Welcome to SF840 “Devotion, Balance, and Fire: Living the Heart of it All.” I am thankful you have signed up for this course and look forward to working with you in January. If you have any questions regarding the assignments or the course, please feel free to call me at my office in Louisville, KY (502) 425-3884.

This course is designed around what I consider to be the very heart of pastoral ministry: an ongoing, ever deepening devotional life. Your daily communion with God is the ground of your life, the basis of your leadership, and the wellspring of the love you pour into your family, friends, and those you shepherd. But the reality is that often this essential time gets sacrificed for what we consider to be more pressing matters.

Thus my major goal in moving you through the process of this course is to assist the Holy Spirit in bringing you back home to a life centered and balanced in God. As you can tell, this will be both an academic and deeply spiritual experience.

In order for you to have a “map” before you as you read, reflect, pray, and prepare for this course, I want to share with you the five points we will be covering:

1. **Devotional times, practices, and dispositions.** This first section will seek out the concrete ways in which we can put *first things first* in our everyday lives. Please pay special attention here to the Harper book (Steve shows us the basics of the Wesleyan faith tradition); to the Mulholland work; and to the Stanley Jones autobiography (Bro. Stanley illustrates the way through his own life). What we will really seek from God in this section is the grace for *dispositional* living, that is the help we need to walk day in and day out in our devotional disciplines.

2. **Balanced living.** Christian faith and practice encompass all of life; not just a few segmented moments. A rich devotional life should result in a balancing influence upon the other areas of our lives. And in turn, some of those other areas—such as exercise, nutrition, and recreation—will definitely help enhance our devotional lives.

3. **The healing streams of repentance.** This is the area in which I want you to especially note the John Cassian work. This ancient spiritual guide will help lead you into the blessing of continual prayer. In short we must continually be alert against the works of the flesh and against the temptations of Satan.

4. **Vocational fidelity.** A rich and growing devotional life really should bear the fruit of competent leadership. To have competent leadership we must have focus and clear direction in terms of how we are to invest our lives. E. Stanley Jones walked away from being a bishop in order to be faithful to his calling as an evangelist. Devotion issues forth in vocation.

5. **Accountable discipleship.** We are not called to make this journey alone. We need spiritual friends to walk with us, to encourage us, and to hold us accountable to...
God. To fulfill who we are called to be in Christ we need to live in covenant community with other pilgrims.

**Pre-Course Assignments:**

Please read all four assigned texts. After working through each book go back over the whole and see where the Holy Spirit is speaking to you (see Mulholland on “Spiritual Reading” pp. 110-115). Remember, you are after “formational reading!” Take special note of how the Holy Spirit might be calling you to reform, go beyond, or include certain devotional habits in your daily life.

Make just a few pages of notes on each text (these notes will help facilitate your integration paper), and hand these into me on the first morning of class.

In addition, I want you to keep a one-month record of your devotional habits. Chart it out by day: how much time are you actually investing in devotion; what are your devotional practices; and how is your devotional life being integrated into the whole of your life? Yes, I know it’s impossible to chart everything—such as times of continual prayer in the midst of ministry—but it is crucial to see what your “holy habits” actually are. This assignment is not to be turned in, but I want to at least see that you have done it; and more importantly, we will be using it in our work together.

**Post-Course Assignment:**

This course requires an integrative research paper, which is a “bringing together” of the impact of the course upon your life, family, and ministry. In approaching this assignment, start out with this basic question: “Where is the Holy Spirit calling me as a result of my overall experience with this class?”

Perhaps the class has made a profound impact upon your life; or the Lord has used the overall experience to confirm that you are on track in some areas but need His transforming grace in other areas.

Your basic assignment is to take the insights, directives, and transformational callings you have received from the readings, assignments, and class interaction, and weave them into an integration paper.

**IT MUST FIRST BE A SPIRITUAL EXERCISE!** Where is the Holy Spirit speaking to you? How are you being called to apply Biblical principles and valid insights to your personal life and ministry?

**INTEGRATION** means an interaction with your readings, reflections, classroom work, and the Holy Spirit, all as applied to your concrete life situation. Be specific: what does all of this mean for me?

**IT IS SECONDLY A DOCTORAL LEVEL PAPER!** Your paper should be polished. Please do not hand in a Saturday night microwave special! Adhere to the MLA style of writing found in the latest version of Form and Style by Carole Slade. Assigned materials for class should be referenced without “forcing” or “packing” references for appearance sake. Quote what the Lord used to move your heart.
Your paper should be between 15 and 25 pages.

**DEADLINE: MARCH 30, 1999**

Please send UNBOUND and UNFOLDED to:

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