

**MOODY BIBLE DISTANCE LEARNING**  
**SYLLABUS**  
**CHRISTIAN SPIRITUAL FORMATION CERTIFICATE PROGRAM**  
**FIRST YEAR PROGRAM**

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“Love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul and with all your strength.”  
Deuteronomy 6:5

“We must imitate Jesus. This is to live as he lived, to think as he thought, to conform to his  
image, which is the seal of our sanctification.”  
Francois Fenelon (d. 1715)

**I. PROGRAM DESCRIPTION**

Participants in this program will be able to grasp a deeper sense of the process of spiritual transformation and therefore be able to assist others in deepening their relationship with Christ. This may occur through one-on-one mentoring, formal spiritual direction, small groups and large group teaching.

This is a non-accredited, non-collegiate program that can be used as a means for personal and/or professional development at the employer’s discretion. Upon completion, participants will receive a Certificate of Completion. No other credential for this program is offered at this time. Participants who complete the year program have the option to continue on with a 6-month intensive training to become a spiritual director.

**II. PROGRAM OBJECTIVES**

Participants participating in the First-Year Christian Spiritual Formation Certificate program will:

1. Begin to understand through experience and teaching that growth and intimacy with Christ is based upon an encounter with God that touches every aspect of the human experience and the very core of their beings.
2. Receive avenues in which they can honestly assess themselves in light of God and His truth.
3. Be encouraged to grow in courage to face into sinful patterns and blocks that prevent them from intimacy with Jesus Christ.
4. Interact with and come to appreciate the biblically informed sources that have been influential throughout the history of the church.

5. Develop skills in selecting disciplines, practices, rules, circumstances and relationships through which they can be matured into Christlikeness.
6. Cultivate deeper intimacy with Christ in prayer by exploring how best to strengthen their own personal communication with God.
7. Learn how to integrate spiritual formation as a vital part of their everyday life and ministry.

### **III. PROGRAM OUTCOMES**

An educational outcome is a direct result, either intended or unintended, of the participant's participation in an educational program or course. This course is included in the participant's curriculum in order to aid in the achievement of the following intended educational outcomes.

*Participants in the First Year program will...*

1. begin to understand through experience and teaching that growth and intimacy with Christ is based upon an encounter with God that touches every aspect of the human experience and the very core of their beings.
2. be provided avenues in which they can honestly assess themselves in light of God and His truth.
3. grow in courage to face into sinful patterns and blocks that prevent them from intimacy with Jesus Christ.
4. interact with and come to appreciate the biblically informed sources that have been influential throughout the history of the church.
5. develop skills in selecting disciplines, practices, rules, circumstances and relationships through which they can be matured into Christlikeness.
6. cultivate deeper intimacy with Christ in prayer by exploring how best to strengthen their own personal communication with God.
7. be learning how to integrate spiritual formation as a vital part of their everyday life and ministry.

### **IV. MODULE THEME OVERVIEW**

#### **Module 1: God's Love Story**

We focus on God's ideal and boundless love for us and see that our response to God's love has been hindered by our brokenness and patterns of sin. We face these sins as we rest in God's forgiving mercy. We address what emotionally healthy spirituality looks like as we enter more closely into a deeper encounter with Christ.

### **Module 2: The Gospel**

We enter into the journey with Christ and identify with His values, goals and methods as we reflect on various Scripture passages of His life. We ponder on various passages of Jesus' public ministry and reflect on God's invitation to us. We will look at our level of health in our relationships and what keeps us from loving others more fully. We also address what keeps us from a more devoted following after Christ and discern His calling in our lives.

### **Module 3: The Cross**

We reflect deeply on living the cruciform life and the obedience and redemptive suffering of Christ. We journey with Christ to the cross, gazing deeply at the various moment leading up to His final crucifixion and the implications of His suffering for each of us personally.

### **Module 4: The Resurrection Life**

We meditate on the reality of the resurrection and discovering and living into our own unique call. We look at living out the gospel in new and radical ways in our personal relationships, our church and the larger world so that the kingdom of God goes forward.

## **V. PROGRAM TEXTS**

*Practicing the Presence of God* by Brother Lawrence  
*Invitations from God* by Adele Calhoun  
*Imitation of Christ* by Thomas a Kempis  
*Can You Drink the Cup?* by Henri Nouwen

## **V. PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS**

- A. **Spiritual Autobiography** – In order to gather a deeper sense of perspective and gratitude for God's working in one's life each participant is asked to write a spiritual autobiography that highlights the major events and crossroads in one's journey with Christ. This will only be read by the instructors.
- B. **Reading:** Participants are encouraged to read Brother Lawrence and Frank Laubach - *Practicing His Presence* to assist them in understanding the nature of unceasing prayer. Participants will be encouraged to read various chapters from *Invitations from God: Accepting God's Offer to Rest, Weep, Forgive, Wait, Remember and More* as different spiritual exercises will be asked of each of the participants to explore. In Module II participants will read *Can You Drink the Cup?* By Henri Nouwen. Module III participants will read *Imitation of Christ* by Thomas a Kempis. In addition, participants will have the opportunity to read and reflect on the various Scriptures, prayers, quotations and articles included within the Module Binder.

- C. **Examen Prayer** – Each participant will prayerfully reflect on the day’s events noting God’s presence, noting moments of activity from the ‘flesh’ and lessons realized about God, oneself, and others. Participants will be asked to spend an hour of prayer a day – either at one time or spread out throughout the day.
- D. **Spiritual Disciplines** - To facilitate understanding the benefits of spiritual disciplines and transform your heart toward living like Christ you will need to practice a spiritual discipline from each of the three areas and write a two-page reflection paper describing your experience.
- E. **Monthly Reflection Paper** – To encourage community and ongoing learning among the participants, each participant will be encouraged to post a 1-2 page paper replying to question on their own growth and learning.
- F. **Major Paper** – At the end of the year program each participant will write a paper outlining their understanding the process and components of spiritual growth as well as their own journey of transformation over the prior year.

## VI. PROGRAM EDUCATIONAL PROCEDURES

- A. The cohort is comprised of four 12-week modules. Each module includes a 2.5 day retreat where all participants come together for fellowship, spiritual direction and teaching.
- B. Each participant will receive a binder that outlines weekly spiritual exercises and a particular topic that they are encouraged to pray through and reflect upon. Embedded in the curriculum is encouraging the participant to be spiritual formed in their spirit, emotions, relationships, mind, body, and vocation. We will examine the Scriptures following the life of Christ throughout and drawing from many of the Ignatius Exercises as a supplement to the content.
- C. Each week is comprised of 10 areas that invite the participant to explore various avenues to expand and explore their relationship with Christ. The areas are:
  - Prayer of Intention
  - Written prayer
  - Scripture reading
  - For reflection (short paragraph from inspirational writer)
  - Required reading article or book excerpt)
  - Engage (optional video/sermon),
  - Challenge (optional activity to do)
  - Journal Question (weekly)
  - Examen exercise (daily)
  - Supplemental Content (for further reading on the weekly topic)
- D. Spiritual Direction will be provided for each participant at the retreat as well one other time during the module (via Zoom call).