depth research into the biblical foundations and history of *lectio divina* confirms that this is certainly not true. Therefore, this research included in its intervention a detailed expository teaching of Scripture when *lectio divina* was introduced to the study participants. Here is the outcome of the intervention.

Twenty Chinese Christians participated in the research coming from various churches in the greater metropolitan area of Los Angeles including Orange County. The course was on the Sermon on the Mount, and it spanned four weekends. Before the intervention was introduced, the pre-intervention survey was done on the first day of class.

The pre-intervention survey shows that although 75 percent of participants expressed their desire to change their lives in accordance with the text yet there was no perspective transformation at all. This could be due to the hastened reading in class. It could also be the case that mere reading does not guarantee transformation. These participants expressed during their interviews that the Sermon on the Mount is difficult to live out. It is difficult to love one's enemy. It is difficult to turn the other cheek and walk the second mile.

One participant even made a comment during class break to other students, "Who are you kidding? Turn the other cheek! No I wouldn't hit back, but I would not even let that person touch my face to start with. No way would I be ready for the second slap." Many of them expressed that the teaching is not current and it just doesn't make sense. Another person said, "I wouldn't teach this to my kid. It is just unbearable to think of my kid getting slapped in the face."

After the first class, *lectio divina* was introduced and the study guide was handed out. During the intervention, when the researcher was carefully expositing the verses, many participants nodded their heads. One participant commented that, having being a Christian for so many years, he/she was only now starting to understand what being "poor in spirit" is about. That person said, "No wonder I've struggled with the rest of the teachings. How I wish I had heard this years ago! Much heartbreak would have been avoided."

During the first two weeks, participants were enthusiastic about the study of the Sermon on the Mount but *lectio divina* was not received well. Participants were in the fog of practicing something unfamiliar. They repeatedly asked how to execute it, and some

participants avoided it totally. There was no intention to force the spiritual discipline on them; rather, the researcher only reminded them to do the discipline and explicated the Scripture as carefully as possible to help them prepare their hearts for *lectio divina*.

The post-intervention survey indicated that perspective transformation went from zero to 47 percent. According to Table 4.10, of the nine participants who experienced perspective transformation, seven of them (89 percent) indicated that the researcher's careful exposition of Scripture contributed to their transformation experience. All of the nine participants who experienced perspective transformation (100 percent) indicated that their transformation had something to do with *lectio divina*. The researcher had to conclude, then, that careful exposition as part of the *lectio divina* was really required for truly transformative *lectio divina*.

As the literature review in Chapter Two suggests, the desert fathers, who practiced *lectio divina* faithfully, understood that interpreting Scripture correctly and ruminating on it was a “means to transformation and holiness... and [a journey] to embark upon a deeply personal drama that the monks referred to as the quest for purity of heart” (Burton-Christie 299). *Lectio divina* was, “for them, a disciplined hermeneutic not only for developing a theology or a prayerful spirituality, but it was a way of life” (Van Dyk 2). Transformation and holiness for them were the result of allowing the Scripture to “strip away the accumulated layers of self-deception, self-hatred, fear, and insecurity that were exposed in the desert solitude and in the tension of human interaction” (Burton-Christie 299). For them, correct understanding of Scripture was a built-in mechanism in the learning activities of *lectio divina*, but this runs contrary to the approach of most

contemporary practitioners of *lectio divina*. They skipped the scholarly exegesis and criticism, deeming them unnecessary.

Lectio divina answers a question that Jesus asked: “What is written in the Law? How do you read it?” (Luke 10:26 ESV). The context of this verse was that Jesus asked the lawyer to interpret the “‘great commandment,’ a combination of Deut. 6:5 and Lev. 19:18” (Bock, *Luke* 1024). When the lawyer answered it correctly, Jesus answered, “...do this, and you will live” (Luke 10:28 ESV). Correctly interpreting Scripture is a must for truly transformative *lectio divina*, making it possible for *contemplatio* (living the text) to be done based in truth. Further confirmation of this finding can also be taken from one of the results of the literature review in this study on *contemplatio*: The Greek equivalent of *contemplatio* is θεωρία which “retains the important sense of ‘study of the Scriptures’” (Cross and Livingstone 412).

Examining *lectio divina* through the lens of TLT revealed that its practice opens the door for Christians to depend upon God to release them from the trap of common misconceptions and habitual ways of learning Scripture

After reading the whole Sermon on the Mount, all the participants completed LAS regarding the learning experiences that they had during the first class. Table 4.1 exhibits the results: 45 percent of participants thought they had perspective transformation, when in fact none of them did.

One month later, after the nineteen participants listened to all the in-class teaching on exegesis and criticism, and some of them practiced *lectio divina*, they did the survey again and were interviewed by the researcher. This survey was tabulated and Table 4.5 exhibits that 100 percent of the participants thought that they experienced perspective

transformation when in fact only 47 percent of the participants experienced perspective transformation. In both situations, participants overestimated their spiritual condition. The good news was that the percentage of participants' experience of both informative learning and transformative learning after the intervention of learning activities were on the rise.

What caused those participants to overestimate their spiritual condition? Two things: misconception of what transformation is really about and habitual ways of reading and learning Scripture. In the beginning, when the participants read the Scripture without participating in any intervention, according to Table 4.2a, they were emotionally stirred by the reading. Seventy-five percent of them desired to change their usual beliefs and roles. None of them indicated they had the chance to put those desires into action. Most Christians experience this: when they read Scripture or hear a good sermon, they sincerely desire to change. Oftentimes, the minute they close their Bibles or walked out of church after the sermon, none of that gets pursued. Many still think they are transformed when they read or hear Scripture and are emotionally stirred. In fact, we are not. This phenomenon could be explained by Romans 12: Unless one's mind is transformed (12:2), one cannot view oneself "in a 'sober' manner – in accordance with a true and objective estimate" (Moo 760) as is described in Romans 12:3. In this case, those participants did not just stop there. They went through exegetical-critical Scripture study and practiced *lectio divina* for one month. This time, the same participants, according to Table 4.6, indicated that there was action taken. What happened?

Before discussing the four movements of *lectio divina*, one assumption must be made. The Literature Review compared monastic *lectio divina* with scholastic *lectio*

divina; it is not hard to notice that “the meaning and function of *lectio divina* changed from time to time and place to place” (Van Dyk 17). It would be easier to use scholastic *lectio divina* which is structured and compartmentalized to analyze the movements of *lectio divina* rather than monastic *lectio divina* which is not structured. It must be kept in mind that, although they may be slightly different in form and in meaning, essentially they are still the same. (This will be discussed further in the third finding that follows.) Therefore, the desert fathers will still be mentioned often in this section of the discussion.

Lectio/disorienting dilemma. Most evangelicals do their reading of Scripture silently. The four Hebrew words used in the Bible for meditation, a concept which includes all the movements of *lectio divina*, all indicate some kind of utterance or murmuring. It is onomatopoeic. (See Literature Review under the heading “The Four Hebrew Words for Meditation.”)

Likewise, patristic and monastic cultures are vocal (Howard 67). As the desert father Abba Nesteros said, “In order then that this spiritual knowledge [Scripture] may be strengthened in you with a lasting steadfastness, ...the words of salvation which we are longing for ought to be constantly poured into our *ears* or should ever proceed from our *lips*. ...the narration of holy things be often repeated ...received every day as if it were something new...” (Severus, Lerins, and Cassian 442). Pedagogically, “the more senses we engage in our learning exercises the better the learning; ...[also] so much of Scripture is presented as speech it is helpful to hear these utterance as actual voices” (Block 9).

This is how one should do *lectio*: “... read a few verses, slowly, meditatively, vocalizing each word, and monitoring our heart to sense God’s movement to highlight a certain word, or phrase or sentence for our attentive reflection and rumination” (Klaus

Issler 119). Andrew Murray beautifully described what *lectio* could be, "...in the very presence of the Father and under the leading of the Spirit, in which the Word comes to us in living power from God Himself. It is to us the very voice of the Father, a real, personal fellowship with Himself" (Andrew Murray 164).

The Disorienting Dilemma of TLT can help to explain what happens during the exercise of *lectio*. When one carries out *lectio* in the way Issler and Murray describe, God's Word can be "living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and spirit... and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart" (Hebrews 4:12 ESV). One's former perspective might be challenged and set off balance. Some of his/her meaning schemes might become inadequate. This would evoke feelings of disorientation. It is at this moment that some people "critically reflect on and question the validity of their inherited meaning perspective" (Morrice 253).

The researcher would like to use the Pharisees to explicate the whole journey of perspective transformation. Generally speaking, when the Pharisees first heard of Jesus's proclamation of the coming of the Kingdom of God, Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John all recorded the doubting, fearful, angry, guilty, or shameful emotions that the Pharisees had when they heard Jesus' teachings. That was their Disorienting Dilemma. It occurred because their meaning schemes were challenged. The traditions they had established for the Israelites to follow and their authoritative status quo got challenged. We will follow their journey later in the discussion of *meditatio*, *oratio*, and *contemplatio*.

Many Christians think that by going to church on Sundays, attending Sunday school, or reading Scripture according to a yearly devotional table, they are guaranteed to have perspective transformation; they are guaranteed to have their daily action match

their Bible knowledge. Of course, all these activities are necessary for a Christian to grow. The idea that these activities will guarantee one's personal growth is a misconception. If one stops his/her learning activity here at the Disorienting Dilemma, whatever got stirred up emotionally during *lectio*—either by listening or by reading—will bear no fruit. Most Christians experience this at some point in their lives. If this is the Scripture reading habit of a Christian, it will hinder his/her spiritual growth and, hence, cause a sanctification gap.

Meditatio/critical reflection. Table 4.8 exhibits that 74 percent of the participants indicated that *meditatio* contributed to their experience of transformation. Evangelicals are more receptive to the idea of meditation because it is often mentioned in the Psalms and by renowned evangelicals. It has already been mentioned that, biblically and in early monasticism, *meditatio* carries the meaning of *lectio*, *meditatio*, *oratio*, and sometimes even *contemplatio*. In scholastic *lectio divina*, *meditatio* is defined as “the busy application of the mind to seek with the help of one's own reason for knowledge of hidden truth” (Guigo 68). *Meditatio* was “concerned with the inward understanding” (Guigo 79) of Scripture. Meditating on Scripture usually involved “saying the words of a particular text, mulling them over in the mind, chewing on and slowly digesting the words, and it was a predominantly oral phenomenon” (Burton-Christie 122).

This description of *meditatio* can be explained by the Critical Reflection movement of TLT. Reflection is critically assessing the content of the problem, the process of problem-solving, and the premise of the problem (Mezirow, “Understanding” 224). Meditating on Scripture should involve all of these three types of reflection. One critically reflects on his assumptions and expectations in life when he is challenged by the

Disorienting Dilemma resulting from *lectio* – the divine reading of counter-culture assumptions from Scripture. Only with critical reflection upon the assumptions and expectations in Scripture can one's beliefs or faith be solidly supported. One's old frame of reference/old perspective, comprised of old acquired assumptions and expectations from his past, so often goes without being checked. They are taken for granted. The habits from the old person go on without being questioned, hence Christians live the same life as before they were converted. Only when one critically reflects on his frame of reference/perspective during *meditatio*, to check if it is in sync with what he read (*lectio*) and understood (*meditatio*) in Scripture, will there be the possibility of beginning the journey of transformation.

If one's learning stops at Critical Reflection of the content and the process of problem-solving, if his learning of Scripture stops after his musing and reflecting on the Word in trying to understand it, there will be no change of frame of reference. There will be only a desire of change of cognition caused by reflection. There must be a critical reflection of premise which increase, the chance of changing of frame of reference. Mere reading and meditating (the scholastic way) on Scripture does not guarantee transformation; to think otherwise is a misconception.

That was the predicament of the Pharisees who were so familiar with Scripture to the point of having it memorized in its entirety yet their behavior was not in sync with the knowledge they possessed. Deep within their hearts, the stage of transformation had only reached the meaning scheme transformation level. In reality, their *form* of frame of reference/perspective was never changed. The Scripture that they memorized verbatim was saved into an old *form* of frame of reference/perspective which did not understand

and accept Jesus as the Messiah for whom they had been waiting. There can be no true understanding of the Word unless the Word is received inside of one's heart. For unbelieving Pharisees, Jesus could not be the King of the Kingdom to come; this was their existing frame of reference which they wouldn't change. Jesus as Messiah was a point of view which could not be accepted. No change of frame of reference, no transformation. The whole chapter of Matthew 23 paints a portrait of the Pharisees, especially 23:3, when Jesus instructs His followers to "do and observe whatever they tell you, but not the works they do. For they preach, but do not practice" (ESV). This portrait of the Pharisees was the outcome of holding to their existing perspective and not being willing to accept the new perspective; hence the Word that they memorized verbatim had no effect on them. Hence, the outcome was the presence of a sanctification gap.

Table 4.9 exhibits that all nineteen participants reflected on the text and desired to change, but only nine underwent the perspective transformation. There will be further musing about the other sixteen participants and what happened to them in the next section on *Oratio/Discourse*.

Oratio/discourse. Guigo defined this as "the heart's devoted turning to God" (Guigo 68), a prayer concerned with one's desires. It is a dialogue between the believer and God. Discourse is necessary to validate what and how one understands or to arrive at the best judgment regarding a belief (Mezirow, "Transformative Learning" 10).

When one Pharisee, Nicodemus, came to Jesus and heard Him say that "unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God" (Matthew 3:5 ESV), he experienced a Disorienting Dilemma, Critical Reflection, and Discourse. During the reflection and discourse, he misunderstood Jesus many times. It still gives a picture of someone who is

responding to God’s Word, and that Word “not return[ing] to [Him] empty” (Isaiah 55:11 NRSV).

Readers of Scripture need to respond to God’s Word with reflection and with discourse – planning a course of action, acquiring the knowledge and skills for implementing it, etc. according to Mezirow’s TLT. How is this done? In prayer, they must dialogue with God, seeking His guidance. During their dialogue with God, they may be misunderstanding His truth, but the Holy Spirit will help them to clarify it.

Are we transformed during prayer – during our discourse with God? Maybe, maybe not. What did Nicodemus do? Did he make a decision to believe Jesus? He appears only in the Gospel of John, and John is silent about what happens to Nicodemus. He might have had a transformation of meaning scheme – an informative learning experience about the truth of being born again. Without the action of saying yes to Jesus, he did not have perspective transformation, he was not born again. It is a misconception to think one will be guaranteed a perspective transformation whenever one prays or engages in dialogue with God. In Scripture, there are quite a few places that vividly describe dialogue between Satan and God. That says something. Table 4.10 exhibits that, of nine participants who engaged in *oratio*, eight of them had perspective transformation. Not a bad outcome; in fact, it is very encouraging.

Contemplatio/action. The researcher mused at length on the biblical bases for contemplation in the Literature Review. In sum, Christians are to live what they *lectio*, *meditatio*, and *oratio* in the presence of God. This is *contemplatio*. There is another aspect of *contemplatio* which should also be included, and this is a mental gaze upon heavenly things so that a person’s soul may ever cleave to God (Severus, Lerins, and

Cassian 298). That mental gaze could also be the loving gaze of our spirit toward God (Demarest 164) which is conditioned by *lectio divina*. This is Jesus' high priestly prayer: "Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth" (John 17:17 ESV). Here is D. A. Carson's comment on this prayer: "In practical terms, no-one can be 'sanctified' ... without learning to think God's thoughts after him, without learning to live in conformity with the 'word' he has graciously given" (Carson, *The Gospel According to John* 566). Christians must read Scripture with the telos of depending on God to live it and embody it.

Mezirow makes a similar comment: "Freedom involves not just the will and insight to change but also the power to act to attain one's purpose.' As Novak claims: 'Perspective transformation represents not only a total change in life perspective, but an actualization of that perspective. In other words, life is not seen from a new perspective, it is lived from that perspective'" (Mezirow, *Learning* 24). The desert fathers were convinced that "only through *doing* what the text enjoined could one hope to gain any understanding of its meaning" (Burton-Christie 135). TLT clearly states that "action, acting upon redefinitions of our perspectives, is the clearest indication of a transformation" (Mezirow, *Learning* 297).

When and how does action takes place? Answering this question also answers the puzzle of why a sanctification gap exists. Abba Nesteros taught that daily *lectio divina* of Scripture can help believers remove the dross from their memory and replace their memory network (Severus, Lerins, and Cassian 442). Similar to TLT, this is basically the exchanging of the existing frame of reference with a newly acquired frame of reference. It seems that the replacement of perspective involves the whole journey of transformation: *lectio*/disorienting dilemma involves cognition and emotion, *meditatio*/critical reflection

involves cognition and emotion, *oratio*/discourse involves cognition and emotion, *contemplatio*/action involves cognition, emotion and conation. In other words, changing one's frame of reference/perspective from the existing one to the newly acquired one is an action that requires all the faculties of one's heart – cognition, emotion, and conation. Jesus told us that in principle, and in the greatest commandment, He did not ask less of His followers for He knows it is only with one's whole heart that he can take action. "And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength" (Mark 12:30 ESV).

Table 4.10 exhibits that those eight participants who did *contemplatio* all had perspective transformation, indicated through the post-intervention LAS and interviews. The researcher reviewed all those eight participants' interview records. Here are some responses, which represent other similar answers as well to the question: "How did you do your *contemplatio*? Could you tell me what were the experiences that helped you change your old habits?"

- "I tried to do *lectio*, *meditatio*, and *oratio* the night before for twenty minutes on the same selected text. In the past, I always had a problem memorizing Bible verses. Guess what? I remembered it after one week. And after I got it memorized, I was able to be watchful about whether or not I lived it during my daily life, i.e. at work, at home, or in church. I don't know when it happened, but somehow I found that the change came so naturally. Of course, I prayed everyday asking the Lord to help me. I just have this peaceful feeling about the problem that I used to struggle with. It is gone. To tell you the truth, I don't know when it happened...."
- "It was not easy for me to be so disciplined, doing *lectio divina* every day. But I knew that I was not alone doing this, with your encouragement and other friends' company in doing the same thing, I was able to keep on going. After a week, I had gotten used to it. My wife supported me too. The key was to have the verses memorized during the first few days, and just watch myself everyday to see if I was able to live out the verses. I don't think I am perfect at living the

verses now, but I have improved. That gave me incentive to pursue it further....”

- “I didn’t know how to live the Bible verses before, but when you taught us *lectio divina*, and also told us the meaning of *contemplatio*, it helped me. I started to plan out how to live the Bible verses. It was wisdom. I am so joyful....”
- “I learned to gaze upon the Lord and heavenly things. And I found that my understanding of the Bible verses is different. I don’t know what happened to me, it must be a miracle....”

Apparently, according to these participants, *contemplatio* helped them to be open to God and to the possibility of living the Scripture.

There are two significant effects of ongoing momentum of learning activities inherent in both *lectio divina* and TLT; namely, first, the non-dichotomization of theology and spiritual; and second, the recursive, evolving, spiraling movements lead the reader to be open with and dependent on God.

This finding comes more from the qualitative research of the project. The researcher mentioned in the Literature Review the Hebrew word for “meditation” in the Old Testament. That was a very elementary study of *הָגָה* *hâgâh* (Strong 1897), *הִגָּיֹוֹן* *higgâyôwn* (Strong 1902), *שִׁיחַ* *sîyach* (Strong 7878), and *שִׁיחָה* *sîychâh* (Strong 7881). To sum up, these Hebrew words are all translated as *meditation*, and all have the meaning of *lectio*, *meditatio*, *oratio*, and *contemplatio* in one way or another. This means that, in the mind of the psalmist and other writers of the Old Testament, there are normally no intentional distinctions between *lectio*, *meditatio*, *oratio*, and *contemplatio*. This is biblical *lectio divina*: not structured or compartmentalized.

In the writings of the desert and Latin fathers, one can observe that little is said about *lectio divina*: “Originally, *lectio divina* and *sacra pagina* [the sacred page] were equivalent expressions... During the Middle Ages, this expression [*lectio divina*] was to

be reserved more and more for the act of reading, ‘the reading of Holy Scripture’” (Leclercq 72). Therefore, there is a distinction between scholastic *lectio divina* and monastic *lectio divina*. The objective of scholastic *lectio* is science and knowledge. The objective of monastic *lectio* is wisdom and appreciation (Leclercq 72).

But here it must be asked: must there be a chasm between “scholastic, knowledge” and “wisdom, appreciation”? During the late third and fourth centuries, monastic *lectio divina* was not called *lectio divina* but *synaxis*. There was public *synaxis* and daily *synaxis*. During daily *synaxis*, monks read (or heard if they were illiterate) Scripture and their minds alternated between reading, meditating, praying, and contemplating in no particular order. For desert monks, contemplation was the necessary mode for *lectio*, *meditatio*, and *oratio*. Contemplation was the setting of one’s mental gaze on heavenly things presented in Scripture (Burton-Christie 117-23; Jones 50; Benedict 467-8). When monks did *lectio divina*, “there was just one simple movement of response to a God who had spoken” (Pennington 20). The reading of Scripture was spiral and never finished/done; the words were chewed over and over again. It was during this process that hermeneutics of Scripture were established for the years to come.

Apparently, for the monks and fathers of the early years of *lectio divina*, there was no problem with mingling “scholastic, knowledge” and “wisdom, appreciation.” By segregating them, one dichotomizes the reading activity into two sections – mental and spiritual. This is a misconception and leads to the divorce of theology and spirituality. Later on, this evolves into the sanctification gap. When one insists that *lectio* and *meditatio* should be compartmentalized as rational scholastic learning, he is not allowing

his perspective to be changed by yielding his learning of Scripture to the guidance of the God who is the Word.

To reiterate the researcher's concern, the contemporary practice of *lectio divina* is scholastic *lectio divina* which is linear and compartmentalized. Therefore, it lacks the spiral movements of monastic *lectio divina* which brought the text deeper into the person and put the reader into a continuous momentum.

To dig deeper, TLT finds the process of perspective transformation “to be more recursive, evolving, and spiraling in nature” (Mezirow, *Learning* 290). Transformation stages do not “always follow the exact sequence of phases but generally include some variation of the identified phases” (Mezirow, *Learning* 290). In nature, the transformation process is more recursive than linear; phases tend to repeat during the process. The transformative process may not necessarily be “sequential nor [is the] successful completion of one stage contingent upon the previous stages” (Mezirow, *Learning* 291).

One final note on this subject: while changing one's existing frame of reference to the newly acquired frame of reference is difficult and at times seems to take forever, the recursive, evolving, and spiraling nature of the process of transformation in both *lectio divina* and TLT keeps the momentum moving as the reader is continuously led into more openness with and dependence on God.

Ministry Implications of the Findings

This study and its findings provide two implications for Christians, especially for those who harbor concerns about the origin, effect, and legitimacy of the spiritual discipline *lectio divina*. This is especially poignant for Chinese evangelicals since *lectio divina* is not popular amongst Chinese Christians at all.

First, *lectio divina* is not the non-biblical, Roman Catholic-inclined mysticism that many evangelicals have imagined or about which they have been concerned. Biblically, this study has shown that *lectio divina*, especially monastic *lectio divina*, can be traced back to the Old Testament when one studies the Hebrew meaning of the word “meditate.” Historically, *lectio divina* was being practiced long before the schism of Catholics and Protestants. In terms of mysticism, the researcher has found, through this study, that the *contemplatio* portion of *lectio divina* invites the participant to the action that is the crucial point in terms of perspective transformation.

Therefore, for *lectio divina* to be received by Chinese Christians, there are some specifications that should be considered:

- Teachings about the biblical and historical/theological foundation of *lectio divina* is probably a better place to start when *lectio divina* is introduced to Chinese Christians. It will help their receptivity immensely if the pastor or teacher can show them through Old Testament verses how *lectio divina* is imbedded in them. (See Literature Review.)
- *Lectio* should include Scripture exposition to avoid the doubt that right beliefs are not being absorbed and that only subjective experience and insights are the focus.
- *Contemplatio* is better introduced as “living the read/meditated/prayed text in the everyday, ordinary world” (Peterson 198) which includes the maintaining of a mental gaze on heavenly things so that one’s soul may ever cleave to God (Severus, Lerins, and Cassian 298). This mental gaze could also be a loving gaze of our spirit toward God (Demarest 164) which is conditioned by *lectio divina*. No one can deny the value of

living the Word of God, especially the teachings regarding loving and depending upon the Lord.

Second, there is a significant misunderstanding about what transformation involves. People usually mistakenly embrace the idea that having right beliefs is equivalent to perspective transformation. Evangelical seminaries today “train their pastoral candidates in the rigors of biblical exegesis. For the most part they are not taught devotional Bible reading, to the harm of those who hear the preaching of those who graduate from these institutions” (Howard 77). This study has proved that mere reading of the Scripture is not enough, and further, it has explained the merit of the learning experience of *lectio divina* through Mezirow’s Transformative Learning Theory which is the most often cited work and one of the leading theories dealing with transformation in the field of adult and higher education (Tisdell 205). Therefore, it would be very helpful for the teacher of *lectio divina* to include TLT in their teaching, to help the learners understand the processes of transforming meaning scheme and meaning perspective, and to help them understand the four transformative phases of TLT which are compatible with and can explain the four transformative phases of *lectio divina*. (See “Exploring and Understanding TLT”).

Limitations of the Study

Three limitations of the study need to be noted: First, historically, many desert fathers and Latin fathers practiced *lectio divina*, i.e. Antony, Origen, Gregory the Great, etc.—many more than were mentioned here. Due to the limitation of the scope of this study, those mentioned here were the ones who had a paradigm shift effect on divine reading.

Second, this study was limited to individual practice of *lectio divina* only; there was no mention of corporate *lectio divina*. The reason for this was because, for almost all of the participants in this study, this was the first time they were ever truly exposed to this spiritual discipline. To minimize complication, this study was simplified to involve the individual practice of *lectio divina* only.

Third, although this study was conducted on a self-selected group of Chinese Christians from Los Angeles and Orange Counties, this study may be generalized to all Chinese Christians in the United States. The researcher can even make the conclusion that this study may be generalized to all Christians. Generalization of this scope is possible because this group of Christians was very diversified in terms of occupation, age level, and years-since-conversion.

Few of them have been in the States over thirty years and have been educated here. They are very Americanized.

Unexpected Observations

The post-intervention interviews were full of surprises. It is possible that the challenges raised by Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount empowered participants. Participants selected the parts of the text which were the toughest for them to live out. They had to engage in *lectio divina* with that text constantly for a month. Many of them revealed during the interviews that it was up one moment and down another; sometimes they felt they were changed, other times they felt like the biggest sinners in the world.

What surprised the researcher was how open some of the participants were during the interview. Chinese are usually characterized as being more reserved or subtle in expressing their emotions. Further, it is believed that family shame should not be made

public. During the interview, these participants were not ashamed of some of the awkward details of their failure to put the text into action. They shared the struggles they had in trying to live the text. This was not in the plan of the researcher; during the whole study, the researcher always tried very carefully not to dig into any participants' personal details. The outcome therefore was not manipulated and was a natural outflow of how *lectio divina* led a person to become when he/she practiced it.

The researcher has concluded that some of the participants were so open due to the newly acquired habits of opening themselves to God during *oratio* and *contemplatio*. Like David in the Psalms, when they were facing their habitual sins during *oratio* and *contemplatio*, they needed to be open to God and pray, "Have mercy on me, O God, according to your abundant mercy blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin. For I know my transgressions, and my sin is ever before me. Against you, you alone, have I sinned, and done what is evil in your sight..." (Psalm 51:1, 3 ESV). Further, "if we confess our sins, he who is faithful and just will forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9 NRSV).

It was engagement in this kind of process for thirty days that shaped their openness to God and anchored their faith in God's merciful redemption through Christ that helped them to have a sense of confidence in their conversations with the researcher. This confidence in God helped them to be unashamed of revealing their own sins. Indeed, the power of God's Word and Holy Spirit were at work. This turned an academic study into heavenly divine fellowship.

Future Directions for the Study

This study sought to explore how *lectio divina* helps Christians open to God's transformation and how TLT helps us to understand better *lectio divina*'s technique of learning which will further prove the effectiveness of its transformative learning pattern. The result of this study was very encouraging. The researcher would like to add certain changes which might help to enhance the experience of *lectio divina*:

1. Taking four weekends to study the Sermon on the Mount made the experience very intense and there was not enough time for participants to share with each other about the *lectio divina* experience in class. This was brought up during the interview when participants shared that they hadn't heard from others about their experience and felt kind of alone in the exercise of this discipline. This was actually due to the oversight of the researcher.

2. It would have been helpful to encourage the participants to design a course of action. For example, regarding Jesus' command to love one's enemy: how does one do that? What course of action would a person plan that would help him *contemplatio*? LAS can actually serve as a guideline for this.

3. The researcher did not explain TLT to the participants at all; thus they did LAS without understanding the theory behind it. The reason for this was to avoid any manipulation of answers. But in the future, if there were not research involved, explaining TLT to those learning about *lectio divina* for the first time may help them better understand the learning activities. This, in turn, might help them to understand some of the symptoms of not wanting to change.

Postscript

Our future is always a gift from God. Through this study, I am, once again, convinced of how one is to learn the Scripture; it is embedded in the greatest commandment, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind” (Matthew 22:37 ESV). We are to learn the Scripture wholeheartedly – with all the three functions of our heart which is cognitive, emotional, and conational. The major movements of *lectio divina* help us to open to God to achieve this goal. My way of learning from the Scriptures is forever changed.

I started the practice of *lectio divina* ten years ago. It wasn't a disciplined practice though for I always got hung up on the critical exegesis of the Scripture; I truly enjoy exegeting text. After I finished exegesis, my time left for *lectio divina* was not much. Another reason the practice wasn't a disciplined one was because I was not sure about *contemplatio*. It was not a trustworthy mystical movement. During this research, the literature review opened my eyes and reminded me that monastic *lectio divina* was very similar to the biblical teaching of reading the Scripture. When the desert fathers did their synaxis, all the functions of heart participated. The telos of learning the Scripture was to embody the texts in their lives. Their *contemplatio*, which I used to treat as the least important of the four movements, was the core of *lectio divina*. I used to think *contemplatio* was only a passive waiting for the Lord. This research taught me that *contemplatio* is not only a passive waiting for the Lord, it is also a positive attitude of desiring Him to help us to open to both His love and His power which helps us to live the text, and, therefore, life transformed. *Contemplatio* is an action which embraces both

living the Word and loving the Word. I have to say that during the process of trying to understand *lectio divina*, TLT also played a major part in clearing the fog.

I went through a paradigm-shift when I began to understand what I just elaborated on which I think is the most important concept one needs to hold when practicing *lectio divina*.

I did not expect all these things to happen, only the Lord, who walks before me, had arranged all these to happen and my life has been so edified through this dissertation research writing.

This study is still very elementary and there is so much more that could be explored on the topic. It is my sincere hope that with this initial study, the divine reading of Scripture will once again be taught in accord with the Bible. *Lectio divina*, with its transformative learning pattern, can help Christians open to God's transformation, allowing them to embark on the journey of transformation which improves the sanctification gap, and, therefore, shapes both belief and behavior. This learning process can be explained by Transformative Learning Theory. Please give it a try.

APPENDIX A (King 20-23)
The Learning Activities Survey
Pre-Intervention

Instructions: *This survey helps us learn about the experiences of Scripture reading. We believe that important things happen when people learn new things. Only with your help can we learn more about this. The survey only takes a short time to complete, and your response will be confidential. Thank you for being part of this project; we greatly appreciate your cooperation.*

1. Thinking about your reading of the selected text on Sermon on the Mount in the past or just now, check off any statements that may apply.
 - a. I had an experience that caused me to question the way I normally act.
 - b. I had an experience that caused me to question my ideas about social roles (Examples of social roles include what a mother or father should do or how an adult child should act).
 - c. As I questioned my ideas, I realized I no longer agree with my beliefs or role expectations.
 - d. Or instead, as I questioned my ideas, I realized I still agree with my beliefs or role expectations.
 - e. I realized that other people also questioned their beliefs.
 - f. I thought about acting in a different way from my usual beliefs and roles.
 - g. I felt uncomfortable with traditional social expectations.
 - h. I tried out new roles so that I would become comfortable or confident in them.
 - i. I tried to figure out a way to adopt these new ways of acting.
 - j. I gathered the information I needed to adopt these new ways of acting.
 - k. I began to think about the reactions and feedback from my new behavior.
 - l. I took action and adopted these new ways of acting.
 - m. I do not identify with any of the statements above.

2. Since you have been reading the selected text of Sermon on the Mount in this course, do you believe you have experienced a time when you realized that your values, beliefs, opinions or expectations on the problem text that you selected during the first class had changed?
 - a. Yes. *If "Yes," please go to question 3 and continue the survey.*
 - b. No. *If "No," please go to question 6 to continue the survey.*

3. Briefly describe what happened.

4. Which of the following influenced this change? (Check all that apply)

Was it *a person* who influenced the change?

- Yes.
- No.

If “Yes,” was it... (Check all that apply)

- Another student’s support
- A challenge from your teacher
- Your classmates’ support
- Your teacher’s support
- Other: _____

Was it part of a *learning activity* that influenced the change?

- Yes.
- No.

If “Yes,” what was it? (Check all that apply)

- Class contents
- *Meditatio* (we meditate Scripture)
- Personal journal writing
- Small group prayer
- Verbally reading Scripture in class
- Reflect Scripture verses during weekdays
- Personal learning assessment
- Discuss Scripture within small group
- In class student teacher dialogue
- Personal reflection about teachings in class
- Scripture exposition in class
- *Oratio* (we pray Scripture)
- *Lectio* (we read Scripture)
- *Contemplatio* (we live Scripture)
- Other: _____

Was it a significant change in your life that influenced the change?

- Yes.
- No.

5. Thinking back to when you first realized that your views or perspective had changed, what did your being in this *Sermon On The Mount Course* have to do with the experience of change?

6. Would you characterize yourself as one who usually thinks back over previous decisions or past behavior?
 - a. Yes.
 - b. No.

Would you say that frequently reflect upon the meaning of your studies for yourself, personally?

- a. Yes.
- b. No.

7. Which of the followings have been parts of your experience in this *Sermon On The Mount Course*? (Please check all that apply)

- Another student's support
- A challenge from your teacher
- Your classmate's or cohort's support
- Your teacher's support
- Other: _____
- Class/group projects
- Verbally discussing your concerns
- Writing about your concerns
- Personal journal
- Self-evaluation in a course
- Learning *lectio divina*
- Nontraditional structure of a course
- Class activity/exercise
- Deep, concentrated thought
- Personal reflection
- Assigned readings
- Other: _____

8. Years since conversion:

- 1 year
- 2-3 year
- 4-6 year
- 7-15 year
- 16+ year

9. Age:

- Below 21
- Above 21

Thank you for completing this questionnaire!

APPENDIX B (King 20-23)
The Learning Activities Survey
Post-Intervention

Instructions: *This survey helps us learn about the experiences of Scripture reading. We believe that important things happen when people learn new things. Only with your help can we learn more about this. The survey only takes a short time to complete, and your response will be confidential. Thank you for being part of this project; we greatly appreciate your cooperation.*

1. Thinking about your reading of the selected text on Sermon on the Mount in the past or just now, check off any statements that may apply.
 - a. I had an experience that caused me to question the way I normally act.
 - b. I had an experience that caused me to question my ideas about social roles (Examples of social roles include what a mother or father should do or how an adult child should act).
 - c. As I questioned my ideas, I realized I no longer agree with my beliefs or role expectations.
 - d. Or instead, as I questioned my ideas, I realized I still agree with my beliefs or role expectations.
 - e. I realized that other people also questioned their beliefs.
 - f. I thought about acting in a different way from my usual beliefs and roles.
 - g. I felt uncomfortable with traditional social expectations.
 - h. I tried out new roles so that I would become comfortable or confident in them.
 - i. I tried to figure out a way to adopt these new ways of acting.
 - j. I gathered the information I needed to adopt these new ways of acting.
 - k. I began to think about the reactions and feedback from my new behavior.
 - l. I took action and adopted these new ways of acting.
 - m. I do not identify with any of the statements above.

2. Since you have been reading the selected text of Sermon on the Mount in this course, do you believe you have experienced a time when you realized that your values, beliefs, opinions or expectations on the problem text that you selected during the first class had changed?
 - a. Yes. *If "Yes," please go to question 3 and continue the survey.*
 - b. No. *If "No," please go to question 6 to continue the survey.*

3. Briefly describe what happened.

4. Which of the following influenced this change? (Check all that apply)

Was it *a person* who influenced the change?

- Yes.
- No.

If “Yes,” was it... (Check all that apply)

- Another student’s support
- A challenge from your teacher
- Your classmates’ support
- Your teacher’s support
- Other: _____

Was it part of a *learning activity* that influenced the change?

- Yes.
- No.

If “Yes,” what was it? (Check all that apply)

- Class contents
- *Meditatio* (we meditate Scripture)
- Personal journal writing
- Small group prayer
- Verbally reading Scripture in class
- Reflect Scripture verses during weekdays
- Personal learning assessment
- Discuss Scripture within small group
- In class student teacher dialogue
- Personal reflection about teachings in class
- Scripture exposition in class
- *Oratio* (we pray Scripture)
- *Lectio* (we read Scripture)
- *Contemplatio* (we live Scripture)
- Other: _____

Was it a significant change in your life that influenced the change?

- Yes.
- No.

5. Thinking back to when you first realized that your views or perspective had changed, what did your being in this *Sermon On The Mount Course* have to do with the experience of change?

6. Would you characterize yourself as one who usually thinks back over previous decisions or past behavior?
 - a. Yes.
 - b. No.

Would you say that frequently reflect upon the meaning of your studies for yourself, personally?

- c. Yes.
- d. No.

7. Which of the followings have been parts of your experience in this *Sermon On The Mount Course*? (Please check all that apply)

- Another student's support
- A challenge from your teacher
- Your classmate's or cohort's support
- Your teacher's support
- Other: _____
- Class/group projects
- Verbally discussing your concerns
- Writing about your concerns
- Personal journal
- Self-evaluation in a course
- Learning *lectio divina*
- Nontraditional structure of a course
- Class activity/exercise
- Deep, concentrated thought
- Personal reflection
- Assigned readings
- Other: _____

8. Years since conversion:

- 1 year
- 2-3 year
- 4-6 year
- 7-15 year
- 16+ year

9. Age:

- Below 21
- Above 21

Thank you for completing this questionnaire!

APPENDIX C (King 24-25)

LAS Follow-Up Interviews

This interview is part of research that included the survey you took. The research is about the experience of adult learners. We believe that important things happen when adults lectio divina Scripture and learn new things. Only with your help can we learn more about this. The interview should only take half an hour to complete, and your responses will be anonymous. Thank you in advance for being part of this project; your cooperation is greatly appreciated.

The interview questions are designed to gather further information about the topics covered in the original survey, so some of them may sound familiar to you.

1. Thinking back over your *lectio divina* Sermon on the Mount experience during past four weeks, have you experienced a time when you realized that your values, beliefs or expectations had changed?

2. Briefly describe that experience:

3. Do you know what triggered it? If so, please explain.

4. Which of the following influenced this change? (Check all that apply)
 - a. Was it a person who influenced the change?
 - Yes.
 - No.

 - b. If “Yes,” was it ...
 - Another student’s support
 - Your classmates’ support
 - A challenge from your teacher
 - Your teacher’s support
 - Other: _____

 - c. Was it part of a class experience that influenced the change?
 - Yes.
 - No.

 - d. If “Yes,” what was it?
 - Class/group projects
 - Writing about your concerns
 - Personal journal
 - The format of the course

- Deep, concentrated thought
 - Assigned readings
 - Verbally discussing your concerns
 - Self-evaluation during *lectio divina*
 - Class activity/exercise
 - Personal reflection
 - Other: _____
- e. Or was it a significant change in your life that influenced the change?
- Yes.
 - No.
- f. If “Yes,” what was it?
- Marriage
 - Loss of a job
 - Moving
 - Divorce/separation
 - Change of job
 - Addition of a child
 - Death of a loved one
 - Retirement
 - Other: _____
- g. Perhaps it was something else that influenced the change. If so, please describe it:
5. Describe how any of the *lectio divina* experiences influenced the change:
6. What could have been done differently in the classes to have helped or supported you as you went through (experienced) the change? What specific activities?
7. Thinking back to when you first realized that your views or perspective had changed:
- a. When did you first realize this change had happened? Was it while it was happening, mid-change, or once it had entirely happened (retrospective)?
 - b. What made you aware that this change of view or perspective had happened?
 - c. What did your being in adult bible class and starting to exercise *lectio divina* discipline have to do with it?

- d. What did you do about the change in your perspective?
 - e. How did/do you feel about the change?
8. Do you have any additional comments?

Thank you for your participation in this research project.

APPENDIX D**INFORMED CONSENT LETTER**

You are invited to be in a research study being done by **Joyce Chen** from the Asbury Theological Seminary. You are cordially invited. You will be asked to participate in four bible study sessions that are four hours each that are taught by me. And the study will also include one pre-intervention survey, one post-intervention survey and an interview at the very end.

You are randomly chosen because our mutual friends that I know from churches in Los Angeles and Orange County invite you. If you agree to participate in this research and bible study, you will be asked to complete the pre-intervention survey at the first bible session and post-intervention survey after the fourth session during the month of July 2015. The interview will occur approximately one week after the bible study session in order for you to reflect upon some of the things you learned in the bible study.

Your participation in this study is voluntary. You may dis-enroll in this study at any time if you wish. Your information will be kept private and confidential at all times.

Signing this paper means that you have read this or have it read to you, and that you want to be in the study. If you do not want to be in the study, do not sign the paper. Being in the study is up to you, and no one will be mad if you do not sign this paper or even if you change your mind later. You agree that you have been told about this study and why it is being done and what to do.

Signature of Person Agreeing to be in the Study Date Signed

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