

Spiritual Formation for People Living with HIV and AIDS: A Continuing Imperative of Pastoral Care

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ABSTRACT

This article discusses the significance of spiritual formation to the task of pastoral care of people living with HIV and AIDS (PLWHA). The research identifies a critical and growing gap in the spiritual formation of people living HIV and AIDS as a pastoral care motif. The writer reviews current literature, exegetes Matthew 5:21–48 as a theological basis for an evangelical definition of spiritual formation, and posits its role in the pastoral care of PLWHA. The indispensability of psychosocial support to the care of PLWHA is admitted in many contemporary studies, but the necessity and precise role of spiritual formation appears to be in doubt. This article, therefore, attempts to respond to such critical questions as: What are the goals of Spiritual Formation in the care of people living with HIV and AIDS? Is Spiritual formation important in the care of PLWHA? The writer posits that there exists a continuing and critical gap for spiritual formation in the care continuum of PLWHA which can only be aptly met through compassionate pastoral engagement.

1. Introduction: Understanding Spiritual Formation

Studying the concept of spiritual formation is fraught with innumerable difficulties owing to the numerous ways by which it is discussed. Understanding the idea of spiritual formation therefore is hardly an easy matter. Definitions of spiritual formation are plenty even though a common thread of understanding exists between them. Dallas Willard is a renowned author on the theme of spiritual formation. He is a Professor in the School of Philosophy at the University of Southern California in Los Angeles, a Southern Baptist and has continued writing on the topic of philosophy and Religion (Willard 2012). Willard writes that “Spiritual formation in Christ is the process by which one moves and is moved from self-worship to Christ-centered self-denial as a general condition of life in God’s present and eternal kingdom” (2002:77). He further explains that:

Spiritual formation in the tradition of Jesus Christ is the process of transformation of the inmost dimension of the human being, the heart, which is the same as the spirit or will. It is being formed (really, transformed) in such a way that its natural expression comes to be the deeds of Christ done in the power of Christ (Willard [2012b]).

Willard is unequivocal that spiritual formation is a process of spiritual growth and not an instantaneous event. Boa (2001:515) defines spiritual formation as “The grace-driven developmental process in which the soul grows in conformity to the image of Christ” (2001: 515).

In Boa’s view spiritual formation is not a man-driven process. It has to do with God’s activity in the individual, or a community of, Christ’s followers. This is not to say that intentionality for spiritual formation is a nonevent. Rather, Boa seeks to stress the fact that human effort alone would not suffice in achieving biblical spiritual formation. It is God’s work of grace to be received by the individual in a context of biblical fellowship.

In this paper I will survey the literature, provide an exegetical basis, and identify a pastoral care gap in contemporary spiritual formation of people living with HIV and AIDS (PLWHA). Anecdotal evidence suggests that a view that people living with HIV and AIDS are not amenable to biblical spiritual formation is extant. Therefore, I will contend that authentic psychosocial counselling and pastoral care models of people living with HIV and AIDS should be synchronous with intentional a spiritual formation agenda.

2. Literature Review of Spiritual Formation

From a historical standpoint, the term “spiritual formation” meant the preparation of men and women for full time church ministry (Sheldrake 2005:309). This preparation included academic training on Scripture, theology, philosophy, liturgy and the spiritual disciplines particularly in a meticulous prayer life. The discussion on the subject of spiritual formation appears to have changed in our times, however. A review of the literature will demonstrate a variety of understandings and practices connected to the topic. First, since the term “spiritual formation” does not appear in the Bible, there are not many exegetical studies on the subject. Most writers merely survey theological aspects and concentrate on the practices. Second, some writers fail to see the difference between spiritual formation and discipleship. Therefore they use the terms interchangeably employing words like spiritual transformation, faith formation, spiritual growth, and Christian formation to describe it. And third, some writers employ the word Christian spiritual formation to distinguish it from spiritual formation which happens in other worldviews and religious ethnicities. In this paper, therefore, I will limit my literature review to Christian writers on this vital theme from four perspectives: the pedagogical, community, social sciences, and spiritual practices. Such an approach will assist the understanding of the various nuances of spiritual formation for people living HIV and AIDS.

2.1 The Pedagogical Perspective

This view admits that teaching and learning is a frequent theme in any conversation on spiritual formation. McGrath (1995) points out that spiritual formation is not an anti-intellectual matter. It engages the mind and moves beyond belief into practice. In this regard the priority of the Bible as the basis for spiritual formation is emphasised (Mulholland 1985). Burer (2012) adeptly asserts, “Somewhat of a modern lexical invention, the term ‘spiritual formation’ refers to a concept that is almost ubiquitous in Scripture.” Therefore, I suggest that spiritual formation is fundamentally an issue of teaching and learning, where both the teacher and the learner are intentional about their participation. In other words, spiritual formation is never an accidental matter.

2.2 Community

Marshall (2000) adeptly points out that spiritual formation does not happen in isolation from others. Spiritual formation essentially occurs in a social milieu. It is congregation-based. Foster (2005: xxix) highlights this critical nuance when he defines spiritual formation as:

[T]he process of transforming the inner reality of the self (the inward being” of the psalmist) in such a way that the overall with-God life seen in the Bible naturally and freely comes to pass in us. Our inner world (the „ “secret heart”) becomes the home of Jesus by his initiative and our response. ”

Forster sees the spiritual formation of an individual as viable only in the context of a community in fellowship with each other and God. The importance of relationship in community as the milieu for spiritual formation cannot be overemphasized. Some writers recognize that spiritual formation is fundamentally influenced by mentors (Anderson and Reese 1999; Houston 2002) and friends (Leech 2001; Moon and Benner 2004). It is clear then that spiritual formation does not transpire in isolation, but in the setting of relationships with other people. Therefore, biblical community is a means of spiritual formation (cf. Heb 10:24-25).

2.3 Social Sciences

In the social sciences Willard provides the most articulate voice on spiritual formation. He defines it as that “Spirit-driven process of forming the inner world of the human self in such a way that it becomes like the inner being of Christ himself” (2002: 22). Willard (2002:30) further elucidates that there are six (6) facets which constitute the nature of human beings:

- a. Thought (images, concepts, judgments, inferences)
- b. Feeling (sensation, emotion)
- c. Choice (will, decision, character)
- d. Body (action, interaction with the physical world)

- e. Social context (personal and structural relations to others)
- f. Soul (the factor that integrates all of the above to form one life)

According to Willard the mind consists of “thought and feeling *together*” (2002:33). Further at the centre of each human being is the human spirit whereas choice (“the capacity for volition, and the acts of willing in which it is exercised, form the spirit of man” (2002:34). Willard (2002:19) also considers spiritual formation as synonymous to character formation. Be as it may, Willard views spiritual formation through the lens of philosophy, theology, psychology, and personality theories. Willard (2006:74) asserts that “psychological and theological understanding of the spiritual life must go hand in hand.” Willard argues that spiritual formation is “achieved by discovering, reflecting, identifying and modifying the six aspects of human personality; thoughts, feeling, choice, body, social context, and soul that prevents us from becoming like Jesus” (2002:89). After the failings are identified, then steps can be taken to ‘renovate’ the inner person to conform to a renewed worldview, habits, attitudes and feelings. In this perspective of spiritual formation, the principal means of spiritual formation is through studying and meditating on the Bible (cf. Tang 2012, Burer 2012).

2.4 Spiritual Practices

Foster (1989) has led a large number of evangelicals to a return to the spiritual disciplines beyond the Quiet Time, regular Bible reading, prayer and evangelism. ‘New’ spiritual disciplines, such as spiritual direction (Moon and Benner 2004), silence and solitude (Barton 2004; Barton 2006), fasting (Piper 1997), daily examination of our consciousness (Ivens 1998) etc., are consequently being encouraged in contemporary evangelical practice. According to Wilkins (1997) practising these spiritual disciplines motivates people to rededicate their lives toward spiritual formation. Smith (1991:55) notes that spiritual disciplines “are God’s instructions in how we are to live godly lives”. Willard (1988) too believes that these spiritual disciplines assist to implant in practitioners a habit of worship and listening.

The foregoing literary survey on spiritual formation is not exhaustive, but amply demonstrates the variegated nuances of spiritual formation and a pervasive desire in contemporary Christians for impactful Christian living. I have limited my literature review to a few sources which make a significant contribution to the dialogue on spiritual formation and how people living with the HI virus may be facilitated toward spiritual maturity. The next issue of critical importance in this paper is whether or not there is any Scriptural warrant to the concept of spiritual formation. A salient implication of this cursory survey on spiritual formation is the belief that spiritual formation is a synthesis of theology and practice found in the Bible, on the one hand, and church history, on the other hand. I prefer the former position to the later based on Jesus’ authoritative statement in the antitheses of the Sermon on the Mount pointing to the concept of spiritual formation (cf. Burer 2006 and Willard 2002). Therefore, I

suggest that the antitheses of the Sermon on the Mount with specific reference to Matthew 5:21-48 provide a tacit exegetical foundation for the concept of spiritual formation.

3. Matthew 5:21-48—an Exegetical Basis of Spiritual Formation

The Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5-7 has often been considered as a key passage of Scripture to explain proper Christian conduct. Here our Lord Jesus clearly elucidates the ethics of the kingdom of God. He calls all who His followers to a standard of behaviour and inner life fitting God's holiness. Within the Sermon on the Mount is a segment (Mt 5:21-48) that require critical attention for compliance to reflect true godliness. This portion can be divided into six related sections usually termed as the antitheses covering a number of ethical issues. Of relevance to our discussion is the change in prominence in the antitheses from external observance or deeds to internal being and character. In each of the six antitheses, Jesus talks about some facet of Jewish Law and then changes focus from the outward compliance to inward transformation. In this section of the paper, therefore, the writer will briefly consider the crucial implication of the antitheses toward grasping contemporary spiritual formation.

3.1 On Murder and Anger

“You have heard that it was said to the people long ago, ‘Do not murder, and anyone who murders will be subject to judgment.’ But I tell you that anyone who is angry with his brother will be subject to judgment. Again, anyone who says to his brother, ‘Raca,’ is answerable to the Sanhedrin. But anyone who says, ‘You fool!’ will be in danger of the fire of hell. “Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to your brother; then come and offer your gift. “Settle matters quickly with your adversary who is taking you to court. Do it while you are still with him on the way, or he may hand you over to the judge, and the judge may hand you over to the officer, and you may be thrown into prison. I tell you the truth, you will not get out until you have paid the last penny (Mt 5:21-26 NIV, emphasis added)

That is the first antithesis then. In Matthew 21:21-26 Jesus speaks about the issue of anger through the prohibition against murder (cf. Ex 20:13 and Dt 5:17). Jesus cites the Law against murder (the unauthorized taking of human life), but goes deeper than the act of murder to address anger, the emotion which motivates the sin. The ethics of the kingdom entail that the heart be free of anger. Meaning that the only acceptable way for a person to follow Jesus is to shun anger or ask for forgiveness and hence be free from anger. This antithesis points to a crucial principle of spiritual formation that the

heart (inner character) must be radically changed in order that the root cause of sinful behaviour is eliminated.

3.2 On Adultery and Lust

“You have heard that it was said, *‘Do not commit adultery. But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart.* If your right eye causes you to sin, gouge it out and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to be thrown into hell. And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to go into hell (Mt 5:27-30 NIV, emphasis added)

In the second antithesis found in Matthew 5:27–30 where Jesus speaks on the issue of lust through the prohibition against adultery. Jesus here deals with a deeper issue than the mere physical act of adultery. He points to the sinful condition of the heart (lust toward another person) as the essential cause of adultery. He identifies the problem by first paying attention the behaviour and its motive: “But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart” (5:28 NIV). This antithesis denounces not only the outward act of adultery but especially the condition of the inward person which produces it. Jesus’ concern is not merely with the type of sexual activity a person is involved in, but the motive and craving of the heart for such illicit sexual activity. The ethics of the kingdom demands that the inner being be free of lust. Thus Jesus shows that the only proper means, for a person to follow Him in true holiness, is by avoiding the outward act of adultery through first eliminating the inward impulsion of lust. In precisely the same way as the first antithesis requires a person be radically transformed in order to truly obey the ban on murder, Jesus demandstransformation of the heart to be truly free from the sinful behaviour of adultery. Thus the human heart must be radically changed in order to uproot the cause of the sinful behaviour.

3.3 On Divorce and Commitment

“It has been said, *‘Anyone who divorces his wife must give her a certificate of divorce.’ But I tell you that anyone who divorces his wife, except for marital unfaithfulness, causes her to become an adulteress, and anyone who marries the divorced woman commits adultery*” (Mt 5:31-32NIV emphasis added)

In this antithesis Jesus clarifies on the vitality of marital commitment by teaching on divorce. He first alludes to a version of Deuteronomy 24:1 (the key passage that deals with the subject of divorce): “Anyone who divorces his wife must give her a certificate of divorce.” Jesus’ position on the matter of divorce is a radical one as He transcends its outward causation and places the real cause of divorce on the lack of true commitment.

Authentic commitment is a matter of the heart. Thus the logical implication of this antithesis, particularly in the immediate context of the preceding one, is that a person must be committed to marital longevity in order to divorce-proof his or her marriage. Again, this kind of commitment entails a radical transformation of the human heart. Thus in this antithesis divorce is deemed as the loss of true commitment to matrimonial longevity on the part of either parties.

3.4 On Oaths and Truthfulness

“Again, you have heard that it was said to the people long ago, *‘Do not break your oath, but keep the oaths you have made to the Lord.*’ But I tell you, Do not swear at all: either by heaven, for it is God’s throne; or by the earth, for it is his footstool; or by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the Great King. And do not swear by your head, for you cannot make even one hair white or black. Simply let your ‘Yes’ be ‘Yes,’ and your ‘No,’ ‘No’; anything beyond this comes from the evil one (Mt 5:33-37 NIV, emphasis added)

In this antithesis Jesus tackles the issue of truthfulness by annulling the need for oaths. Jesus starts by summarizing the Old Testament teaching on the matter of making oaths: “Do not break your oath, but keep the oaths you have made to the Lord” (cf. Lv 19:12; Num 30:2; Dt 23:21-23). A critical issue of these oaths is that they were made to the Lord or in the Lord’s name. Therefore, the Lord was directly called upon to punish the person who sworn if he did not fulfill his or her oath. Jesus responds by repealing oaths: “Do not swear at all”. The principal issue in this antithesis is the requirement for truthfulness on the part of Jesus’ followers. In the lives of Jesus’ followers the compulsion to deceive should be interchanged with a passion for truth. Complete sincerity and integrity of speech should characterize those who submit to Jesus’ Lordship. Anything less than this standard emanates from the evil one who both hates the truth (John 8:44) and is against God.

3.5 On Hurt and Retaliation

“You have heard that it was said, *‘Eye for eye, and tooth for tooth.’* But I tell you, *Do not resist an evil person.* If someone strikes you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also. And if someone wants to sue you and take your tunic, let him have your cloak as well. If someone forces you to go one mile, go with him two miles. Give to the one who asks you, and do not turn away from the one who wants to borrow from you (Mt 5:38-42 NIV)

In Matthew 5:38–42 Jesus speaks on the subject of appropriate reaction to hurt through the *talion*. He first cites verbatim from two different portions of the Old Testament, Exodus 21:42 and Leviticus 24:20: “Eye for eye, and tooth for tooth.” This is the normal principle taught in the Old Testament. Jesus however proceeds to show that in the

new kingdom which He is establishing this standard of justice is superseded by a new ethic: “Do not resist an evil person...” Tasker (1983:70) explains that Jesus here “drives home the point (almost to the point of absurdity) that a Christian rather than avenging himself upon a brother who has done him a personal wrong had better go to the opposite extreme!” In other words, there is no longer room for vengeance in the Christian’s life, even when rightfully approved. Undoubtedly, this antithesis points to a radically transformed inner person as a natural person is more ready to retaliate when harmed. Such obsequiousness to others is a motif of authentic spiritual formation.

3.6 On Hate and Love

“You have heard that it was said, ‘*Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.*’ But I tell you: *Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you,* that you may be sons of your Father in heaven. He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous. If you love those who love you, what reward will you get? Are not even the tax collectors doing that? And if you greet only your brothers, what are you doing more than others? Do not even pagans do that? (Mt 5:43- 47 NIV)

Conventional wisdom taught that one loved his neighbor and hated his enemies as the way of relating with others. Jesus however, fundamentally changes that tenet by requiring that His followers “Love [their] enemy and pray for those who persecute [them].” The natural human reaction is to hate those whom one would naturally hate, such as enemies. This antithesis therefore points to that fundamental change that occurs in the inner being of those who are true Jesus’ followers. This ethic of the kingdom Jesus is incepting is clearly a goal of spiritual formation.

3.7 Perfection—High Point of the Antitheses

In Matthew 5:48 Jesus ends the antitheses with a high point drawn from the Old Testament “*Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect*” (Mt 5:48 NIV, emphasis added, cf. Lev 19:2 and Dt 18:13). His emphasis is on perfection pointing to character rather than a mere external action. The call here involves appropriate actions as much as it requires appropriate character culminating in transformed behaviour. Jesus thus is talking about the heart of spiritual formation. The transformation of the inner being to conform to Christ’s character specifically cast in the Sermon on the Mount, the ethic of His kingdom.

What then is the principal meaning of each of these antitheses in the Sermon of the Mount as expressed in the injunction to perfection? The writer is of the view that being truly a follower of Jesus means having a transformed character which stems from a deeper change, beyond mere outward compliance to the Decalogue. Jesus sets a standard of behaviour that operates beyond outward obedience alone. As Tang (2012)

pithily explains:

Jesus' goal in these antitheses is to force people to look inside themselves. He presents the standard which those who enter the kingdom must meet. The individual then is implicitly guided down a particular path: "How will I meet this standard of an inner character as perfect as God is?" It is an invitation to inner change through interaction with Jesus himself. This in seminal form is the nature of spiritual formation: growth in the inner person so that following Christ and obedience to his commands comes from the inside through internal motivation.

In short, then, the antitheses in the Sermon on the Mount help us understand the meaning of the concept of spiritual formation. Spiritual formation is that reality of "being formed" in such a manner that an individual's, or a community's "natural expression comes to be the deeds of Christ done in the power of Christ" (Willard 2012b). But is spiritual formation a possibility for people living with the HI virus? Is spiritual formation within the ambit of pastoral care?

4. Spiritual Formation for People Living with HIV and AIDS

Van Dyk (2005:217) notes well that HIV positive people frequently ask questions about spiritual matters in their search for religious support. This means that PLWHA have deep questions which open a door of opportunity toward spiritual formation from a pastoral perspective. Furthermore, people living with HIV and AIDS go through various phases of the HIV disease from seroconversion (HIV-positive diagnosis) to the full-blown AIDS phase (van Dyk 2005:38-61). Here again in the stages of progression is a brilliantly disguised opportunity for pastoral intervention including the leitmotif of spiritual formation. The HIV disease progression entails that appropriate pastoral responses can be made as the person experiences different crises as the disease progresses. Van der Walt I posit that pastoral care and counselling intrinsically involves the goal of biblical spiritual formation as defined above. Müller (1999) contends that the whole enterprise and context of pastoral care and counselling is a 'journey' of equal companions toward spiritual maturity. Walt (2004:33-38) suggests helpful guidelines on how to give effective pastoral care to people living with HIV and AIDS at each stage of the care continuum. The table below summarizes these critical guidelines in the journey toward spiritually formed people living with HIV and AIDS.

Counselling and Progression Stages of HIV and AIDS (source: Magezi 2005:237)

Progression Stage	Counselling Focal Issues		Pastoral Counselling Response
<p>Diagnosis/ Seroconversion</p>	<p>When a Person is diagnosed HIV Positive there is shock That often leads to <i>denial, anxiety, fear, and suicidal behaviour or thinking</i></p>	<p><i>Denial</i>-At the breaking of the news, it is a defence mechanism to temporarily reduce emotional stress. Denial gives a breathing space, but if it continues it hampers positive thinking.</p>	<p>When a person is at this stage, not much talking should be done. Presence with the person is necessary, but if the denial persists it should be confronted so that the person may accept the reality and live positively. The counsellor should be empathetic, assure God's love, trust and commitment to support the person.</p>
	<p><i>Anxiety-uncertainty</i> of the progress of the HIV infection, the risk of infection with other diseases, fear of dying in pain, inability to change things, etc. create anxiety.</p>		<p>Correct information should be communicated to the person. Counselling of the person to accept the situation and progress with life is vital. Focus on life in Christ is the controlling factor.</p>
	<p><i>Fear</i>-HIV-infected people have experienced the pain and death of loved ones by AIDS, so they fear what awaits them, or they fear because they lack knowledge of how one can live with AIDS</p>		<p>The person should be educated about the facts and information regarding HIV/AIDS. The Christian hope of the resurrection should be shared with the person. Death is not the end for a Christian.</p>
	<p>Suicidal behaviour or thinking- Self-blame, knowing that one is living on borrowed time, shame, and fear of losing control of one's life may lead the person to commit suicide.</p>		<p>The Pastor should aware that there is a high risk of suicide in HIV-infected people, especially when they have just been told that they are HIV-positive. More time should be spent with the person.</p>
<p>Asymptomatic Phase</p>	<p>At this stage the person appears healthy like other people, though he/she carries the HI virus. The person may have emotional ups</p>		<p>The counsellor should always be available when the person needs him/her. Counsellor should strengthen the person's</p>

	<p>and downs as he/she remembers that he/she is carrying the HI virus. This person needs normal living guidance and continuous support. They could be in danger of obsessive conditions and hypochondria as the person becomes so preoccupied with the smallest physical changes or sensations, and this causes obsessive behaviour or hypochondria (van Dyk)</p>		<p>faith and relationships in preparation for the later terminal stage. To avoid obsessive behaviour or hypochondria, the person should be encouraged to accept the HIV-positive status, which would lessen this phenomenon as the person adjusts to cope with the situation. The correct information should be communicated</p>
<p>Symptomatic Phase</p>	<p>The HIV/AIDS-infected person at this stage feels emotionally isolated, loneliness and mourning, sense of loss, guilt, anger, grief and socio-economically deprived.</p>	<p><i>Isolation and loneliness</i> -HIV-infected people's self-esteem is threatened as friends abandon them, leaving them feeling unworthy. The inability to continue in a career or having children also contributes. The person needs contact with others.</p>	<p>Emphasize human worthiness as defined by a relationship with Christ, not material or profession. The person should be encouraged to feel self-sufficient in Christ. The faith community should come alongside for comfort, which makes koinonia care crucial. The person should be accepted in the community to belong and get healing.</p>
	<p><i>Mourning and sense of loss</i>- Often HIV positive people experience a loss of their hopes, dreams, sexual relations, independence, and importantly, loss of life and many other things.</p>	<p>The counsellor should experience a process of grief with them. Be patient and show compassion and encourage the celebration of life. Encourage wholeness through union with Christ.</p>	
	<p><i>Guilt</i>-Guilt may be intense for someone who has contracted the disease through promiscuity.</p>	<p>The pastor should be supportive and dispel the guilt. The person should be helped to</p>	

	<p>One feels guilty about the wrong choices of a sexual partner. He/she feels guilt that he/she has let down the family, friends, relatives, etc.</p>	<p>realize that the circumstances of HIV infection are not the problem. He/she should be aware of a gracious God who accepts and forgives the guilt through His great love in Christ. The pastor should encourage reconciliation with God and other people, where possible.</p>
	<p><i>Anger</i>-HIV positive people are often angry with themselves for being irresponsible, angry with people who infected them; angry that there is no cure; angry at society's reaction of hostility and indifference.</p>	<p>The pastor's warmth and love often soothes the anger as the person realizes that there are people with his/her interest at heart. Acceptance of the person plays a vital role.</p>
	<p><i>Grief</i>-Grief is more like loss. If the person is a parent he/she grieves for the children who will remain behind.</p>	<p>The art of listening is critical as the person grieves for loss. The pastor's presence is important, although he be silent.</p>
	<p>Socio-economically deprived-some companies dismiss workers when they are diagnosed HIV-positive, though this is illegal. Therefore, loss of employment, discrimination and stigma, and the need to buy anti-retroviral medication drain the HIV+ person's financial resources.</p>	<p>Social support through the community of faith (<i>koinonia</i>) should be encouraged. Where possible, food parcels and financial assistance provided to the person.</p>
<p>Serious Illness</p>	<p>The person may have serious depression. The feeling that he/she has lost much in life, feeling of powerlessness and knowing that many have died of AIDS and they will die , cause their depression. They may also experience self-rejection,</p>	<p>The counsellor should encourage the celebration of life. Resurrection hope as the final destiny should be emphasized. Hope and meaning as found in Christ should be emphasized.</p>

	hopelessness and worthlessness. These people need value, respect and dignity.	
Terminal stage	The people at this stage are fragile, uncertain and in extreme fear. The people need peace, acceptance and security for those left behind especially children. These people are confronted with death and loneliness. They ask spiritual questions about death, sin, guilt, forgiveness and reconciliation. They ask the theodicy question: why does god allow HIV/AIDS and death?	God's unconditional forgiveness of sin and guilt, and reconciliation in Christ should be shared. Resurrection hope should be emphasized. The counsellor should assist with succession planning and be with the person through the process of dying. The counsellor should be aware of Kübler Ross's stages of the dying (denial, anger, bargaining, depression, acceptance, and resignation). Eschatological hope should always be emphasized.
Grieving	Grief counselling normally is focused on family members who were the caregivers who also witnessed their loved one dying. There is depression, sadness, feelings of loneliness and abandonment, etc. They mourn the loss.	Since the pastor/counsellor would have been involved with the family for a long time over the period that the HIV/AIDS person was still alive, it becomes easier to encourage peace with what has happened. The counsellor should always minister by his presence even in silence. But it is important to encourage people to go on with life.

Arguably, a critical goal of pastoral care and counselling for people living with HIV and AIDS is to help them continue being followers of Jesus (cf. Mt 28:19-20). It is my view that PLWHA should become followers of Christ who are growing in their personal walk with God toward themselves becoming disciplers (or helpers) of other people living with HIV and AIDS. Furthermore, PLWHA can be empowered and enlisted as caregivers to others who may be living with HIV and AIDS and their significant others (Cornu 2003, van Dyk 2005, and Magezi 2005). Magezi (2005: 239) adeptly writes, "A well-counselled person should be a resource to the community of

faith and should be active in bringing healing to other people, as a model of Christian therapy.” The present writer holds that there is immense pastoral value in facilitating the spiritual formation of people living with HIV.

Kübler Ross (1987:11) also pithily points out that “Of all the thousands of patients I have seen literally all over the world, I have never seen such mutual support and solidarity as I have among AIDS patients themselves and their partners.” This reality undoubtedly means that PLWHA are to be involved in care work and designing approaches to care work which will facilitate spiritual formation in others. Ultimately, people living with HIV can be true followers of Christ and be used by the grace of God to help others in the HIV and AIDS predicament. Thus people living with HIV can be vital encouragers toward spiritual formation in the community of faith. Therefore I posit that spiritual formation should be a goal of HIV and AIDS pastoral care and counselling.

5. The Nature of Spiritual Formation for PLWHA

With this context in mind, what should be the nature of spiritual formation for people living with HIV and AIDS? How can those giving pastoral care to people living with HIV and AIDS serve as ‘midwives’ of the grace of spiritual formation?

First, it is critically essential that pastoral care givers recognize that the primary work of formation belongs to the Spirit of God (Burer 2012, Marshall 2000). Moltmann explains that the Spirit is at work in human lives in this way: “We cannot make the fruit of the Spirit...we have to wait expectantly for it, and let it grow, as fruit ripens on a tree” (1997:53). This entails that spiritual formation is not another form of ‘self-help’ with which we are familiar. It fundamentally depends on divine help. It is therefore significant that we acknowledge the inescapable and delicate balance between the work of the Holy Spirit and the ‘diligence’ of the individual. In this case the person living with HIV should be encouraged to spare no effort toward being receptive and cooperative with the Holy Spirit’s spiritual formation agenda.

Second, we must acknowledge that a primary means the Holy Spirit uses for spiritual formation is Christian community. We are “ecclesial Christians” (Marshall 2000). Hence, stigma and discrimination against people living with HIV is a serious hindrance to biblical spiritual formation. Contemporary Pastoral care of people living with HIV and AIDS, as all paradigmatic forms of pastoral care, is a community task (Mulenga 2009, Gerkin 1997). This implies that biblical spiritual formation in people living HIV and AIDS is the work of the Christian community (Magezi 2005). While pastoral care givers may help people living with HIV and AIDS toward self-acceptance, Christian community must as well unconditionally give acceptance to them in authentic fellowship.

And third, the person living with HIV and AIDS has a part to play in spiritual formation too. We have noted in the foregoing discussion that the Spirit of God and the ‘character’ of community are the first two indispensable ingredients in spiritual formation for people living with HIV and AIDS. But it is important to also encourage PLWHA to accept the unfinished work in their Christian lives this side of heaven. Scripture is clear that “... now we are children of God; *and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be...*” (1 John 3:2NKJV emphasis added). Spiritual formation will always mean that we are growing every day toward becoming like Christ and this reality entails that each person has the responsibility of nurturing a desire to change into His likeness. For pastoral care givers, it means that we must pray for people living with HIV to have a desire toward spiritual growth. This is similar to what Paul eagerly desired for the Galatian believers: “...I am again in the pains of childbirth until *Christ is formed in you...*” (Gal 4:19-20 NIV, emphasis added).

6. Conclusion

I would, therefore, like to reiterate that Pastoral care givers of people living with the HI virus should not underestimate the value of cultivating a hunger for spiritual formation in them (i.e. PLWHA). Needless to mention that people living with HIV and AIDS can live much longer, and have high quality lives, with the availability of antiretroviral medication and thus enjoy the benefits of spiritual formation for themselves and their significant others. Since spiritual formation is a lifelong matter, people living with HIV and AIDS should be encouraged not to give up on their quest for intimacy with Christ and His people in spite of their situation.

As we have observed in the foregoing discussion that spiritual formation involves a critical pedagogical aspect, it is fundamental that both care giver and PLWHA be intentional about their participation. Thus spiritual formation for people living with the HI virus is never an accidental matter. It calls for intentionality within a context of mutual support and unconditional acceptance. This reality also entails that pastoral care givers of people living with HIV and AIDS should provide leadership in the fight against stigma and discrimination which is still so pervasive in contemporary faith communities.

Finally, I note Kübler-Ross’ (1987:11) pithy observation that “Of all the thousands of patients I have seen literally all over the world, I have never seen such mutual support and solidarity as I have among AIDS patients themselves and their partners.” Therefore, a spiritually ‘formed’ people living with HIV and AIDS can become a ‘healed community’ to facilitate perceptual transformation within the communities of faith and beyond. In this way people living with HIV and AIDS may be harnessed into an invaluable resource of spiritual formation in the context of authentic and enduring *koinonia*.

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