THE AUTOETHNOGRAPHIC REFLECTION OF A CHRISTIAN PRINCIPAL AND HIS GREAT DESIRE TO KNOW AND LOVE JESUS CHRIST WHOLEHEARTEDLY: A STORY OF BEING CALLED, ENCOUNTERED, AND CHANGED BY GOD WHILE GROWING AS A SERVANT LEADER

A Thesis Presented to the Faculty of Education
Brandon University
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the Degree of Master of Education

by
Bryan Schroeder
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Brandon University

FACULTY OF EDUCATION

The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommended to the Senate for acceptance, a MASTER'S THESIS entitled:

The Autoethnographic Reflection of a Christian Principal and His Great Desire to Know and Love Jesus Christ Wholeheartedly: A Story of Being Called, Encountered, and Changed by God while Growing as a Servant Leader

Submitted by: Bryan Schroeder

In partial fulfillment for the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF EDUCATION

Date: November 30, 2017

Signature on file.
Advisor:
Dr. Marion Terry

Signature on file.
Committee member:
Dr. Alexa Okrainec

Signature on file.
Committee member:
Dr. Burcu Yaman Nteliooglou

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ABSTRACT

This study presents a qualitative data driven account of highly personalized and transformative experiences that I reflect on, draw meaning from, and summarize the professional value of how I was called, encountered, and changed by God, as I pursued to know and love Jesus Christ wholeheartedly while growing in servant leadership as a (vice) principal at a Christian school. In 2014, I stumbled upon and pursued the notion of using my journal entries from May 2010 to December 2013 (271 pages), as qualitative data to write an autoethnography. The guiding research questions for this autoethnographic study were as follows: What prominent themes did I, a young (vice) principal at a Christian school, naturally write most about in my journal? What meaning did I derive from the personal encounters recorded within the prominent themes of my journal? How did the transforming experiences in my personal life influence me as a growing servant leader, in the principal role, at a Christian school? What kind of encounters did biblical characters, who were seeking God wholeheartedly, have with God that were similar to mine? How are my experiences of being called, encountered, and changed by God supported and paralleled by Christian literature? What implications do my findings have for (future) principals practicing servant leadership? My responses to the research questions offer valuable perspectives and unique insight from my view of the world, as transformation in my personal life led to transformation in my professional life.

Autoethnography was the chosen methodology to vividly express the emotional, intellectual, and spiritual details from my life, and analyze and interpret the meaningful encounters that I had journaled about. Themes were established through the inductive process of coding data, and findings were framed by the servant leader theory, which led to the writing of Chapters IV through VII. Chapter I is an introduction, Chapter II reveals the theoretical
framework and worldview of the study in order to give the reader a grid with which to connect my thematic chapters. Chapter III presents my methodological framework, and Chapter VIII is a summary of how my personal encounters influenced my thoughts, feelings, and actions as a principal of a Christian school, and it also displays implications for principals practicing servant leadership and for teachers at public schools and Christian schools. The sources that contributed significantly to the credibility of this autoethnography were extensive Christian literature references. Bible verses, supportive research of the servant leader theory, and my authentic journal entries. Although my experiences were unique to me, many authors shared similar experiences in the context of their Christian communities. The life changing journey that I experienced as a servant leader, must be known among principals who also have a similar desire to hear from and know God, and be called, encountered, and changed by Him.
DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated

to my beautiful wife and best friend,

Amanda Schroeder,

who has always supported and encouraged me.
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I acknowledge Jesus Christ for His intimate friendship, grace, love, and divine inspiration so that I could lovingly and obediently complete this writing assignment for His glory and His Kingdom.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

It was the fall of 2009 and I still remember where I was sitting, talking to my friend on the phone, telling him I want more. I was not wanting more possessions, prestige, or power. I was wanting to truly know Jesus Christ. I was dissatisfied with continually being distracted by other things and living in compromise or what felt like half-hearted devotion to the God who I believed in. I was hungry in my spirit, I yearned to truly live freely and not feel like my personal faith was always up and down, waxing and waning. I wanted something more; I ached on the inside. I needed something more. My friend told me to keep praying and asking God for more hunger to know Jesus Christ, and more desire to seek Him. He affirmed that God would give me the hunger that I asked for, the desires of my heart, and reveal Himself to me. I prayed and prayed. I could not remain in my dissatisfaction. I was beginning to believe that there was more, whatever that meant; I wanted it because I was not satisfied. I longed to hear Jesus’ voice, desired intimate friendship with Him, wanted two-sided conversations, and needed to be done with the sins that plagued me. I wanted true life. I wanted to feel free as I served God; Hansel (1987), declared that “servant leaders are the freest of all leaders” (p. 159). I was beginning a journey of desire that would transform me so that I could learn to love, serve, and lead as Jesus did, but it began with me desiring Him in His fullness.

I had been hired as a grade 5-8 teacher at a funded independent Christian School in Manitoba, and had been teaching there since September 2008. I enjoyed the teaching role. I had been married for five years and loved my wife Amanda, and I had healthy relationships with the people around me. Amanda and I were attending church, making a difference in our community, and had a beautiful Weimaraner named Blue; life was good. I had a challenging yet respectable
year of teaching during my first year; however, as 2009 progressed, the more that I read the Bible and prayed, heard our pastor preach, met with other believers, and reflected on my life, I was not content. I was an emotionally steady person with a positive perspective of life, a willingness to serve and help others, and I loved learning and enjoyed life, but I felt hindered on the inside of me. I was unsettled and disturbed. I felt like there had to be more to life than what I was experiencing. I wanted an adventurous life full of faith, power, and love. I shared my deep discontentment with a couple of friends and fervently prayed asking God and telling God that I needed to know Jesus Christ more. I do not understand how God works. He is God and I am not. My internal life completely shifted when He started speaking to me and showing me that He heard every one of my prayers. My personal and professional life entered into a season of momentous change in 2010.

In January 2010, I was approached by the principal and chairman of the board of the independent school where I worked, with the proposal of being mentored into the role of principal. The proposal was that I would serve as vice-principal for one year as I continued to teach, and then I would be the principal starting the following school year (2011-2012). I prayed about it and discussed it with my wife, and agreed to take on this challenge in my professional career and started working on my M.Ed. in Educational Administration in July 2010. In 2011, at the age of 30, I became a principal at a K-8 Christian school, a father for the first time, and a man who was overcome with a desperate hunger and vision to seek to know and love Jesus Christ wholeheartedly.

The timing of God is perfect. He knew all along that I would step into my calling as a principal in a Christian school and be seized with a yearning in my spirit to pursue Jesus with all my heart, strength, mind, and soul in the same season of life. I had started listening to sermons,
reading more books, reading the Bible more and talking to God more as I hungered for the reality of intimate relationship with Jesus. I wanted to hear Jesus’ voice, be a man of holiness, be a man who was pure in heart, and be a man who made decisions of justice and righteousness to serve others. I also was entering into a new professional role and career, because serving as a principal is very different than serving as a teacher. The learning curve was nearly vertical. God had prepared me to tackle the new role and continue to learn through the graduate level courses that I began to take. However, I wanted a vision for the Christian school that was rooted in the values and principles of the Kingdom of God. Therefore, not only did I need to learn how to be effective in the principal role, but also how to be effective in a Christian learning community as a Christian principal at a Christian school. I wanted to be taught and led by the King Himself, Jesus Christ.

I committed myself to grow in areas of knowledge in order to understand and fulfill the principal role; however, I believed that God had called me to the principal role at the Christian school for a divine purpose. I also believed that if I could learn to hear and know Jesus’ voice, then I could serve Him faithfully and obediently out of a passionate loving relationship with Him. As I fervently sought God with all my heart, He began to reveal His heart and speak to me in mysterious ways. He was working in me, despite my unawareness of His gentle reforming of my heart and mind. It was the relentless yearning in my spirit to encounter Jesus Christ and know him that compelled me to keep pursuing Him, and through the process I became aware of His deep love and enjoyment of me as His friend. He revealed how real, powerful, loving, happy, holy, and personable He really is. I was impacted immeasurably in my personal identity and journey through the revelations and encounters I experienced, and was subsequently powerfully transformed in my professional identity as a Christian principal who practiced servant
leadership. I believe this study will impact other principals who want to hear from God, and be used, called, encountered, and changed by God.

**Context of the Study**

I believed that God had called me into the principal role at the Christian school, and yet I frequently wrestled with questions regarding why He wanted me in that role, how I was to live out a personal faith professionally, and how I was to passionately and adequately serve and lead staff members – some who were twice my age. I did not want to try to find success or fill that role without being led and inspired by Jesus Christ. The expectations of principals are already overbearing; however, I also felt a spiritual pressure to be faithful and obedient as I served God in that new professional role. The condemnation was my own doing. It was hard. It did not take long for me to realize how emotionally and mentally demanding the job was, how little I knew, and how much I needed help from others. I also discovered how much selfishness and pride were in my heart as I journeyed to learn how to serve and work with people and make decisions humbly and confidently, in a Christian school community that was filled with passionate but diverse board and staff members, parents, and students. I needed to be grounded in my faith and growing in relationship with Jesus to be effective, and yet that was the exact area that I felt needed the most renovation, in order for me to succeed as a servant leader in the principal role at the Christian school.

The role of a principal at a Christian School has additional demands and expectations than a principal at a public school. Although both roles and contexts can embody the servant leadership model, the clear expectation to set a spiritual tone and create a healthy thriving spiritual atmosphere exists only at a Christian or religious school. The vision of the Christian school where I work is to educate and equip children with Kingdom of God views and values. It
is a funded independent school that requires Manitoba certified teachers to teach the Manitoba curriculum, who have the privilege to teach it from a faith-filled biblical worldview. All of the staff members have a personal faith in Jesus Christ and do their best to model and teach biblical truths integrated with the provincial curriculum. Christian schools have a mandate and remarkable opportunity to educate and prepare students with truth and purpose, in a spirit of humility, in order for them to go and powerfully serve and love humanity as Jesus Christ did (Schroeder, 2016, p. 16). Jesus referred to the principles, values, and reality of heaven being expressed on earth as the “Kingdom of God” (Luke 17:20-21; Mark 1:15).

Significant aspects of my servant leadership role as principal at a Christian school were to model a servant heart (Cerit, 2009, p. 603), encourage teachers’ hearts (Grothaus, 2004, p. 229), and communicate a larger vision (Taylor, Martin, Hutchinson, & Jinks, 2007, p. 402) that was related to the Kingdom of God. “When servant leadership is defined accurately and implemented correctly, teachers are inspired, mobilized, and empowered to maximize their effectiveness in the purposeful roles that they carry out” (Schroeder, 2016, p. 17); therefore, I needed to educate and equip my heart and mind in order to be an effective servant leader. I needed to learn that from Jesus Himself, because He led His followers by modeling extravagant servanthood. Servant leadership is highly demanding. It aims to increase the effectiveness of teachers by positively impacting their personal beliefs and values (Cerit, 2009, p. 602; Spears, 2004, p. 10; Taylor et al., 2007, p. 402), classroom leadership and pedagogy (Russel, 2012, p. 16; Stewart, 2012, p. 238), interactions with coworkers (Crippen, 2010, p. 34; Taylor et al., 2007, p. 412), interactions with students (Herman & Marlowe, 2005, p. 175; Sultan & van de Bunt-Kokhuis, 2014, p. 6), and desire and ability to build school community (Cerit, 2009, p. 602; Crippen, 2012, p. 193) at a Christian school. In order for me, as the principal of a Christian
school, to meet expectations that revolved around inspiring staff members’ hearts, faith, personal values, worldview, relationships, and Christian pedagogy through servant leadership, I needed to be growing exponentially and learning vehemently in my relationship with Jesus Christ. That became my driving focus and desperate need in my life.

I started journaling my prayers, thoughts, and feelings five months before I started working as vice-principal at the Christian school, because of my hunger to know and love Jesus Christ wholeheartedly. I resolved to write daily in my journal, and it became a part of my personal and professional journey. As I moved into the vice-principal role and then principal role, I not only wanted to learn the philosophy and practicality of the servant leadership methods that Jesus Christ modeled, I wanted to intimately know Jesus Christ. There would be no substitute for that desire deep within my spirit.

I was encouraged to record my “history in God” by a church leader out of Kansas City who has a powerful testimony of God doing amazing things when he and the other leaders focused on loving, knowing, and obeying Jesus through wholehearted timely investments of prayer, worship, and serving people. God spoke to them through various methods, and truly instructed and guided them as they sought to obey His leading. I wanted a similar testimony and was exhilarated when I began to hear God’s voice! I recorded those encounters in my journal alongside my desperate cries for more of God, and I enjoyed looking back over the months and years to see what I had written as my history in God. It was encouraging to see how God was changing me, particularly how I was growing in my faith and relationship with Jesus, and noticeably through the trying circumstances of life and struggles as a principal growing in servant leadership. The social context of my experiences changed with the dynamics, location, purposes, and expressions of my independent, interdependent, and dependent biblically based,
faith fueled spiritual disciplines of my Christian faith. The people and places that my faith journey led me to provided the social and cultural context of this study. Social context and consciousness is a significant aspect of any autoethnography (Reed-Danahay, 1997, p. 9); therefore, I use “personal experience to illustrate facets of cultural experience, and, in so doing, make characteristics of a culture familiar for insiders and outsiders” (Ellis, Adams, & Bochner, 2011, p. 276). My story will awaken the spirits and engage the souls of readers, particularly principals practicing servant leadership who can identify with a similar desire to hear from God, and be used, called, encountered, and changed by God in their personal and professional lives.

**Purpose of the Study**

My life changed when I, out of personal desperation and resolve, changed my priorities to seek to know and love Jesus Christ wholeheartedly and hear His voice. My life changed even more when He, the Son of God, responded! My journey of wanting to know God and then God revealing Himself to me cycled repetitively. Every time that He told me or showed me something made me want His presence, power, and characteristics in every area of my life. I believe that God has a purpose and calling for every person He creates, and wants to interact with each one in a personal way. Therefore, as a young (vice) principal, I journaled internal and external areas of victory, struggle, doubt, confusion, failure, anger, celebration, and desire that I experienced in my personal and professional life. I believe that principals practicing servant leadership need, above all things, to have a thriving, adventurous, intimate friendship with Jesus Christ.

Jesus changes everything, and if people are open to His leading, He makes everything better. Christian principals must lead as the primary Christ-like servants in their schools, in order to model their love and honour for Jesus, for students, and for colleagues and parents. I
hope that this study will awaken, provoke, encourage, disturb, and compel readers to seek wholeheartedly to know and love Jesus Christ in their personal lives so that they are transformed personally and professionally. Neyman (2011), a veteran teacher who wrote an autoethnography about her teaching experiences, agreed: “The transformations that took place on a professional level were triggered by internal changes in my personal life” (p. 5). I am still learning how to serve, love, and work with people in my professional role as principal at a Christian school. My personal experiences and encounters in my faith journey have a direct impact on my professional role.

The purpose of this study is to tell a worthwhile data driven story in order to reflect on, draw meaning from, and summarize the professional value of how I was called, encountered, and changed by God, as I pursued to know and love Jesus Christ wholeheartedly while learning and growing in servant leadership as a young (vice) principal at a Christian school. The guiding research questions for this study were –

What prominent themes did I, a young (vice) principal at a Christian school, naturally write most about in my journal?

What meaning did I derive from the personal encounters recorded within the prominent themes of my journal?

How did the transforming experiences in my personal life influence me as a growing servant leader, in the principal role, at a Christian school?

What kind of encounters did biblical characters, who were seeking God wholeheartedly, have with God that were similar to mine?

How are my experiences of being called, encountered, and changed by God supported and paralleled by Christian literature?
What implications do my findings have for (future) principals practicing servant leadership?

Why Autoethnography?

In 2014, I stumbled across and began to pursue the idea of being able to use my journal entries from May 2010 to December 2013 (271 pages), as qualitative data to write an autoethnography. The genre of autoethnography presents writers opportunity to dynamically share their personal experiences and bring meaning to a larger social or cultural context (Jackman, 2009, p. 27). The style of writing usually “features concrete action, emotion, embodiment, self-consciousness, and introspection” (Ellis, 2004, p. xix); therefore, I thought autoethnography was the appropriate methodology to express, in the first-person account, vivid emotional, intellectual, and spiritual details from my life (Ellis & Bochner, 2002, p. 744; Jackman, 2009, p. 28). I welcomed the opportunity and challenge to tell my story by weaving intricate connections between my faith and profession, and analyzing and interpreting events in my life that have led to deeper meaning (Jackman, 2009, p. 29; Neyman, 2011, p. 23), and understanding of who I am, who Jesus is, and how He has influenced me as a servant leader in the principal role at a Christian school. The story found in the many pages of my journal give substance to this thorough study rooted in personal life changing experiences, which I believe will engage, provoke, and add value to the reader.

The autoethnographic writer is conscious of his or her evolving worldview and has the competency to shift it based on who he or she wants to be. The introspective writer “connects their own life experiences with those of onlookers in a way that transforms preconceived ideas and biases” (Custer, 2014, p. 5); according to Reinelt (as cited in Jackman, 2009), this happens by “looking at the world from a specific perspective, and limited vantage point . . . [thus]
creating space for dialogue and debate that instigates and shapes social change” (p. 26). People undervalue the power and pertinence of their worldview and may even be unconscious of the assumptions they make every day. Conscious competence leads to improved lives and a changed world. Ellis (2013) sagaciously and eloquently elucidated the qualitative research method of autoethnography by declaring the following:

Autoethnography is not simply a way of knowing about the world; it has become a way of being in the world, one that requires living consciously, emotionally, reflexively. It asks that we not only examine our lives but also consider how and why we think, act, and feel as we do. Autoethnography requires that we observe ourselves observing, that we interrogate what we think and believe, and that we challenge our own assumptions, asking over and over if we have penetrated as many layers of our own defenses, fears, and insecurities as our project requires. It asks that we rethink and revise our lives, making conscious decisions about who and how we want to be. And in the process, it seeks a story that is hopeful, where authors ultimately write themselves as survivors of the story they are living. (p. 10)

Each sentence of this quotation bears rich meaning and application for this study. We dwell in our world and it dwells in us (Neyman, 2011, p. 6), but as we reflect on, observe, and interrogate what we perceive and believe we can hopefully purify our prejudgements and align them with God’s will.

This study is buried deep within a biblical worldview that must be explained in order to construct a framework consisting of layered ideas and beliefs that provide understanding to how and why I think, feel, and act the way that I do. Ellis’ explanation is foundational for all autoethnographic writers. Its significance led me to format my final chapter (Chapter VIII) with
two parts that convey the inward implications of the valuable influences of my personal transformations upon my role as a principal and the outward implications for public schools, Christian schools, and generally other (future) principals. The first part is organized into sections of reflection, as Ellis powerfully emphasized, which describe how my thoughts, feelings, and actions were particularly influenced in my professional role. The second part unveils implications for public schools, Christian schools, and other principals. In chapter two, I explain my theoretical framework and worldview so that my four thematic chapters (Chapters IV-VII) have an ideological grid within which the reader can place them. Chapter III explains my methodological framework.
CHAPTER II
THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND WORLDVIEW

Theoretical Framework

As an educator, I believe that the servant leader theory is a powerful framework of beliefs for educational leadership and management. I also believe that Jesus Christ was the penultimate servant leader. The more that I study the life of Christ and grow in my relationship with Him, the more confidently and competently I am able to serve and lead as a principal. The servant leadership model has steadily grown since Greenleaf (1970) popularized it. It is a leadership model that begins with the leader having a pure, strong, natural, intrinsic desire to serve people (Crippen, 2010, p. 28; Stewart, 2012, p. 235), thus establishing him or her as a servant first, and as a leader second. Crippen has studied Greenleaf’s original work and further researched and developed the theory in educational leadership and management. Servant leaders are humble and compassionate people who focus on serving their followers and meeting their needs. Crippen (2005) discovered that servant-hearted educators’ regular thoughtful acts of service and committed stewardship often exposed them as genuine servants before they were officially acknowledged or positioned as leaders (Crippen, 2005, p. 12). Crippen’s and others’ research findings have revealed that servant leadership has improved school communities by enhancing teachers’ value systems, pedagogy, and interactions with colleagues and students (Crippen, 2010, p. 34; Herman & Marlowe, 2005, p. 175; Spears, 2004, p. 10). Students’ moral literacy and teachers’ shared decision-making capabilities have improved due to servant leadership; both contribute to building school community and influencing school culture (Crippen, 2010, p. 34; Stewart, 2012, p. 234; Taylor et al., 2007, pp. 404, 413).
Strong character traits are necessary for effective servant leaders. The top ten characteristics of servant leaders, based on Greenleaf’s work, are listening, empathy, healing, persuasion, awareness, foresight, conceptualization, commitment to the growth of people, stewardship, and community building (Crippen, 2005, pp. 13-14; Crippen, 2010, pp. 29-32; Stewart, 2012, pp. 236-238). Crippen (2010) also emphasized that humility is an integral personal attribute of servant leaders (p. 28). I have matured as a leader due to my value of humility, practice of listening, and commitment to the growth of the people whom I lead. This maturing has been fostered by an understanding that a common link among the top servant leadership traits is communication and that I can always improve my communication skills. Communication must be clear, genuine, and rooted in a desire to understand what the other person or people are saying and hearing. It is always two sided and mostly understood based on body language and tone of voice, rather than verbal implication. Trust must be built through communication, not hindered. People who are genuinely servant-hearted develop such characteristics in their lives; however, not every leader does.

Teachers need principals who genuinely care for them beyond the requirements of the job, in order for them to be influenced on a personal level. Principals’ personal value systems will naturally infiltrate everything they do and potentially everyone whom they serve and lead. Therefore, the servant leader theory is effective optimally when teachers’ personal values are permeated by the principal’s values and others-focused characteristics, which will naturally influence the school community’s values. Servant leadership propels educators to become wiser and healthier emotionally (Crippen, 2005, p. 12), and to grow toward meeting the glaring need to teach with humble conviction. Thus, teachers embrace a positive servant mindset (Taylor et al., 2007, p. 403) and proliferate empowering learning experiences for their students (Crippen, 2010,
Remarkably, Cerit (2009) learned that such a significant change in teachers’ values and perspectives increased their job satisfaction (p. 613). Principals are responsible to develop, serve, and empower their staff members to become servant leaders themselves (Crippen, 2010, p. 28). Schools led by servant-hearted principals are often successful, because the teachers have been genuinely cared for, mentored to become servant leaders, and personally influenced by their committed servant leader. Such nurturing relational impact is naturally reciprocal among colleagues (Crippen, 2012, p. 75) and those teachers have learned to work collaboratively and relate to one another and their students with honour, integrity, and selflessness (Cerit, 2009, p. 604; Crippen, 2005, p. 15; Taylor et al., 2007, p. 405).

In the realm of education, the theoretical framework of servant leadership “provides the promise of an effective educational leadership and management model” (Crippen, 2005, p. 16), which Jesus consistently used to teach His disciples over two thousand years ago. Followers of Jesus were filled with hope because the vision of experiencing and increasing the Kingdom of God was articulated effectively among them. Followers of servant leaders in education are also filled with hope as they are empowered to teach toward a larger vision for their school community. Hope is arising as a critical need and focus among students in Canadian schools. There is much anxiety, trauma, confusion, and brokenness experienced by students who attend elementary and secondary schools. Stories and case studies of hope are being researched, published, and used in Canadian post-secondary institutions in order to adequately train pre-service teachers to educate students who are losing hope. AuCoin and Stegemann (2017) presented 9 studies in their text Inclusive Education: Stories of Success and Hope in a Canadian Context, which tailors to educational leadership. The Department of Curriculum & Pedagogy out of the Faculty of Education at The University of British Columbia offers HOPE education
(Health, Outdoor, and Physical Education) as a M.Ed. cohort. It is a unique program that targets teachers, coaches, administrators, and outdoor leaders and challenges them to think about the established educational values and ontological and epistemological issues with a hope-filled approach of experiential learning. The intentional message of a hope-filled education is strongly linked to the servant leader theory because a servant leader is focused first on meeting the needs of those whom he or she is responsible for. Hope is one of those needs.

Principals who embrace a servant heart and the accompanying characteristics lead by empowering teachers and increasing teachers’ effectiveness, in order to build collaboratively toward a larger hope-filled vision in the school community. Servant leaders transform their followers and their schools (Crippen, 2012, p. 194; Taylor et al., 2007, p. 417). This study is educationally significant and academically contributory because of its global application to all principals who identify with the servant leader theory and who desire to hear from God and be used, called, encountered, and changed by God in their personal and professional lives.

**My Worldview**

The value of my story to the profession of a principal may only reach to those who perceive the world from the servant leadership perspective and with the understanding of a biblical Christian worldview. Everyone has a worldview, whether or not individuals can identify or explain it. A worldview, or a perspective of the world, is how each person views the world and the reality that individuals experience in and around it. In essence, the world becomes operational to us based on a set of ideas, “if we did not believe these ideas, we could have no idea how to make sense of the world” (Mohler, 2012, p. 45); therefore, everyone has a worldview that helps them understand the world. The set of assumptions that create my outlook on the world and thereby influence my actions, thoughts, and feelings (Ridenour, 2001, p. 7), are
important to understanding myself. A person’s worldview can be discovered after answering questions,

(1) Who or what is God? (2) Who am I and how do I operate in my world? (3) How can I tell right from wrong? (4) When it is all over, where do I go? (5) How can I know the truth; for that matter, how can I be sure that I know anything? (6) What does my life mean and how do I fit into history? (Ridenour, 2001, p. 7)

As a worldview is shaped, frameworks are created, and moral judgements are predictable based on the conclusions reached after analyzing issues within the frameworks, which are founded upon original assumptions. A worldview determines what each person believes to be true and false, right and wrong, good and evil. I have discovered that the more that I become cognizant of and understand my worldview, the more that I understand myself. For me to tell my story adequately and poignantly, it is significant that I first present a framework of ideas and assumptions, to offer a perspective of the foundational contours to my life.

**Biblical Christian Faith**

I believe that creation and the created order, living and non-living things, were created by an eternal being, God. I believe that people have a spirit, a soul (mind, emotions, and will), and a body. I believe that God created Adam and Eve as the first humans, who walked in perfect relationship with a relational God, until Adam and Eve disobeyed God. Their spirits were separated from the Spirit of God; therefore, they experienced spiritual death, although they continued to live and communicate with their soul and body. All of the created order was affected by the sinful disobedience of Adam and Eve, because they were given legal dominion and spiritual leadership over it. That disobedience allowed death to exist for the first time, because the choices of Adam and Eve, who were moral agents of good and had free will, decided
to make choices that were absent of the morality of good. The absence of good is evil. God allowed evil to exist, because he gave free will to men and women. God is a triune God: Father, Son, and Spirit with a unique and distinct personhood within each person, yet existing in perfect relational unity as one God.

Why did God create people? God the Father wanted a large family of sons and daughters with whom He can share all of His creation; therefore, He delightedly experiences immense pleasure when He uniquely forms each person’s valuable and unique spirit, soul, and body. Each created person is loved by God, is desired by Him to be adopted as a son or daughter, and has a purpose for his or her life. God the Son, Jesus Christ, was born of the virgin Mary by the power of the Holy Spirit, lived a sinless life on earth as a man and accepted the limitations of the flesh, yet walked in unbroken communion with His Father. The Father sent the Son from heaven as the exact representation of His nature, substance, essence, and character. The Son was delighted to serve the Father, and do only what He saw His Father doing and say only what He heard His Father saying. He eventually died on the cross of Calvary around the age of thirty-three, and rose from the dead, thereby conquering death and redeeming all humans from the spiritual consequences of sin once and for all. This atoning act of redemption made it possible for them to be spiritually reconciled to their Heavenly Father, adopted as sons and daughters, by the power and presence of the Spirit of God when they receive and believe in the Name of Jesus.

God the Spirit, the Holy Spirit, dwells within anyone who believes in Jesus Christ, and submits to the leadership and Lordship of Jesus as the King of kings and Lord of lords. The Holy Spirit is the personal and powerful moving presence and release of God the Son’s desires and words. People often experience supernatural encounters with the Holy Spirit, when they are open to knowing Jesus and having Him influence their spirits, souls and/or bodies. Jesus died on
the cross and rose from the dead, in order to re-establish the desired relationship between the Holy Spirit of the Living God and the spirits of humans. It is amazing what God did to reconcile and redeem His sons and daughters, who were lost in darkness, so that they could become children of the light by confessing with their mouth and believing in their heart that Jesus is Lord. There are longings inside every person’s spirit to be enjoyed by God, to experience intimacy without shame, to be fascinated, to be beautiful, to be great, to make a deep and lasting impact, and to be wholehearted (Bickle, 2006, p. 23). Those longings can only be fully satisfied as people discover who they were created to be as they become rooted and established in the love of Jesus Christ and grow to know and love Him wholeheartedly.

My worldview is rooted in a biblical Christian faith, because “Christianity is a comprehensive worldview and way of life that grows out of Christian reflection on the Bible and the unfolding plan of God revealed in the unity of the Scriptures” (Mohler, 2012, p. 45). I believe that Jesus Christ is the most unique individual to have ever lived and is the Son of God and Son of Man, as He claimed and presented Himself to be (McDowell, 1977, p. 10; Strobel, 1998, p. 35; Zacharias, 2000, p. 3), and I fell in love with Him and regularly experience His love and friendship. After I have explained who I believe Jesus to be and what I believe He did for humanity, then the rest of my worldview rests on how I believe that Jesus viewed the Scriptures, Himself, His Heavenly Father, the Holy Spirit, His Kingdom, me, and all people whom He came to seek, save, and offer eternal and abundant life. Discovering who Jesus is has changed my life and truly changed my perspective of everything.

The Historical Jesus

Jesus was a Jewish historical figure who “was counted in a Roman census” (Little, 1988b, p. 73), lived in Palestine in the first century under the reign of Tiberius Caesar and was
then crucified by Pontius Pilate (McGrath, 1997a, p. 39; McGrath, 1997b, p. 16). If anyone takes the time to study the life and teachings of Jesus, the conclusion is that He was more than just a man, left a permanent impression on history, and impacted generations of humanity (Jeffery, 1999, p. 30; McDowell, 1977, p. 7; Zacharias, 2000, p. 5). The prominent biographies of Jesus’ life, found in the gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, record events from indirect or direct eyewitness accounts (Jeffrey, 1999, p. 34; Little, 1998a, p. 78; Strobel, 1998, p. 29) that reveal Jesus’ claims about Himself. The name Jesus comes from the name Jeshua in the Greek and means “the Lord saves” (McDowell, 1977, p. 11; McGrath, 1997a, p. 38), and the title “Christ” comes from the Hebrew word Mashiach or in the Greek, Messiah (McDowell, 1977, p. 11; McGrath, 1997a, p. 38). The origins of Christianity are rooted in the historical evidence for the existence of Jesus, and He is the central figure of Christianity because He proved who He said He was by what He did, “Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures” (1 Corinthians 15:3-4).

Jesus of Nazareth was not only written about in the Bible and Christian literature, but was discussed in the Talmud, an ancient Jewish work. He was also written about by historical writers such as Pliny the Younger, Tacitus, and Josephus. They acknowledged that people viewed Jesus as the Messiah, people were healed miraculously by Jesus, He was rejected by the Jewish religious leaders, He was crucified under the authority of Pontius Pilate in the reign of Tiberius, and large numbers of people saw him after He was crucified, and people worshipped Him as God (Strobel, 2001, p. 67). The four gospels found in the New Testament, the biographies of Christ, are traced back to 24,000 original manuscripts of the New Testament, mostly in Greek and Latin, are 99.5 % consistent and virtually say the same thing (Strobel, 2001, pp. 61-62). Evidence from

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1 All scripture citations are from The Holy Bible, New International Version, 2011.
the early church, the four gospels, and even the first century Jewish leaders all point to an empty tomb after the dead body Jesus of Nazareth was laid to rest in the tomb, which was guarded by Roman soldiers.

Jesus powerfully changed His disciples’ lives through His life, death, and resurrection. There are no natural explanations to account for the disappearance of Jesus’ body and – look what happened to the disciples: At the time of Jesus’ death they were depressed. Peter denied Jesus three times. The disciples ran away because they were afraid they would be put to death. They were hiding behind closed doors. John decided he was going back to the family fishing business. But a short time later, these disciples were out boldly proclaiming that Jesus Christ is alive. These once cowardly men were transformed into individuals so certain of what they saw – the resurrected Jesus – that they were willing to go to their death proclaiming that he is the Son of God who came back from the grave. Not only were they willing to go to their death, almost all of them – 10 out of the 11 remaining disciples – were put to death for their faith. Yet none of them gave up their testimony that the resurrection was real and that it authenticated Jesus’ claim that he is God. (Strobel, 2001, pp. 98-99)

The historical accuracy of the life of Jesus of Nazareth is confirmed by many historians, and they acknowledge that people perceived Jesus as the Messiah.

**Jesus is the Son of God**

Jesus’ own teachings were rooted in the Old Testament truths that the Jews were familiar with; however, He also claimed to be God. He claimed that He and the Father were one (John 10:30), that He could forgive sins (Mark 2:5), and that He was the Son of Man (Mark 2:11), a statement of deity. Lewis wrote (as cited in McDowell, 1977),
A man who was merely a man and said the sort of things Jesus said would not be a great moral teacher. He would either be a lunatic, on a level with the man who says he is a poached egg, or else he would be the Devil of Hell. You must make your choice. Either this man was, and is, the Son of God: or else a madman or something worse. (p. 26)

During Jesus’ life on earth, He predicted his own death, the destruction of Jerusalem, and His resurrection from the dead. He had flawless character, perfect personality, and sweet gentleness. Jesus had power over natural forces, death, sickness and disease, and changed history by predicting His own death, dying, and then rising from the dead to verify His claim to do so (Little, 1988a, p. 46). Macleod (1998) powerfully explicated,

What manner of man was he: able to overcome the scandal of his crucifixion and exert such an influence on human history that to this day scholars eagerly discuss his impact not only on religion but on art and science, politics and literature? Is it credible that one so insignificant that nobody had any interest in his life and personality (certainly not enough interest to give an accurate account of them) could have made such an impact on human affairs? (p. 117).

Jesus remarkably fulfilled over 100 Old Testament prophecies, accurately predicted His own death and resurrection, and lovingly and powerfully demonstrated authority over creation.

**Jesus and Discipleship**

Jesus invested time, energy, and much prayer into His twelve spiritual sons, His disciples. Jesus modeled true discipleship, because He invested His life into 12 men’s lives so that they could love, live, and lead as He did. The night before He was arrested, Jesus was sent to six different trials, and then crucified. During that sacred evening with His disciples, He said that the Holy Spirit of God, the breath of the life of God, would come to guide them into truth (John
16:13a; Foster, 1998, p. 18; Murray, 2002, p. 174), remind them of everything that He had said (John 14:26), and tell them what was yet to come (John 16:13b). He told them that it was to their advantage that He leave them (John 16:7). He was promising that His own Spirit would dwell within them (John 14:17) after He rose from the dead, so that they could receive the same power, love, thoughts, and feelings that Jesus received from His spiritual Father (John 16:14), and they could be one with the Father as He was one with the Father (John 14:20).

After Jesus rose from the dead, He breathed on His disciples and gave them His own Spirit so that they could become bold proclaimers and dynamic demonstrators of the love and power of the Kingdom of God. Halter and Smay (2008) explained how Jesus modeled His deepest convictions and values.

When you look at the influence that Jesus had on billions of people over the centuries, you see that it can all be traced back to how he influenced twelve, then seventy, then 120 followers. His primary mode of moving people was to facilitate a big classroom of “show and tell.” There was great power in His words, but His following came from the way He modeled Kingdom life. He simply lived a different story and invited people to observe. And then, as they were drawn to Him, He communicated about a new Kingdom and offered people entrance into it. (p. 76)

As a successful teacher, Jesus was a servant first (Russell, 2012, p. 16). His disciples may have identified with what Barna (2009) imagined many students think, “We all have more talent and ability than we think, but we need somebody who really believes in us, and sets goals and standards, and shows us how we could possibly achieve them” (p. 16). In untainted leadership, Jesus believed in His disciples and showed them how to lead by proclaiming the reality of the Kingdom of God and then humbly demonstrating it by serving people in need who wanted help.
His disciples learned and adopted the same characteristics and values as their teacher. They even had a greater impact on their followers, because of the powerful servant leadership of the One whom they followed.

**Jesus and the Holy Spirit**

Jesus referred to the Holy Spirit as the Advocate (John 14:26) who would testify about Him (John 15:26) and be with His disciples (and all believers) and in them (Ferguson, 1996, p. 68; John 14:17; & Moore, 2002, p. 32). Russell (2012) wrote,

> So here are the facts: If we have surrendered our lives to Jesus Christ and made Him our Lord and Savior, then right now – whether we feel it or not, whether our circumstances are good or bad, whether our relationships are positive or negative – we have the very Spirit of God dwelling deep within our spirits. The Spirit who raised Jesus from the dead, the God of Genesis 1 who spoke the universe into existence, lives in us. Jesus Christ now dwells within all believers, regardless of their ethnicity, their gender, their background, or their struggles. And not only is Christ in us, but more than that, we are in Him. (p. 39)

There is no greater storyline than the one that God wrote and invited all people into, He desires us and enjoys us. The Holy Spirit allows believers in Christ to access the heart and throne of God the Father in heaven.

**Jesus is the Son of Man**

Jesus sacrificed Himself on a cross and qualifies those who believe in Him, because He took their place. All people are tainted in their spirit with sin, which leads to death, and sin cannot co-exist with an eternal Holy God. Atonement was needed: Expiation for people’s sins. Redemption comes with a cost. Jesus paid the price. He lived a sinless life and was the
symbolic sacrificial lamb without blemish that satisfied the requirements of a just God; therefore, by the grace of God, all who accept the righteous gift of Jesus’ sacrifice receive the holiness, forgiveness, and ability to co-exist in the presence of, a holy God. Although believers continue to sin, it is by faith in God’s grace and the reception of the gift of righteousness, they are now seen as spiritually purified by the blood that Christ shed on the cross.

One sinless human was needed to qualify all the sin-affected humans. Paul the apostle explicated,

As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient. All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our flesh and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature deserving of wrath. But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions – it is by grace you have been saved. . . . through faith – and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God – not by works, so that no one can boast.

(Ephesians 2:1-5, 8-9)

That gracious qualification brings believers access to God the Father through God the Spirit so that people who believe in Jesus can live victoriously with the same power and love that Jesus lived with. Jesus modeled a prophetic lifestyle by being in constant communion with God His Father and therefore, did only what He saw His Father doing and said only what He heard His Father saying (John 5:19). Jesus obediently served His Father by embracing the humble attitude of a human servant, in order to lead many people to freedom. He embraced the limitations of the human body and soul given to Him, and needed the Holy Spirit to show Him what God the
Father was doing and wanted to do (Bickle, 2008, p. 172; Hebrews 4:15), and Jesus responded in faithful obedience.

**The Word of God**

The holy scriptures, God’s special revelation to all people, are in a book that was written by men, yet inspired and breathed into by the Holy Spirit. In other words, it is unlike any other book ever written. The book is not magical yet without faith it is basically information. With faith, it becomes life-changing, powerful truth to each who reads it. The apostle John declared, “The Word was God [Jesus] . . . Through him all things were made that has been made. In him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind” (John 1:1-3) and the passage continues to describe God in the flesh, Jesus of Nazareth, being the Word of God. Grudem (1994) stated, “John not only calls Jesus ‘God’ but also refers to him as ‘the Word’ (Gr. logos)” (p. 546); therefore, engaging in and meditating on the Word of God presents great opportunities to get to know Jesus personally. Jeremiah (2011) highlighted that Jesus of Nazareth rebuked the religious leaders in Israel because they had taken away a key of knowledge for the people, which was the poignant and practical understanding of God’s Word (p. 156). The book of Hebrews describes the Word of God as alive and active, which judges the attitudes of the heart and pierces deep into the soul and spirit, and is described being sharper than a double-edged sword (4:12). The context of the verse is that God sees everything and knows everything and can speak authoritatively to anything that He created because it is His (Psalm 24:1). Therefore, His Word carries His power and authority when spoken with faith. God the Father gave people specific revelation, which was written down by men who were inspired and empowered by the Holy Spirit of God and eventually compiled into the Holy Bible. It has the written words of God.
The Kingdom of God

When Jesus came to the earth, His main message was proclaiming what and where the Kingdom of God was. When the disciples asked Jesus to teach them how to pray, Jesus modeled that they were to talk to their holy Heavenly Father and agree by declaring that they want His Kingdom to come, and His will to be done, on earth as it is heaven. The Kingdom of God existed before the earth was created and it is an everlasting Kingdom. A kingdom refers to a territory and realm wherein a ruling king has reigning dominance and divine influence in every sphere of society. The Kingdom of God is the manifestation of the reality of heaven, according to the King’s desires, in the realm of business, education, family, government, media, religion, and the arts. People often think about God’s Kingdom as being a religious influence only, because rigid rule-based religion has tainted God’s original intent for people to experience the fullest available expression and reality of peace, joy, hope, freedom, justice, community, family, purpose in work, and relationship with God in each society sphere.

As the storyline of the Old Testament unfolds, it is evident that the Lord, who is enthroned above the cherubim (angels) in heaven, is the King of the nations; however, His desire is to dwell with humans and share all the goodness of the land of His Kingdom with them (2 Chronicles 20:6; Isaiah 37:6; Psalm 10:16). God desires to see people, His sons and daughters, living kingly and priestly lives (Exodus 19:6) as they rule and reign over His “stuff.” “The earth is the Lord’s and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it” (Psalm 24:1); therefore, He has always viewed His daughters as royal princesses and His sons as royal princes who can have access to Him, to be abiding in close relationship with Him in the Kingdom. Because Jesus died on the cross, rose from the dead, and ascended to heaven, the only access to the Father is by
receiving and believing in Jesus Christ, who is the Way, the Truth, and the Life (John 14:6). True life is found in knowing and loving Him sincerely.

Adam and Eve were originally chosen, appointed, and given dominance over all of creation by God the Father; the earth, in all of its glory, was their kingdom to legitimately rule (Genesis 2:15-17). They were to fill the earth with their governance, increase in number, be fruitful and productive, and subdue the earth by conquering and controlling it with the values and principles of God (Genesis 1:28). However, they lost the legal right to rule over the kingdom of the earth when they chose to disobey God; therefore, the keys of power and authority over God’s creation were stolen by the deceiver, Satan. He had legal dominance over God’s creation on earth until the “keys” could be rightfully and justly taken back by a human who gained the legal right to stand before the Holy Father in heaven by paying the just death penalty of humanity’s sin. Power and authority would be given to a worthy human who was sinless, although tempted in every way as a human, and who lovingly and fully obeyed God the Father, while living on the earth. The only human to do that was Jesus of Nazareth. Not only did He acquire right standing for Himself, as a human, before the Father, He also made available to all humans who receive and believe in the Name of Jesus Christ, the same intimate relationship and right standing with God the Father by conquering death and establishing eternal life. God’s Word says that Jesus –

Forgave us all our sins, having canceled the charge of our legal indebtedness, which stood against us and condemned us; he has taken it away, nailing it to the cross. And having disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross. (Colossians 2:13b-15)

Legal dominance over creation was regained for humanity by a man, Jesus of Nazareth, who was found worthy to set people free from the righteous judgement of eternal damnation.
God the Father granted God the Son full authority and power over the Father’s Kingdom, because Jesus was faithful and obedient in His sonship while on earth. Jesus’ main message on earth was that the Kingdom of God was near and accessible through repentance and by believing in the gospel of Christ (Luke 10:9; Mark 1:15). He also preached that the Kingdom of God is in those who believe (Luke 17:21), and it will be fully manifested on the earth when He returns (Revelation 19) to bring heaven to forever habituate the earth. After Jesus rose from the dead, but before He ascended to heaven, He commissioned His disciples and anyone who believed in Him and embraced His commandments, to love Him and people and to receive His power and authority to release the Kingdom of God by the power of the Holy Spirit (Matthew 28:18-20). This would be done by following the servant leader model of Christ’s life on earth of building relationships, teaching, practicing discipleship, baptizing, and ministering to people from servant hearts and Christ-like minds. Abiding in close loving friendship with Jesus Christ (John 15:1-17), by His Holy Spirit, is the key to living a joyful life of humble service and faithful obedience until God’s Kingdom is fully manifested in every realm of society.

**Conclusion**

If I could pick any person in history to follow, inquire of, observe, learn from, interact with, and grow in deep friendship with, I would choose Jesus of Nazareth. I want to know His thoughts, His feelings, and His way of doing things. He said and did things that were unprecedented, unpredictable, and uncanny. He had solid morals, the fear of God, creativity, and wisdom as He showed compassionate mercy with calm consideration and contemplation in conflict and confrontation. However, I was not content to know *about* Him, I needed to know Him. I no longer only wanted to hear stories about other people hearing His voice, being encountered and led by Him, and walking in intimate and victorious loving relationship with
Him. I wanted to have my own stories to share of knowing Jesus and being known by Him. I desired to serve and lead, as a principal, with the same attitude, patience, and perception that He had. And I had to hear His voice in order to be changed internally and eventually externally.

All the theological, practical, and pedagogical books about Christianity or about Jesus did not satisfy the cry of my spirit to know Him as an intimate friend. Studying the life of Jesus immediately increases intrigue, tugs at the heart, and makes people want to know Him. Although Jesus lived over 2000 years ago in an obscure part of the world, “He comes across as someone we feel we know in the same sense as we know a real and living person” (McGrath, 1997b, p. 16), because the personality of Jesus invites, empowers, and engages the inquiring heart and mind. Therefore, I needed to hear His voice and see His face, nothing else would satisfy my heart’s longing. I believed that there was more than what I could experience with my natural senses, I wanted my spiritual senses to be fully alive so that I could encounter Jesus Christ, by His Spirit with my spirit, and be transformed and inspired to know God’s calling on my life and fulfill my God-given destiny.
CHAPTER III
METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK

This autoethnography studies my life-changing experiences when I was called, encountered, and changed by God, while seeking to know and love Jesus Christ wholeheartedly, and while growing as a servant leader in the (vice) principal role at a Christian school.

“Research is an extension of researchers’ lives” (Ngunjiri, Hernandez, & Chang, 2010, p. 2), and my handwritten expressions in my journal from May 2010 to December 2013 are the qualitative data that described my personal experiences within a Christian cultural and educational context (Dethloff, 2005, p. 56). My raw journal entries exposed my vulnerable thoughts and emotions as I cried out to know Jesus Christ and be purposefully used by Him as a principal at a Christian school. The rich, life-transforming journey that I experienced must be known among principals practicing servant leadership who also have a similar desire to hear from and know God, and be called, encountered, and changed by Him. I was strengthened in the core of my being to persevere in humble and passionate learning and servant leadership, in order to impact student and staff members, while continually being changed through my own experiences.

This chapter explains autoethnography as my chosen methodology to answer my primary research questions, because “scholarship is inextricably connected to self-personal interest, experience, and familiarity” (Ngunjiri, Hernandez, & Chang, 2010, p. 2). The purpose of this study is to tell a worthwhile data driven story in order to reflect on, draw meaning from, and summarize the professional value of how I was called, encountered, and changed by God, as I pursued to know and love Jesus Christ wholeheartedly while learning and growing in servant leadership as a (vice) principal at a Christian school. The guiding research questions for this study were –
What prominent themes did I, a young (vice) principal at a Christian school, naturally write most about in my journal?

What meaning did I derive from the personal encounters recorded within the prominent themes of my journal?

How did the transforming experiences in my personal life influence me as a growing servant leader, in the principal role, at a Christian school?

What kind of encounters did biblical characters, who were seeking God wholeheartedly, have with God that were similar to mine?

How are my experiences of being called, encountered, and changed by God supported and paralleled by Christian literature?

What implications do my findings have for (future) principals practicing servant leadership?

Autoethnographic Research Design

Autoethnographic research is qualitative research that explores subjective experiences to provide personal views and meaning within biases. Autoethnography has its roots in ethnography, which was originally derived from anthropological research (Neyman, 2011, p. 24; Reed-Danahay, 1997, p. 2). Ethnography is a qualitative research paradigm that is used “for describing, analyzing, and interpreting a culture-sharing group’s common patterns of behavior, beliefs, and language that develop over time” (Creswell, 2012, p. 462). Within an ethnographic model of research, the researcher provides elucidation and depiction of numerous individual contributions to the group’s cultural interactions and practices. Studying a group of people who consistently behave a similar way, and knowingly or unknowingly follow a set of spoken or unspoken rules, leads to understanding. An autoethnography is a type of ethnography that is a
“reflective self-examination by an individual set within his or her cultural context” (Creswell, 2012, p. 464), and presented as a self-narrative that produces “aesthetic and evocative thick descriptions of personal and interpersonal experience . . . that can make personal and social change possible for more people” (Ellis, Adams, & Bochner, 2011, p. 277). Working in the educational context of a Christian school connected me with and influenced me by the different community members in that context, where I had many personal and interpersonal experiences. The students, parents and grandparents of students, staff and board members, and visiting and supporting community members contributed in their own slight unique ways to my life events and the cultural context that housed my experiences upon which I reflected regularly. Deep personal meaning is drawn from my subjective experiences, which will engage the reader throughout this thesis.

The guiding research questions of an autoethnography are intentionally phrased so that the researcher’s responses provide valuable insight and unique perspectives (Creswell, 2012, p. 17) of his or her view of the world and personal and professional life events (Neyman, 2011, p. 22). Themes are often established while the qualitative data are organized and then analyzed to discover larger meaning within the findings. Meaning is associated with the self-reflective perspectives and experiences, the interrelatedness of themes, and the contributing cultural context that resulted in a qualitative database founded on observation (Dethloff, 2005, p. 61). Therefore, there is a scholarly standard and great “need to be realistic and persuasive to convince the reader that the study is an accurate and credible account” (Creswell, 2012, p. 18), which presents findings of value in response to the research questions. Autoethnographies are highly personalized accounts that are multi-faceted and layered in framework (Creswell, 2012, p. 274; Dethloff, 2005, p. 63; Holt, 2003, p. 2); they extend understanding from many different
experiences to point to a consistent overarching direction within the storyline. These qualitative manuscripts often include “dramatic recall, unusual phrasing, and strong metaphors to invite the reader to ‘relive’ events with the author” (Holt, 2003, p. 12), and also stimulate the reader toward self-reflection (Dethloff, 2005, p. 60). Ellis and Bochner (2000) emphasized the value of autoethnography whereby the intrigue of engaged readers compels them to declare, “By exploring a particular life, I hope to understand a way of life” (Ellis & Bochner, 2002, p. 737). Therefore, my responses to the research questions offer unique perspectives from the events of my personal life and how those experiences influenced my professional life.

**Educational Context**

The educational context of this study is Christian Heritage School (CHS) in Brandon, Manitoba. CHS currently is an elementary (Kindergarten to Grade 8) funded independent school and has 19 staff members, nearly 100 families, and over 150 students. CHS is accountable to the Manitoba Federation of Independent Schools, which works collaboratively with the Manitoba Department of Education. As a funded independent school, CHS is required to have certified teachers who teach students the provincial curriculum; however, they may teach it from a faith-based perspective. It is a not-for-profit organization that has a Board of Directors who manage the larger financial, operational, and directional functions of the school. CHS is known for having caring, dedicated, professional, Christian teachers who love Jesus, children, and teaching. The school started in 1975 when a group of 5 passionate Christian families gathered inside an apartment suite on MacDonald Avenue and around a vision to create a school that was grounded in the Word of God where students could come to receive an excellent Christian education.

In the context of a Christian learning community, the essence of the school’s mission statement is to equip students for a life of excellence, passionate faith, and joyful service to Jesus.
Christ by training their minds, shaping their character, and inspiring their hearts in partnership with parents. Parents pay $3700-$7000 tuition annually, depending on the number of children enrolled, and must transport their own children to and from the school, unless they live rurally along the Brandon School Division bus route. Parents value the academic and spiritual training that their children receive at CHS more than the cost of their invested finances and time. CHS has a reputation among the three high schools in Brandon of graduating students into grade 9 who are well prepared. CHS has a vision to educate and equip students with Kingdom of God views and values. Teachers work to create a beautiful tapestry of synergizing curricular content with heaven’s perspectives and God’s purposes and plans for each student. The goal is the preparation of confident, purpose-driven, educated, value-infused, critical thinking, hard-working, equipped, grade 8 graduates who love Jesus, people, and themselves. Honour, humility, holiness, (spiritual) hunger, and hope are the main cultural values of CHS and serve as a filter and a focus for the mission of the school to flow through and toward.

Students have a variety of unique experiences at CHS. The monthly service projects that students learn about, invest into, and pray for inform students about local and global needs and engage their hearts, minds, and wills in order to make a difference and impact our local and global community. Students have Bible class every day wherein they learn about God’s powerful love, Word, purpose for their life, and plan for mankind. Students are taught to hear God’s voice, grow in relationship with Jesus Christ, be empowered by the Holy Spirit, and understand how they can be used by God. The school day begins with joyful worship, heart-felt prayer, and a declaration of God’s Word. We believe that CHS is a spiritual light in the city of Brandon that will draw others to know and love Jesus Christ wholeheartedly. The grade 8 students go on a week-long mission trip to Calgary every year in March. They learn about and
meet people experiencing homelessness, and are given tasks to help them begin to understand what life “on the street” is like and learn to love and help people experiencing homelessness. The learning that takes place in Calgary is then applied in Brandon in the following months.

Christian Heritage School has a resource department led by a resource teacher. She oversees the assessment of new students, completion of funding applications for students with more functional needs, speech and language program, students’ individual education plans, literacy and numeracy groups, Roots of Empathy (2009) program, scheduling of educational assistants, book fairs, and library which has over 5000 books. The school has provided exceptional learning experiences for level 2 and 3 funded students. Various learning resources are used at the school, such as the Barton Reading and Spelling System (2000), KeyMath3 (2008), and the Fountas and Pinnell Benchmark Assessment System (2010). Trained professionals, such as a Speech and Language Pathologist, Occupational Therapist, Psychologist, Physiologist, Counselor, and Pastor, come to CHS to support students’ learning as they are needed and requested. God has a plan and purpose for every person that He creates, no matter what their strengths or weaknesses are. The Word of God reveals that Moses likely had a speech impediment and God still chose him to speak to the slave-enforcing king of Egypt and lead a nation of over 2 million people into their own land and freedom. Moses learned to humbly trust God and be used by Him despite having struggled previously with being different and feeling inadequate. Students learn God’s ways and values so that they can experience the freedom of understanding His perspective and their identity and destiny in Him, in every educational program they are a part of at CHS.

Although CHS does not have a gymnasium, students have gym class outside on the 10-acre property (or inside on rainy days). Older students are bussed to a church down the road for
gym classes during the colder months of the year, because we rent their gym space. Grades 6-8 students have opportunity to play school sports of volleyball, basketball, badminton and track and field. Younger students can participate in track and field and soccer. There are also opportunities for students to participate in skits, musical worship teams, other artistic clubs, and spiritual growth clubs. A Student Council is voted on every year, and those student leaders help to generate ideas and make decisions to enhance community, increase awareness, encourage engagement, and build relationships at CHS.

The school day begins at the 8:40 a.m. bell when students are allowed to enter the school. They put their belongings away and get settled in their classroom while teachers greet and take attendance. At 8:48 a.m., O Canada (1908) is played over the intercom and The Lord’s Prayer (Matthew 6:9-13) declared as well. Depending on what day it is on the 6-day cycle, there may be a few grades or all of them that go to chapel for worship, a brief teaching from the Word of God, a special presentation from a guest, or to celebrate students who have birthdays during that week. Academic classes begin at 9:10 a.m. and continue until 3:35 p.m. when students are dismissed for the day. Students learn from the Manitoba curriculum, including French, Music, Home Economics and Industrial Arts. There is a 15-minute recess in the morning and afternoon, and a 45-minute lunch break. When the 12:00 noon bell rings, students go play outside for 25 minutes and then come in to eat lunch before returning to class at 12:45 p.m. Parents serve as lunch supervision volunteers; they know all of the students and enforce the playground, hallway, and classroom rules. There is a Before School (7:30 a.m. to 8:30 a.m.) and After School (3:30 p.m. to 5:15 p.m.) Supervision Program for parents who need the early drop-off or late pick-up options.
The school runs well because of the dedicated parents and professional staff members who partner together with a united value for Christian education and an openness to the leadership and powerful love of Jesus Christ and His Holy Spirit. Board and staff members attend different denominational churches in the community of Brandon and surrounding Westman region; however, as a family they gather unified because of the mission, vision, and values of CHS. The fruit of the hard work, many sacrifices, and countless lessons will be shown through the lives of the students who were trained at Christian Heritage School.

**Data Collection**

Qualitative data collection often involves gaining enough information to answer the research questions of the study, by utilizing interviews, observations, and documents, which respect the views of participants (Creswell, 2012, pp. 205, 212; Neyman, 2011, p. 27). Documents are a precious source of information for researchers, because they consist of “records that qualitative researchers obtain about a site or participants in a study, and they can include newspapers, minutes of meetings, personal journals, and letters” (Creswell, 2012, p. 223). A personal journal can offer excellent data on the central phenomenon being studied, because it presents the “advantage of being in the language and words of the participants” (Creswell, 2012, p. 223); the data collected for this autoethnography are strictly from my personal journal. These documents will provide textual data that include the honest and unconstrained perspectives of my personal life from May 2010 to December 2013, as I was transformed in my personal and professional life. The words that I used in my journal writing to articulate my thoughts, feelings, and experiences increase the authenticity and originality of the study.

Using data that spanned a period of over three and a half years, unbeknownst to me during that time that they would be used for this study, increases the credibility and validity of
the study. The literary representation of my exposed feelings and genuine behaviours provides the reader the paramount experience (Dethloff, 2005, p. 64; Jackman, 2009, p. 36; Neyman, 2011, p. 28) of co-participating with me throughout the story told in this autoethnography. The data collected from my untainted, self-expressive and reflective journal entries align with Ellis and Bochner’s criteria for worthy autoethnographical narrative inquiry. They substantiate that concrete action, dialogue, emotion, embodiment, spirituality, and self-consciousness are featured, appearing as relational and institutional stories affected by history, social structure, and culture, which themselves are dialectally revealed through action, feeling, thought, and language (Ellis and Bochner, 2000, p. 739). Allport (1942) wrote, “The spontaneous intimate diary is the personal document par excellence” (as cited in Jackman, 2009, p. 35), because it holds the deepest longings of the heart, surreptitious thoughts, the jaunts of reflection on decisions made during the day, and the chief emotions of pain, joy, frustration, celebration, despair, failure, hope, and perseverance.

I started my handwritten journal in May 2010. I chose to journal because as I was growing in desire to truly know Jesus, I developed a vision for recording my history in God. I was encouraged to write down the high and low movements of my emotions, the questions and ponderings of my mind, the deepest cries of my spirit, and the times when I felt like Jesus was speaking to me or revealing Himself to me. The idea was to look back on my life as the weeks, months, and years passed by, to see how God had slowly changed me and made me more like Jesus; that was my vision and prayer. It would be my history in God, my personal account of growth as I journeyed with the Lord and wrestled with the new responsibilities and challenges of being a principal at a Christian school. History has the power to mesmerize and captivate its audience. It is intriguing, and impacts the one who reviews, researches, or learns from it.
Everyone loves stories and they are the basis and expression of history. My journal was definitely an outlet for my personal prayers and heartfelt cries, and also my professional frustrations, fears, and failures. It was a place that I could write down valuable questions, meaningful thoughts, and experiences with God. Whenever I felt like God was revealing Himself to me or speaking to me, as soon as I could, I would write down what happened and what I believed He was saying or showing me, the best that I could remember.

**Trustworthiness and Triangulation**

Trustworthiness refers to the credibility of the research, and the honesty of its limitations. Accurate data and authentic interpretations are important, and enhance the trustworthiness of the study and the associated findings (Creswell, 2012, p. 259). My personal journal from May 2010 to December 2013 was used as data, and the authenticity of my autoethnography is found in the depth, progression, and discovered meaning of the story itself framed by the servant leader theory. However, the limitations are also found in the subjectivity of the stories of the personal experiences recorded. Triangulation augments a study’s accuracy and validity as it is “the process of corroborating evidence from different individuals . . . or methods of data collection (e.g., documents and interviews) in descriptions and themes in qualitative research” (Creswell, 2012, p. 259). An autoethnography must be a credible study supported by honest and relevant data.

Good research is substantiated by comparative procedures, credibility, authenticity, and triangulation (Creswell, 2012, p. 444), which ensures reliability and validity (Jackman, 2009, p. 36). Multiple sources that offer solid evidence and thematic consistency contribute heavily to the credibility and reliability of research reports. The sources that contributed to the credibility and reliability of this autoethnography are my genuine, well-documented and coded journal
entries, Bible verses, and extensive Christian literature references. The evidence gathered from supporting Christian literature strengthened the study and improved its credibility because, although my experiences were unique to me, many authors shared similar experiences in the context of their Christian communities. I ensured that my research guided my writing, which at times was challenging and strenuous because of the amount of data that needed analyzing. The honest and meticulous analysis process produced a purer study with soundly cited sections and chapters leading to superior trustworthiness and authentic findings.

Data Analysis

Data analysis is an extremely important component of research, because the resulting categorizations and interpretations will ultimately lead to the findings and conclusion of the study. The data must be organized well, transcribed accurately, and analyzed prudently. The iterative process of qualitative analysis optimizes the opportunity to discover prevalent themes throughout the data. Thus, inductive analytical coding elucidates those themes and leads to answers to the research questions. Rich descriptions and contextual understandings begin to be filtered out of the data through the process of open coding, eventually leading to the development of themes by means of axial and selective coding. “Coding is the process of segmenting and labeling text to form descriptions and broad themes in the data” (Creswell, 2012, p. 243), in order to comprehend the data, link it to the theoretical framework, and specify what data to use for the study. Open coding begins the process of segmenting information into initial categories, axial coding connects the segmented pieces of information back together adding depth and structure, and selective coding refines the categories into themes based on the interrelationships and interconnectedness among the research phenomena (Creswell, 2012, pp. 424, 426).
I was unsure what themes would emerge in this study. After reading through my journal once, I began my initial coding. Then I read through the data multiple times to refine my coding and ensure the process was consistent, and that the themes would credibly emerge from the inductive process (Dethloff, 2005, p. 69). Zhang and Wildemuth (n.d.) described, “During data analysis, researchers immerse themselves in the data and allow themes to emerge from the data” (p. 2). My coding decisions were guided by the coding units that I learned to define during the open and axial coding processes, in order to meticulously draw out and recognize key words and phrases that revealed concepts and properties that became categorically noteworthy and connected to the servant leader theory. I discovered that describing coding units was fundamental to my decision making because of the quantity of unitized coding decisions that needed to be made (Zhang & Wildemuth, n.d., p. 3). I developed and validated a coding scheme, after performing small revisions, which I used consistently throughout the procedure. The open coding process was inductive in nature and was based largely on manifested content supported by latently unitized codes. The completion of the axial coding process revealed much interconnectedness, which was inspired by the continual exploration and dissection of the categorical data and attributed conditions, which divulged the research phenomena. I then used selective coding to organize the results of the axial coding into a larger theoretical scheme, in order to illuminate the links among the central trends of the data and reveal the four prominent themes.

It was the prevalent phrases, language, emotions, thoughts, expressions, and experiences that were identified, connected, categorized, and developed into four thematic chapters. Four thematic chapters emerged after I completed the selective coding: “Seeking to Know and Love Jesus Christ Wholeheartedly,” “Fellowshipping with God,” “Receiving Prophetic Ministry,” and
“Dreams from God.” The first thematic chapter emerged from phrases, articulations, and prayers that expressed desire, want, request, yearning, longing, and spiritual hunger. The second thematic chapter emerged from phrases, language, and connotation that revolved around thankfulness, friendship with God, being together with Jesus during worship and prayer, the development of spiritual senses, growth in personal and professional perspectives, struggles with and affirmations of identity, encountering the presence of God in different ways, and expressing love back to God in the context of relationship with Jesus. The third thematic chapter emerged from the organized data and reveals what I experienced, and the contexts of the experiences, when other people prayed for me whether they were alone, with me in person, or praying for me during a phone call. The fourth thematic chapter emerged from the astounding interconnectedness and content magnitude of dreams that I recorded and believed were from God. Once the themes were established, the data within the thematic chapters were again analyzed, interpreted and justified by the servant leader theoretical framework, and organized into sections for smooth story-telling and presentation purposes.

Thematic development provides structure and context that leads to a deep understanding of the key phenomena and answers to the research questions, based on the data analysis (Creswell, 2012, p. 247). Themes are significant because they are the product of the coding process, and such propelling aggregation of similar codes that uphold the major idea of the study “form a core element in qualitative data analysis” (Creswell, 2012, p. 248). Creswell (2012) summarized,

Thematic data analysis in ethnography consists of distilling how things work and naming the essential features in themes in the cultural setting. Consistent with the process about
describing and developing themes from data, the ethnographer segments the text (or images), codes them, and formulates a small set of non-overlapping themes. (p. 473)

My own “researcher reflexivity” sought not to disturb, influence, or change any pattern of behaviour or personal interaction (Creswell, 2012, p. 474) between myself and other Christians with whom I continue to join in prayer, worship, and fellowship as we continue to corporately seek to be changed by the love and power of Jesus Christ at church, work, and prayer and worship gatherings. My autoethnography thematically presents the life-changing experiences that I encountered personally, based on my journal entries from May 2010 to December 2013, when I resolved wholeheartedly to know and love Jesus Christ, and grow as a servant leader while working as the (vice) principal at a Christian school.

The theoretical framework of the servant leader theory helps explain the significance of the findings, and supports the structure of this study’s purpose. From the perspective of servant leadership, the accumulation and consolidation of valuable data from my personal life steered me toward writing an autoethnography. I believed its methodology served the study with the greatest potential to answer the research questions with esteemed meaning for the reader. The theoretical base of servant leadership framed the measuring and examination (Grant and Osanloo, 2014, p. 18) of the data from my powerful personal encounters that led to four prevailing themes. Those thematic chapters are saturated with revelatory particulars from my life that God was using as pebbles to slowly build me into a rock solid servant leader, because I was seeking to know and become like the greatest servant leader – Jesus Christ. My findings were perforated with the incessant deliberations of a man who was maturing as a servant leader in the (vice) principal role, due to his hunger to serve, lead, and live as Jesus Christ did, in order to influence the school community the same as Jesus influenced His disciples. The theoretical
framework of servant leadership laid a foundation of understanding upon which my study was built, because the primary tenets of the servant leader theory are significantly linked to my personal character development and influence upon teachers’ pedagogy, value systems, and interactions with colleagues and students.

**Ethical Considerations**

Creswell (2012) emphasized the importance of ethics in research and that it is a complex matter that “should be a primary consideration rather than an afterthought” (p. 23). The respect for the rights of the individuals mentioned in my autoethnography was upheld throughout my analysis of the data and thesis transcription. I prepared an informed consent form for individuals that outlined the “purpose and aims of the study, how the results will be used, and the likely social consequences the study will have on their lives” (Creswell, 2012, p. 23). All such individuals were above 18 years of age. Any section of my report that includes information about, or reference to, any of the aforementioned individuals has been copied and shown to them before producing the final draft of my thesis. Each individual’s dignity has been preserved.

Privacy and confidentiality does not apply to this ethnographic study, because I am the only participant, and the other people included in the report did not disclose vulnerable information or private details of their lives. The research and data have been stored under lock and key during the writing of the report. I also have completed the Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans course regarding research ethics. The study was conducted as per the research protocol and consent forms approved by the Brandon University Research Ethics Committee. As an educational researcher, I honoured the

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2 See Appendix A for the BUREC certificate and Appendix B for the consent form.
“ethical mandate to produce research that is of high quality” (Creswell, 2012, p. 24), which led to the ethical writing and dissemination of my study.

Sampling

Theory or concept sampling seeks to understand a concept or theory; therefore, specific people or places are chosen to be studied, in order to gain the desired conceptual understanding. It is a “purposeful sampling strategy in which the researcher samples individuals or sites because they can help the researcher generate or discover a theory” (Creswell, 2012, p. 208). That exposed theory is often linked to the researcher’s presupposed notions of the theory that he or she expected to emerge during the study. My autoethnography is purposeful sampling because of the theory that I sought to support and expose, and thereby offer an important piece of literature to support it in the academic realm. My theory is that other principals who are open to hearing from, being changed by, and being used by God will be provoked, awakened, disturbed, and encouraged by the story that I tell through this study. The powerful experiences that I have had must be explored, analyzed, and presented in order to test the theory, and discover the potential reality of related conceptual perceptions of it. I know my story the best and since I have recorded it in my journals with raw emotion and no mental hesitation or reservation, I am the best sample to choose to gain optimal understanding of my theory and study.
CHAPTER IV
SEEKING TO KNOW AND LOVE JESUS CHRIST WHOLEHEARTEDLY

I want a fire within me so fierce that I am consumed with the things of God. I am not on this earth to make people happy. I am here to love God as much as I possibly can and to know and ingest and live out his Word. What Truths would I die for? I have no fear. My vision is to love Jesus and learn to love him more and more. I need to discern what is best, that I may be wise, lead well [as principal], and have no fear.

(Schroeder³, February 20, 2011, p. 45)

I had a raw hunger deep inside of me to search relentlessly to know God intimately, as the men and women of faith did in the Scriptures. This yearning in my spirit was new, but it grew as I prayed more that I may really know Him. King David cried out repetitively to God with wholehearted desire, “You, God, are my God, earnestly I seek you; I thirst for you, my whole being longs for you” (Psalm 63:1), and God heard David’s prayer and revealed Himself to David in powerful ways. David was a leader of a nation, but a servant of the God of the nations. His servant leadership was rooted in a selfless desire to serve (Herman & Marlowe, 2005, p. 176; Taylor et al., 2007, p. 401), by pursuing to know and love the God who lovingly revealed Himself as powerful and personal.

Without desire, there is never any manifestation of God among His people (Tozer, n.d., p. 13), because He waits and wants to be wanted and often rule-based religious practices have blocked the progress of relationship. To have desire for something or someone leads to an ardent pursuit (Bootsma, 2014, p. 85) with an unmatched intensity that burns continuously like a well-stocked fire. I was disturbed by Jesus’ words when He stated, “I am the good shepherd; I know

³ All citations based on the qualitative data from the author’s personal journal appear in the form: (Schroeder, month and day, year, page number).
my sheep and my sheep know me – just as the Father knows me and I know the Father . . . My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me” (John 10:14-15, 27). I was shaken because I believed in Jesus and had a relationship with Him, but I could not say that I knew or recognized Jesus’ voice. How can a sheep follow the shepherd if the sheep does not know the shepherd’s voice?

I desired to know His voice, and that desire was from God Himself. Foster (1998) declared, “How do we receive the desire to hear his voice? This desire to turn is a gift of grace. Anyone who imagines he can simply begin meditating without praying for the desire . . . will soon give up” (p. 24-25), so God gave me the grace of desire to pursue Jesus wholeheartedly. Jesus said that I can know Him as the Father knows Him and He knows the Father (John 14:11). That was inconceivable to me, because of the perfectly intimate and pure relationship it resembled – and yet I could not even hear God’s whisper. I nearly gave up; however, I stopped thinking about it so much, and started believing Jesus’ words and trusted that I could hear His voice and know Him intimately; therefore, I started searching for Him relentlessly everywhere I could out of raw faith and desperation.

I had reached a point in my life where nothing made sense without God. As I surveyed and questioned the reality around me and around the world, I could only conclude that God, in His goodness, sovereign planning, powerful love and fatherly heart, encompassed and connected everything. Everything. I had experienced His love, presence, and forgiveness, but a vision grew inside of me to know God based on how He is described in the Bible and how people knew Him and related to Him in the Bible. Paul prayed for the Christians in Ephesus,

I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through His Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that
you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the Lord’s holy people, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge – that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God. (Ephesians 3:16-19)

I began to believe in the core of my being, my spirit, that God wanted to engage me with His Spirit so that the love, power, joy, and freedom of Jesus Christ could influence every area of my life, including my role as a principal. I believed the spiritual relationship that I desired went beyond my intellect, emotions, and my will, because those were the capacities and expressions of my soul. I was longing to experience God in my inmost being, so that I could receive and be changed by the fullness of God in my spirit or “heart.” Then I hoped God’s thoughts, emotions, and will would influence my internal personality traits as I became more like Jesus. The prayers I wrote in my journal often sounded like the following:

I made a commitment yesterday to spend an hour per day in the Word and in prayer. I want to know Jesus intimately. I want to rearrange my life around Him. I was so excited to seek the Lord today and I knew in my spirit I would get to sit before Him. I want Him to be my teacher, I want anything that is within me which is not of the Kingdom of God to be crushed, removed, and destroyed by fire. I want only that which is everlasting. I want sustainability in the place of intimacy and ministry. I do not want to look back, I will only look forward. I want to understand the Word. I want to seek the King and love Jesus with all my strength, all my soul, and all my heart. I want to hear His voice, I want to be empowered by the King’s Spirit. Holy Spirit come, take me where I have never gone. I am ready to embark on a journey with you, wherever it leads. I will not obey the voice of man, but rather the voice of God.
I was starting to believe that God was “a Person, and in the deep of His mighty nature He thinks, wills, enjoys, feels, loves, desires and suffers as any other person may . . . He communicates with us through the avenues of our minds, our wills and our emotions” (Tozer, n.d., p. 11). I believed that I could actually experience Him in those different areas of my personhood as well. I was internally stirred and provoked, and thereby resolved to seek to know and love Jesus Christ wholeheartedly.

I was doing my best to walk in friendship with Jesus and was worshipping Him through song and prayer, and gathering with other believers to stay connected and grow in community. However, the pursuit of knowing Jesus was on and off, and it was not really a pursuit of deeper relationship because it was based more on a selfish desire for an easy and blessed life. I chose to start seeking the Person of Jesus Christ. Meyer (2003) identified with my lack of inner satisfaction and growing desire to know God intimately and pursue Him like King David did (p. 4). I gained more understanding of the scriptures by talking with people who consistently displayed a life of passionate faith, obedience, and love. I was attracted to their joy and commitment to their mission of loving Jesus and loving people. I began going to a weekday worship evening at my friends’ church. I also went up to the front of my own church on Sunday mornings to ask for prayer, just to know Jesus more. I started taking verses in the Bible, God’s words, and declaring them to myself; I was speaking God’s words back to Him, asking Him to allow me to experience the truth of His words. I knew His words intellectually, but I wanted to know Jesus experientially. It really was an experiment. Essentially, faith is an experiment – the variables consist of the components of our worldview, which lead to personal values and beliefs. I heard a wise man say that holy experiments lead to holy expectations, which lead to holy
encounters. I was experimenting and started to expect, with the smallest amount of faith, that Jesus wanted to share His thoughts and feelings with me. Seeking Jesus wholeheartedly looks different to different people. The following chapter sections help to describe the parts of my reality as I expressed my desire to relentlessly pursue to know and love Jesus with all of my heart.

**God, I Need You!**

*Lead me, teach me, counsel me, comfort me,*

*set me on fire with the intimate love of Jesus of Nazareth.*

*I will follow you.*

*(Schroeder, January 1, 2013, p. 169)*

I knew that I could not change without God’s help, but I did not just want His help, I wanted Him. I wanted to be with Him, know Him, and have His thoughts, His ways, and His feelings flowing through me so that I could live a confident and victorious life in the love and power of Jesus Christ. My prayer life increased drastically, likely proportionately to the increase of my consciousness of my need for God. Need fuels prayer and my soul was consumed with the plaguing awareness that I needed God. I did not primarily want His gifts or His blessings. Primarily, I wanted to be in the deepest possible relationship with Jesus Christ and I believed that living life in this world could not be what it was meant to be without experiencing a deep personal connection and relationship with Jesus. Jesus described people who were aware of their great need for God’s presence in their lives as being poor in spirit (Matthew 5:3). Tozer (n.d.) described it as paralleling the outward circumstances of a beggar on the streets with the inward state of one who was poor in spirit (p. 17). People can find freedom in God by surrendering and
acknowledging the great need of their spirit. Freedom is personally found when God is personally found. Moses found this freedom.

The story of Moses’ life is one of the most intriguing and powerful stories because an ordinary man was used in an extraordinary way by God, due to the man’s willingness to trust and obey God. That willingness came through Moses’ recognition of his great need for God and his ferocious desire to know God more. I used to scoff at the verse that Moses wrote about himself when he declared, “Now Moses was a very humble man, more humble than anyone else on the face of the earth” (Numbers, 12:3), because it sounded like the opposite of humility. As I grew in wisdom and understanding of the story of Moses and the characteristic of humility, I discovered that Moses was simply confessing and declaring his great need for God as a “very needy man.” With such a confession and declaration comes a heart that is ready and willing to do anything for God out of joy-filled love and obedience, because of the awareness and perspective of the relationship between human and God.

Moses was an intimate friend of God (Exodus 33:11). The key to the closeness and intimacy of their relationship was Moses’ humility. It fueled Moses’ confidence to walk toward his mighty Creator and trust him, because “humility is the foundation of all prayer” (Sorge, 2004, p. 287) and truly reveals the heart’s cry of “God, I need you!” I believe that the humble heart of Moses was attractive to God because it meant that Moses honoured God and made himself available and willing to be used for the Kingdom of God. Herman and Marlowe (2005), defined this type of servant leadership “as an attitude of leading others from a perspective of placing the organizational purpose, the needs of the organization, and the needs of people over the needs and desire of the leader” (p. 601). As Moses grew in humility sacrificially, and served God obediently, he received a new attitude to lead the people. God gave Moses authority and power
because He trusted Moses. The humility of Moses put his attention on God, which God
honoured, and in turn God gave Moses His attention and much more.

   As I grew in the awareness of my greater need for God, my prayers were often cries out
to God because I needed Him. They really highlighted my felt needs,

   I am hungry, hungry for Jesus to feed me, to feed me His thoughts, His Truth, His agony
that He beheld on the cross, I want to think, feel, pray, stand, speak, lead, love, and serve
like him. I am hungry for HUMILITY. I do not deserve any of it. I need GRACE.

(Schroeder, November 14, 2011, p. 92)

In my written prayers I declared my desire, as the principal of a Christian school, to lead like
Moses (Schroeder, December 6, 2011, p. 101), for God to have his way in me (Schroeder, July
23, 2012, p. 145; Schroeder, August 7, 2012, p. 147), and that I wanted Jesus, and His thoughts,
feelings, and ways to be expressed through me (Schroeder, March 18, 2012, p. 119; Schroeder,
over my life has changed it. When I would be in a state of internal agony because of my need for
God, I would speak His words to my soul and I would find peace, joy, and hope. One of my
favourite verses to pray out of need, through surrender and declaration, was from Psalm 86:11
and I repetitively expressed it in my journals, “Teach me your ways O Lord and I will walk in
them, give me an undivided heart that I may fear your name” (Schroeder, April 27, 2013, p. 191;
Schroeder, September 27, 2013, p. 218; Schroeder, November 16, 2013, p. 245). I never stopped
believing that God heard my prayers. They were my desperate pleas held by an ounce of faith
that spurred me on to eventually believe that there is much more of God that I need and can even
experience.
Felt needs are commanding motivators. The more that I felt the need for God, the more motivated I was to give up anything that hindered me from having or knowing him more. My prayers were occasionally saturated with extreme statements of inviting Jesus to do whatever it takes to increase my faith (Schroeder, February 9, 2012, p. 113; Schroeder, August 20, 2013, p. 204), to change my life (Schroeder, July 7, 2012, p. 140; Schroeder, March 29, 2013, p. 184), and to be a man who lives out his heart and faith passionately and confidently (Schroeder, November 19, 2011, p. 93; Schroeder, January 2, 2013, p. 171). I would not have consistently prayed so desperately if I did not believe that I really needed God and His help. I was growing in my relationship with Him because I was studying His Word, talking with Him, and surrendering more of my thoughts and time to serve and know Him. These investments of time, energy, and meditation came in slow and painful exchanges for my selfishness, pride, and desire to cling to worldly things and deceptive ideologies based on false perceptions of possessive need. As Tozer explained the following:

There is within the human heart a tough fibrous root of fallen life whose nature is to possess, always to possess. It covets “things” with a deep and fierce passion. The pronouns “my” and “mine” look innocent enough in print, but their constant and universal use is significant. They express the real nature of the old Adamic man better than a thousand volumes of theology could do. They are verbal symptoms of our deep disease. The roots of our hearts have grown down into things, and we dare not pull up one rootlet lest we die. Things have become necessary to us, a development never originally intended. God’s gifts now take the place of God, and the whole course of nature is upset by the monstrous substitution. Our Lord referred to this tyranny of things when He said to His disciples, “If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and
take up his cross, and follow me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever shall lose his life for my life shall find it” (Matthew 16:24-25).

(Tozer, n.d., p. 16)

On December 28, 2013, I expressed my raw surrender to God and essential agreement with what Tozer wrote, “Remove and destroy everything within my heart and paradigm that is not true nor everlasting. In the Name of Jesus, I give you everything, take me. I am yours. I deny myself, I take up my cross and will follow you Jesus” (Schroeder, p. 271). I was motivated to absolutely trust and surrender to Jesus, because of my felt need to know Him and serve as principal with the same passion, love, power, and confidence that He lived and served with on earth.

**Desire for the Knowledge of God**

| I desire to know and love and worship Jesus |
| more than anything else. |
| (Schroeder, February 11, 2013, p. 115) |

I became consumed and obsessed with knowing Jesus. I wanted to learn His thoughts, know His feelings, and hear His voice. I believed that I should be able to hear His voice and experience His powerful presence because of what He said about his sheep knowing Him, the Shepherd. I believed this because of what the scriptures said, how Jesus talked about Himself in the scriptures, and based on other people’s stories and testimonies. I started praying and writing in my journal, expressing my deepest desire to know Jesus and hear His voice (Schroeder, December 30, 2010, p. 31; Schroeder, November 19, 2011, p. 95; Schroeder, September 22, 2012, p. 150), because that is one main purpose of prayer (McManus, 2002, p. 207). I used God’s words from the Bible to pray for myself because I thought that approach would get the best results. I prayed a verse nearly daily that says, “I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus
Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation so that you may know him better” (Ephesians 1:17), because I wanted to know Jesus more (Schroeder, December 7, 2011, p. 102; Schroeder, September 1, 2012, p. 149; Schroeder, February 17, 2013, p. 180). I believed that our Heavenly Father desired –

to send to us the Spirit of wisdom and revelation so that we might know Him better. Our hearts have a desperate need to know the Lord better, to understand the kind of God He is, to know His goodness and kindness to us, and that His eternal purpose is for our blessing and fulfillment. (Wiens, 2004, p. 246)

I started searching the pages of the Bible to learn more about Jesus and then talk to Him about what I was learning. I was seeking Him wholeheartedly. I did not know of another human being like Jesus of Nazareth who lived a worthy and sinless life of victorious powerful love, left an everlasting legacy, rose from the dead, and ascended into heaven. I constantly expressed my longing to know Him, “Jesus, here I am, I seek you, I need to find you. I call to you! Come feed me, reveal your heart, encounter my heart, fill me with your love, Word, power, and Spirit” (Schroeder, May 16, 2013, p. 193), because I wanted nothing more.

In the scriptures, David is recorded as a man after God’s own heart (1 Samuel 13:14), even before he was publicly positioned and anointed as king. His life continually was consumed with a spiritual desire for God (Tozer, n.d., p. 12) and a pursuit of God. He expressed his yearning to know God by seeking God early in the morning through prayer and worship (Psalm 63:1-2), and could not wait to meet with God as a thirst-ridden deer could not wait to drink from a stream (Psalm 42:1-2). Jesus fulfilled Isaiah’s prophecy of presenting Himself as the Living Water whom people could come and “drink” of so that their spirits would never thirst again (Eldridge, 2000, pp. 36-37; Isaiah 55:1-2; John 4:10). David’s thirst to know and experience
God was satisfied only when he was pursuing God. Although he was a king of a nation, he said that the one thing that he desired most was to gaze upon God’s beauty (Psalm 27:4) in God’s temple, which was filled with continual praise from singers and musicians, and was where God’s presence could be found (Wiens, 2004, p. 227). In dry times, he cried out to God and sought Him, and was empowered and encountered by God’s Holy Spirit.

I could relate to David in many ways. I was not a king of a nation; however, I was the principal of a school. I wanted to do an excellent job as a principal, but that was not my chief desire. I wanted to be encountered by the living God (Schroeder, February 12, 2011, p. 42; Schroeder, November 8, 2011, p. 92; Schroeder, November 21, p. 96)! I believed that God sovereignly timed His calling of me into the principal role and my aching desire to know Jesus intimately: The connection was clear, the more that I knew Jesus, the more motivated I would be to serve and lead like him in my role as principal. The apostle Paul declared another powerful prayer for the church in Ephesus in the book of Ephesians, which focused on the believers comprehending the affections of Jesus such that they would know His love in a way that surpassed knowledge (Ephesians 3:18-19). In the Greek language, there is a difference between the words “know” and “knowledge” in that prayer. “Know” (ginosko) means to find out by learning or trial, implying that the believer can gain understanding of Christ’s love by experiencing it, whereas “knowledge” (gnosis) means fragmented intellectual knowledge that is limited, much different than an experiential love that could be felt (Moore, 2002, p. 217).

God’s Spirit enabled David to learn and experience the affections that God had for him: He learned what God was thinking and feeling about Him because he was chasing after the Spirit of God (Tenney, 1998, p. 87). I wanted to know what God was thinking and feeling about me, so I started to ask him (Schroeder, November 5, 2010, p. 22; Schroeder, July 31, 2011, p. 74;
Schroeder, July 1, 2012, p. 138), and He started to tell me. The Holy Spirit loves to reveal God the Father’s thoughts (1 Corinthians 2:10-12) to His sons and daughters so that they feel loved, but will often only do it when the sons and daughters ask to know His thoughts and to receive more revelation from their Heavenly Father. My prayers became saturated in asking the Holy Spirit to reveal Jesus to me, teach me, comfort me, counsel me, and help me to know Jesus so that I would be empowered to love Jesus and love people (Schroeder, November 22, 2010, p. 27; Schroeder, February 15, 2011, p. 45; Schroeder, May 10, 2013, p. 194). Tozer explained the glorious pursuit of knowing God by the power of the Holy Spirit, and exploring God’s depth when he stated, “Being made in His image we have within us the capacity to know Him. . . . The moment the Spirit has quickened us to life in regeneration our whole being senses kinship to God and leaps up in joyous recognition” (Tozer, n.d., p. 11). I desired to know the Lord’s heart (Schroeder, August 26, 2013, p. 207; Schroeder, November 25, 2013, p. 252; Schroeder, December 20, 2013, p. 264) and to seek Him and find Him as David did (Schroeder, November 12, 2010, p. 24; Schroeder, January 20, 2012, p. 110) over three thousand years ago.

The apostle Paul wrote most of the New Testament in the Bible and was powerfully used by God to changes cities, because he considered everything a loss compared to the invaluable worth of knowing Christ Jesus (Philippians 3:8) and obeying Him. He often described his human weakness and ever-present need of God, so that God’s power and name could be known. Paul was impelled in his life by his longing to know Christ (Eldridge, 2000, p. 181), and he fervently declared to the church in the city of Philippi, “I want to know Christ – yes, to know the power of his resurrection and fellowship in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death” (Philippians 3:10). I could relate to Paul in his admitted weakness and wanting to know Jesus more, and would thereby cry out to know Jesus more out of my weakness and hunger for more of
him (Schroeder, March 18, 2012, p. 118; Schroeder, June 14, 2012, p. 134; Schroeder, June 7, 2012, p. 133). If I was going to make an impact as principal at a Christian school, I needed to know Christ and be led and influenced by Him. If the anointed and infamous apostle Paul was already walking in relationship with Jesus and was still indicating his desire to know Jesus more and identify with Christ’s sufferings for the sake of love, then I definitely needed to keep seeking Jesus.

I declared Paul’s spiritual desires to myself by praying Philippians 3:10 repetitively (Schroeder, February 17, 2013, p. 181; Schroeder, December 22, 2013, p. 265; Schroeder, December 22, 2013, p. 266), and continued to long to know, love, serve, and worship Jesus wholeheartedly (Schroeder, April 19, 2011, p. 54; Schroeder, January 5, 2012, p. 107; Schroeder, November 25, 2013, p. 257). Wiens (2004) described,

There is a longing in our hearts to be awakened to the knowledge and understanding of the nature, character and purposes of God. In our human weakness, we do not have the ability to comprehend these realities, and so in a miraculous way, God has provided the one and only door for understanding. His Holy Spirit will come to our human spirits and awaken the knowledge of eternal things. All He asks is that we acknowledge our need for this, saying, “Lord, I admit that in my own strength I am blind and confused. But You will send help to me, Lord, by the power of your Spirit. Touch my eyes, Lord; I want to see.” This prayer of humility is pleasing to the Lord, and He is delighted to release to us the power to see and know Him as He really is. (p. 247)

I was giving more time, energy, thoughts, prayer, and study than any other time in my life, in order to know Jesus as the apostle Paul did.
Desire for the Revelation of God

Please Jesus, reveal yourself to me,

open my eyes and ears that I may see every detail and hear every sound.

Come, encounter my heart.

I seek you. I desire you. I love you.

I want to know you as Paul did. Amen.

(Schroeder, December 24, 2012, p. 168)

In my longing to know Jesus, I started to ask Him to reveal Himself to me. God revealed Himself powerfully to men, women, and children in the biblical stories and I wanted to see Him, hear Him, feel His love, and have powerful encounters with Him like Ezekiel, Isaiah, Mary, Peter, James, and John did. I wanted this so badly because I wanted to see God’s glory. Moses cried out to God to show him His glory (Exodus 33:18); he wanted to see the manifest presence of God. I started getting jealous and possessive in my desire, thinking, “If he can have that, I want it too!” (I’m so thankful for God’s grace.) My journey of chasing Jesus wholeheartedly was saturated with the constant praying of scripture, “Father in heaven, I ask that you would release your spirit of wisdom and revelation so that I can know you more” (Ephesians 1:17). I just wanted to have Jesus reveal Himself to me.

As I was seeking to know God, I hungered to see His glory as Moses did. I believed that seeing God’s glory would change my life (Tenney, 1998, p. 116), so I cried out in desperation that Jesus would reveal himself to me so that I could encounter His powerful presence and His glory (Schroeder, November 6, 2010, p. 23; Schroeder, March 20, 2011, p. 50; Schroeder, July 12, 2011, p. 68). My belief that God wanted to reveal Himself to me grew as I listened to sermons, read books, and searched the scriptures. Soon I found my perception of God changing
from someone who was distant, impersonal, and either mad or sad most of the time, to someone who was a good Father, enjoyed me, wanted me, and desired only good things for me as a child of God.

Scripture shows that these truths are to be experienced through a relationship with his Son, Jesus Christ. I started thinking that God really liked me. But why? Mike Bickle (2006) stated the following:

Every human being struggles with different degrees of rejection. We can be emotionally drained and even devastated if we believe God is rejecting and shaming us or if we believe the same about those we love. But to feel enjoyed by the Father and cherished by Jesus overpowers rejection and shame. Without the revelation of divine enjoyment we are much more vulnerable to Satan and his traps to answer this longing in a false way. This deception is the seedbed for many false religions that lure people into guilt and useless striving to escape the stigma of shame. As God assures us of His enjoyment, the strongholds of rejection and shame are dismantled. A spiritual pleasure is released in our souls that is second to none. Oh, the assurance that we are delighted in, enjoyed and longed for! With this we can rest on the inside. (p. 34)

It was this spiritual pleasure and rest of truly knowing God and being enjoyed by God that gave me a vision to emerge from my feelings of shame and rejection and begin to believe that Jesus truly loved me, wanted to interact with me, and know me in intimate friendship. As my hunger to know Jesus grew, I started asking Him to reveal His love for me.

If He loved me to the point that He died on a cross for me so that I could live freely forever, I wanted to feel and experience His love for me and so I continually asked Him to reveal it to me (Schroeder, November 12, 2010, p. 24; Schroeder, November 22, 2010, p. 27;
Schroeder, January 3, 2011, p. 31). I know that the disciples, who were closest to Jesus when he walked on the earth, saw and heard the glory of God revealed in, on, and through Jesus (Matthew 17:1-8). They walked away loving Jesus and knowing Jesus more than they did before such encounters. I wanted that, too. Deere (1993) stated that Jesus revealed the nature and character of God the Father to His disciples so that they would know “what the Father is like. Jesus did this for one overriding purpose: he wanted his disciples to love him like his heavenly Father loves him” (p. 200). The more that I read chapters fourteen to seventeen from the book of John, the more that I believed that I could know and love Jesus wholeheartedly, but I needed to persevere in my pursuit of Him with all my heart, soul, mind, and strength (Matthew 22:37).

Jesus came to the earth to reveal the character, nature, power, glory, and love of His Heavenly Father. He came to redeem people from a curse so that God’s presence could be in us and His work done through us (Wright, 2007b, p. 96). The nature of God is relational, which implies that He wants to know and be near His creation, and He wants His creation to know Him. I wanted to know what was on God’s heart; in other words, I wanted to know who Jesus was and what He was doing so that I could serve him and do it with Him (Schroeder, September 8, 2012, p. 153; Schroeder, April 27, 2013, p. 192; Schroeder, August 26, 2013, p. 206). God is holy. He always has been and always will be. That means that He has transcendent beauty that is incomparable to anything else that we can gaze on in heaven or on earth. There are angels in heaven who are perpetually overwhelmed with the beauty of the Lord. They express themselves day and night as they receive fresh revelation of God’s beauty again and again by stating, “Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty, who was, and is, and is to come” (Rev. 4:8). I started to learn that in order to receive the truth of who God was, I needed to lay down my pride and selfishness and position my heart to get connected to His.
The more I expressed my desire to receive revelation of God’s nature and beauty, the more God started to reveal himself. Tenney (1998) learned from John the Baptist’s prayer of wanting less of himself in order to receive more of God (John 3:30), that “the more of me that dies, the closer He can get. . . . The God of Moses is willing to reveal Himself to you but . . . He can only come close to you to the degree you are willing to die” (pp. 64-65). I wanted God to kill my selfishness and pride, to destroy it, so that the man whom He made me to be could arise and my true identity and destiny could come forth as He aligned my desires with His. Part of God’s destiny for me was to serve as a principal at a Christian school, where I would be challenged spiritually, emotionally, relationally, intellectually, and professionally. My prayers were often raw pleas for more of God and desperate cries of surrender and repentance (Schroeder, April 27, 2013, p. 192), because I needed His Spirit to comfort me, correct me, and connect with me so that I could be a diligent principal. On July 8, 2012, I prayed,

I cry out for humility and the fire of the Holy Spirit to burn. I want to be like Daniel, a man of resolve [who had] relationship with the king, an administrator with no corruption or negligence within him. I desire to be like Ezra, a man with burning zeal for the things on the heart of the Father in the present hour, a man of prayer, fasting, passion, and leadership. I ask for more Lord, I want to obey you out of love and desire for who you are. Teach me contentment in the midst of spiritual hunger. I ask for revelation of Jesus Christ. I ask for the gift of prophecy. I ask for an increased revelation of the love Jesus has for me. I ask for courage and strength to lead. (Schroeder, July 8, 2012, p. 140).

I was learning that the condition of my heart was the most important factor in order to receive revelation from God, and serve as the principal of a Christian school. Chapter 8 of the book of John tells a story of Jesus revealing the freedom found in belonging to the family of God.
by the way of receiving truth, but the hard-hearted Pharisees rejected Jesus’ words because they
did not have room in their proud hearts and minds for His words of truth (John 8:12-47). They
were piously convinced that they understood this world and the next to the point that they were
spiritually blinded and religiously congested: They were full of love-less knowledge and self-
serving information that only emphasized their preset mindsets and agenda. I did not want to be
like that. I started to ask the Lord for ears to hear what His Spirit was saying (Schroeder, July
16, 2011; Schroeder, September 3, 2012; October 27, 2012) and that He would open up my
spiritual eyes and give me dreams and visions, so that I could see what He was doing and how I
fit into His plan (Schroeder, January 12, 2012; June 18, 2013; October 5, 2013). I had to learn,
as the leader of a Christian school, how to be willing to learn from staff members and parents,
and not think or try to act as if I was perfect or all-knowing. If I wanted to become a servant
leader who constantly transformed people, as excellent servant leaders do, (Crippen, 2012, p.
194; Spears, 2004, p. 8; Sultan & van de Bunt-Kokhuis, 2014, p. 1), I needed to not only be
willing to learn from Jesus, but also from other people. I needed wisdom from God to do that.

**Desire for the Wisdom of God**

*Jesus, I need you. I need dove’s eyes. Draw me after you, let us run together.*

*You are my beloved, I am yours . . . *

*I ask for the love and wisdom of Jesus Christ.*

*(Schroeder, August 31, 2012, p. 148)*

I have done many foolish things in my life, and I knew that I was a shallow source when
it came to wisdom. I grew to believe that the wisdom of God is found in understanding the will,
ways, and work of God. I began to believe that I needed to exchange my ways with God’s ways,
my definition of joyful work for God’s definition of joyful work, and my will for God’s will to
be done. A pastor once said that he often prays to God, “Your Kingdom come, my kingdom go,” and I believe that is a significant perspective about growing in God’s wisdom. I was growing in my understanding that if I wanted to lead and serve people as a Christian principal with justice and righteousness, I had a lot to learn. I wanted to make decisions that truly helped people; I wanted to make decisions that were not all about me. The trouble was that I naturally struggled with selfishness and self-preservation; therefore, how could I truly live in a way that served and helped the people around me? When Solomon became the third King of Israel, God appeared to him and asked Solomon what he wanted: Solomon asked for wisdom and knowledge to know how to lead and govern the nation (2 Chronicles 1:7-10). He wanted the knowledge, but needed wisdom to know how to apply what he knew.

The book of James confirms that if we lack wisdom, then we should ask God, because he gives generously to those who ask (James 1:5). Therefore, I asked God for wisdom (Schroeder, July 3, 2011, p. 63; Schroeder, August 31, 2012, p. 148). I wanted my heart to be intimately connected with God’s (Schroeder, March 1, 2011, p. 49), so that I could grow in understanding of what is valuable to Him and learn how Jesus made decisions and interacted with people. As a young principal, I felt bombarded in the area of decision making and did not know how to make or communicate decisions well in my role. I desired to know God’s thoughts and ways so that I could confidently make decisions in a way that glorified Jesus, even if I did not get any recognition. I had to repent and ask for God’s forgiveness during the learning process, because I often did not have a pure heart or clean conscience as I struggled with selfishness and pride while trying to make decisions for a school. Decision making is an important part of leadership. How does a principal make decisions? Who do you include in the process? How do you communicate the purpose, process, and product of the decision being made? There were many
questions. However, I did not want to be distracted; I wanted to be humble, bold, and servant hearted (Schroeder, October 23, 2011, p. 87). On October 12, 2012, I journaled my prayer, “Dear Lord, You are Sovereign. I desire to glorify you with the decisions I make. People are important to you, glorifying your name is most important. I ask for grace, humility, compassion, boldness, and wisdom” (p. 157). I was asking God to show me His ways and give me His wisdom, so that I could diligently govern the students and staff members for His glory. I studied God’s Word and prayed, and it became an ongoing procedure of positioning my heart to receive understanding of God’s way of doing things, His definition of joyful work, and His will.

Many Bible verses are about the human spirit, heart, or inner being (Ephesians 3:16). God’s Word says that it must be guarded (Proverbs 4:23), kept pure (Psalm 24:4), cautioned (Matthew 6:21), and prayed for (Ephesians 3:16), and can be deceptive above all things (Jeremiah 17:9). I wanted my heart to be connected intimately with my Heavenly Father’s and aligned with Jesus’, so that I could live and love people as Jesus does (Schroeder, July 7, 2010, p. 8; Schroeder, January 2, 2012, pp.106-107; Schroeder November 3, 2013, p. 240). During times of prayer, worship, and reading God’s Word I would ask God to show me areas in my heart that were dark and impure, so that I could repent and receive His forgiveness and grace and be made new (Schroeder, November 22, 2010, p. 27).

In June 2011, I journaled my desperate pleas for Jesus to fill me with His character and to forgive me, “Jesus, I ask for grace upon grace upon grace and wisdom and love and humility and a spirit of the fear of the Lord. God help me. Forgive [me] for my selfishness” (p. 60). The fear of the Lord leads to wisdom (Prov. 9:10), and that is why I was asking God for it; I needed to acquire wisdom (Prov. 4:7). Many biblical truths are linked to the fear of the Lord. The fear of the Lord is the all-consuming awareness that a mighty, loving, zealous God wants me to worship
Him, have a relationship with Him, and honour Him in my relationships with others. The fear of the Lord leads to love, peace, prosperity, encouragement, increased community, and a heart that is connected with the Heavenly Father’s (Acts 9:31; Leviticus 25:17; Psalm 34:9).

I needed wisdom so that I would not be deceived in my heart and could embrace God’s ways in my role as principal. I did not just want to fulfill a management position where status quo was maintained and the years dragged on. I wanted to see staff members, students and families learning and growing together to learn God’s plan for their lives and walk victoriously in the power and love of Jesus Christ. I wanted to contribute to fulfilling a God-sized vision for the school, community and city. While serving in the principal role, I constantly prayed for God to discipline me, tenderize my heart, fill me with His presence, train me to serve Him faithfully and joyfully, and be daily renewed and refreshed with His wisdom, insight, perseverance, and understanding (Schroeder, October 30, 2011, p. 89; Schroeder, February 11, 2011, p. 115; Schroeder, April 9, 2013, p. 186).

Jesus said that His Father was always working and so was He (Matt. 5:17). Other verses show that Jesus was doing His Father’s work: He did only what He saw his Father doing and said only what He heard His Father saying (John 12:49; Matthew 5:19). It was this kind of deeper truth and submission to God that I wanted to understand (Schroeder, July 3, 2011, p. 63; Schroeder, July 16, 2011, p. 69), because it exuded wisdom although it occasionally appeared as folly. The apostle Paul wrote about this wisdom to the first century church in the city of Corinth,

> Where is the wise person? Where is the teacher of the law? Where is the philosopher of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? For since in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not know him, God was pleased through the foolishness of what was preached to save those who believe. Jews demand signs and
Greeks look for wisdom, but we preach Christ crucified: a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles, but to those whom God has called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. For the foolishness of God is wiser than human wisdom, and the weakness of God is stronger than human strength. . . . It is because of him that you are in Christ Jesus, who has become for us wisdom from God— that is, our righteousness, holiness and redemption. (1 Corinthians 1:20-25, 30)

These verses spurred me on to throw aside my selfishness and pride, and trust Jesus in the wisdom that God provides, so that I could live freely with confidence in who God has created me to be. Sorge (2004) wrote that when we crucify our selfishness, it is “not an achievement, but a process” (p. 312), which leads to being prepared to be used by God to do His will. I became really comfortable with God’s loving determination “to root out all such human pride, any wisdom is to be rejected which is not based on ‘Christ crucified’” (Prior, 1985, p. 40), so that I could be obedient to God’s call on my life as a principal, and confidently live to try to glorify Him in everything that I thought, felt, and did (Schroeder, September 25, 2010, p. 22; Schroeder, February 28, 2011, p. 48; Schroeder, February 28, 2011, p. 48).

God the Father’s will is a powerful reality. Jesus of Nazareth laid down His own will in the garden of Gethsemane to embrace the cross and suffer, according to the will of His Father (Moore, 2004, p. 179; Sorge, 2004, p. 312). The Lord’s Prayer declares that the Heavenly Father is holy and that we want His Kingdom to come and His will to be done (Matt. 6:9-10). Furrow (2004) described God the Father’s will as the following:

The predetermined course of action that He will take to fulfill His purpose and gratify the longings of His heart. To understand the purpose for which we have been created, we must explore the longings that existed in God’s heart before the foundations
of the world. What motivated Him to create Heaven and Earth? Why was it in the predetermined counsel of God for Christ to be slain? All these questions are answered when we understand what He desires. And as we yield our lives to these longings, and surrender our will to the way in which He has determined for these desires to be fulfilled, so will we realize our true identity in Him. (p. 194)

I was beginning to experience the exact process and identity that Furrow described.

I was burning with desire and passion and was asking God what I needed to do to understand and receive the desires of His heart; I was the one who was now declaring that God’s will be done in my life (Schroeder, April 10, 2011; Schroeder, October 1, 2011, p. 86). I continually cried out for a spirit of wisdom and revelation and the aligning of my heart with the heart of Christ, so that I could walk in complete loving surrender, trust, and obedience as I joyfully followed Him (Schroeder, January 29, 2011, p. 41; Schroeder, February 7, 2011, p. 42; Schroeder, November 14, 2011, p. 93). God the Father only acts out of love, and if “God’s way is to exalt and glorify Jesus, the wise man will follow God’s way, humble himself before the crucified Saviour, renounce any reliance on worldly assets and boast of the Lord alone: that is true wisdom” (Prior, 1985, p. 47), and that was the journey that I was on.

When Jesus obeyed his Heavenly Father by embracing the cross and the humility of being beaten, mocked, and shamelessly crucified, He did it with joy (Hebrews 12:2), because He knew that it was part of the Father’s plan and would bring eternal life and freedom to billions of people. Death had no victory over Him. I wanted to obey Jesus the same way that He obeyed His Father. I was becoming a person who was obsessed with Jesus, caring more about my character than my comfort, and believing that true joy did not depend on my environment or circumstances (Chan, 2008, p. 146), but rather my heart being intimately connected with Jesus.
through it all. This mindset changed me in my role as a principal, because I became more focused on showing the love of Jesus and serving the people in the community, than wanting to see my wishes accomplished at the school. I was learning to humbly receive the love and wisdom of God while He helped rid me much foolishness in my life, so that I could joyfully walk in the confidence of my identity in Christ.

**Desire for Open Spiritual Ears and Eyes**

*Connect my heart with yours that we may be One.*

*Move my heart with things that move yours.*

*Give me ears to hear what the Spirit says and eyes to see what the Spirit is doing.*

*Holy Spirit, speak through me and to me to glorify Jesus today through my words, actions and thoughts.*

*(Schroeder, August 29, 2011, p. 81)*

I began to believe the things that God’s Word said about the Holy Spirit. I wanted to know truth (John 16:13a), I wanted to know what was yet to come (John 16:13b), and I wanted to have the Holy Spirit reveal Jesus’ goodness, power, and wisdom to me (Deere, 1993, p. 169; Moore, 2002, p. 205; Verwer, 2000, p. 38). I repented for my arrogant perspective and cried out for God to change me, teach me, and awaken me in my spirit. I longed for the strength and courage of God, and I actually began to believe that the Spirit of the living God lived inside of me, like every believer in Christ, and wanted to reveal everything about Jesus to me.

The apostle Paul lived in active fellowship with the Holy Spirit, because he was constantly dialoguing with him (2 Corinthians 13:14) and talking to him as a person (Russell, 2012, p. 46). I started to talk to the Holy Spirit regularly, and ask him to reveal the person and heart of Jesus Christ to me so that I could know what Jesus was thinking and feeling (Schroeder,
Paul wrote powerful verses in the second chapter of 1 Corinthians that declare,

> What no eye has seen, what no ear has heard, and what no human mind has conceived –
> the things God has prepared for those who love him – these are the things God has
> revealed to us by His Spirit. The Spirit searches all things, even the deep things of God.
>
> For who knows a person’s thoughts except their own spirit within them? In the same way
> no one knows the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God. What we have received is
> not the spirit of this world, but the Spirit who is from God, so that we may understand
> what God has freely given us. (1 Corinthians 2:9-12)

Because of these verses, I was profoundly encouraged and filled with faith that I became
ravenous to be consumed with His Spirit, and to know His thoughts and have Him open up my
spiritual ears and eyes to His voice, activity, Kingdom and heart (Schroeder, July 17, 2010, p. 9;
in such close friendship with God that his spiritual ears were opened to hear conversations taking
place between God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit (Psalm 2, 45, 110), and his spiritual eyes
were opened so that he could see God during times of worship (Psalm 63:2).

Paul prayed that the eyes of the Ephesians’ hearts would be opened to see and experience
God (Ephesians 1:18): This is what I wanted in my life so I committed to ask the Lord for eyes to
see what the Holy Spirit was doing (Schroeder, August 29, 2011, p. 81; Schroeder, September 5,
2011, p. 82; Schroeder, December 7, 2011, p. 103). I continually cried out that God would give
me ears to hear what the Spirit of God was saying (Schroeder, April 8, 2011, p. 51; Schroeder,
November 28, 2011, p. 97; Schroeder, December 18, 2012, p. 167). I was hearing stories of God
speaking clearly and with great detail to people (Deere, 1993, p. 214), and I believed that God
wanted to speak by His Spirit to and through men and women, boys and girls (Bickle, 2006, p. 84). I wanted to experience it, too, and hear God speak as Elijah heard Him speak (1 Kings 19:9-18). Tozer (n.d.) highlighted the importance of taking time to sit still and wait on God so that we can begin to hear Him speak to our hearts. He also emphasized that the more that we listen to the Spirit of God, the more clearly we will hear His warm and intimate voice, and learn to recognize it as the word of a dear friend, Jesus Christ (Tozer, n.d., pp. 45-46).

I came to a point in my life where I wanted freedom and peace so badly within my soul that I started regularly asking the Holy Spirit to cleanse me from my sinful thoughts and actions. I wanted to believe that I really was clean and pure on the inside, because the Bible says that if I believe in Jesus, then I can have access to His mind and to His thoughts, by the power of the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 2:16). I believed that I was free and had a right relationship with God because Jesus died for all my sins, past, present, and future, so that I could stand blameless before a holy and loving God today. The Bible teaches that this freedom comes through repentance and believing in Jesus (Acts 3:19; Acts 20:21; Luke 24:46-48), so I was asking God to show me any area in my life for which I needed to repent, so that my attitude and mind could change and I could find the fullness of freedom and joy in Christ.

I began to believe that I would have freedom wherever the Spirit of God was, so I yielded to His authority and Lordship in every area of my life (Moore, 2002, p. 178) and started to fellowship regularly with my life source, the Holy Spirit (Russell, 2012, p. 41). I prayed that the Holy Spirit would change me (Schroeder, September 24, 2013, p. 214; Schroeder, November 3, 2013, p. 242) by crying out, “Consume me with your unfailing love. I want to know you more Jesus. Holy Spirit, have your way in me, reveal any offensive way there is in me and I will repent” (Schroeder, October 27, 2012, p. 164), so that I could live with a powerfully pure heart.
Deere (1993) highlighted that one of God’s greatest mercies is to show His children their sin, because “when divine light exposes our darkness, we can repent, confess, and receive his forgiveness (1 John 1:9). Without the revelatory ministry of the Holy Spirit, we cannot understand the motives of our heart (Jeremiah 17:9-10)” (p. 168), and are ultimately left guessing. I wanted the Spirit of Christ to be recognized in my actions, because He had filled me with the freedom and glory of God (Moore, 2002, p. 33). I was not captive to any thought, person, or ideology. I was free.

I visualized myself being taught by God, and became still before God nearly every evening. If Jesus said that the Holy Spirit would teach me truth and what was yet to come, I wanted to hear it all. I wanted to receive wisdom, truth, insight, and understanding by the divine teaching of the Holy Spirit (Schroeder, November 14, 2011, p. 92) and really learn how to live and love like Jesus did. I turned on worship music, opened my Bible, sat with a journal and pen, and talked with the Holy Spirit, asking Him to teach me (Schroeder, January 12, 2012, p. 111; Schroeder, June 3, 2012, p. 132; Schroeder, September 26, 2013, p. 217), because I wanted to know Jesus more.

As I grew in my friendship with the Holy Spirit, I kept asking Him to awaken me on the inside and show me more (Schroeder, June 8, 2011, p. 59) of the Kingdom of God. I asked Him to flow in me like a river of living water (Ferguson, 1996, p. 67), as Jesus said that the Holy Spirit would do (John 7:38-39), and to set me on fire metaphorically (Schroeder, February 11, 2012, p. 115) with a new, sustaining and refreshing zest for life. John the Baptist prophesied that Jesus would baptize believers with the Holy Spirit and fire (Luke 3:16). It was the awakening, cleansing, and transforming power of God (Ferguson, 1996, p. 68), by the Holy Spirit, through whom God wants all people to be reunited with Him, and experience perfect communion with
God. I wanted the power of the Holy Spirit to flow through me so that God would graciously use me to influence and heal other people in the Name of Jesus (Deere, 1993, p. 205; Schroeder, February 25, 2011, p. 47). Clark (2015) described the Bible as not only a theological book, but also a manual that presents how to do the things that Jesus did by working with the Holy Spirit (p. 144). That was what I wanted the Holy Spirit to use me to do for the Kingdom of God.

I knew that if I was going to risk taking steps of faith, then I was going to need as much of God’s help as He was willing to give, including strength and courage. As Joshua, the successor to Moses, was given command and leadership over the Israelites to lead them into the Promised Land and experience victory in every battle fought, I imagined God saying to me what He said to Joshua. “Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged, for the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go” (Joshua 1:9), and so I declared the same words to myself. Joshua needed faith and confidence in the vision that God had given him.

Leaders serve their followers well when they “envision the future, creating images of what the organization can become” (Taylor et al., 2007, p. 413) and where it can go. I earnestly prayed, “Holy Spirit I am desperate to be strengthened by you, I ask for your spirit of wisdom and revelation that I may know you better” (Schroeder, November 2, 2011, p. 90), and for Him to grant me the courage and boldness that Peter and John had (Acts 4:8, 13; Schroeder, February 28, 2011, p. 49; Schroeder, February 26, 2013, p. 182). I believed that because the Spirit of Jesus lived inside me, and because I was completely free of all oppression and bondage (2 Corinthians 3:17; Moore, 2004, p. 77), I could do anything and even become the servant leader that God wanted me to be, by the power of the Holy Spirit and genuine work of God (Deere, 1993, p. 94).
I wanted to heal and help people as the apostles and prophets did in the first century church. On August 3, 2011, I bore my heart before the Lord and longingly cried out the following:

Holy Spirit, come, increase your presence. Increase my awareness of your presence. Reveal the Son of Man to me. Refine me with the fire of your presence, remove anything that is not everlasting. Fill me with the spirit of wisdom and understanding. Anoint my lips in power for the Kingdom of Heaven. Show me what is yet to come. MORE! MORE! MORE! Give me ears to hear what you are saying that I may know the heart of Jesus Christ, the voice of my Shepherd. I am so weak, so frail, so afraid, so self-conscious, so afraid of disturbing the peace – afraid of turning people away from Jesus because of how I act or this or that, and so I self-preserve. Cast that selfish and proud spirit away and out of me in Jesus’ Name. The weight of what I feel is too much. Hold me Father, hold me close. [I need] Your Words in my heart, Your Name and Words on my lips, to agree with the Father’s heart is my desire; to know this Jesus and feel His love is my cry. To experience the depth and height, and width and length of the love of Jesus is what I long for, that I may love Him in return. (p. 77)

The Holy Spirit was listening and began to give me an insatiable hunger for the Word of God.

**Desire for the Word of God**

*I want to know God’s Word,*

*Speak God’s Word,*

*And live God’s Word.*

*Nothing else matters.*

*(Schroeder, February 17, 2013, p. 180)*
The scriptures have always been a part of my life, because I was raised in a home where my dad read them to me and my brothers every day while sitting around the breakfast table. As I grew into adolescence, I enjoyed learning from the stories in the Bible and deepening my understanding of how they could change my perceptions of God, people, myself, and the world around me. However, only as I set my heart to pursue Jesus with my whole heart did the Word of God begin to burn within me as Jeremiah the prophet described, “His word is in my heart like a fire, a fire shut up in my bones. I am weary of holding it in; indeed, I cannot” (Jeremiah 20:9). I have always been fascinated by the declaration in the Bible, “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. . . . Through him all things were made” (John 1:1, 3), and it continues to describe Jesus, the Son of God, as the Word of God (Murray, 2002, p. 81). The more that I hungered to know Jesus, the more the desire to know and understand the Word of God grew within me. I wanted Jesus to feed me with his Word, the daily bread (Matthew 4:4), so that I could understand, live wisely, and value it the same way that King David did.

King David proclaimed that he valued the Word of God more than gold (Psalm 19:10), and said that it refreshed his soul, gave him joy and understanding, and guided him how to live obediently in the fear of the Lord (Psalm 19:7-9, 11). I prayed that God would increase my hunger for His Word (Schroeder, May 7, 2013, p. 194) and that I would understand it as life-changing truth (Schroeder, October 27, 2012, p. 162). A group of Berean Jews, from first century Macedonia, listened to the apostle Paul preach with eagerness and a readiness in their hearts that caused them to search the scriptures to see if what Paul was saying was true (Acts 17:11). As the Lord increased my hunger for the Word, I told Him, “Jesus I want to know you more. I ask for humility, I ask for greater revelation and understanding of Your Word. Release
your Kingdom within me. Strengthen me... Your Word is my delight O Lord” (Schroeder, April 13, 2012, p. 124). I believed that the Lord wanted to speak to me through His delightful Word (Piper, 2003, p. 152). Because the Holy Spirit goes where the Word of God goes, I started to believe that the more of God’s Word that I knew and loved, the more of God’s presence I would experience (p. 148). I wanted God to speak life and truth from His Word to me as though He were speaking right into my ear (Meyer, 2003, p. 40), so I positioned myself to hear from Him again and again. Tozer (n.d.) brought insight when he stated, “God’s word in the Bible can have power only because it corresponds to God’s word in the universe. It is the present Voice which makes the written Word all-powerful” (p. 42). The more I meditated on God’s Word, the more I heard His voice and desired God’s hope, joy, and peace.

My hunger and focus was growing so I committed to reading large portions of the Bible every day, and God gave me grace to do it. My prayers continued to resonate with desperation, “Jesus, help me to LIVE your Word, speak it, breathe it, pray it, think it, feel it, dream it, believe it” (Schroeder, October 9, 2011, p. 87), so that I could become more like Jesus. I wanted to be instructed by the Holy Spirit as I persistently fed on God’s words until they influenced and lodged their truth in my deepest thoughts, feelings, and desires (Schroeder, April 19, 2012, p. 126, Sorge, 2004, p. 297). I needed to be washed and cleansed through the Word, as Jesus promised to do to the Church (Ephesians 5:26), in order to prepare the Church as a pure and spotless Bride to dwell in eternal companionship. In 2011, I was desperately clinging to God and decreed,

Jesus, I resolve in my heart to push other spiritual books aside and to read your Word in its entirety. I am hungry from your Truth. Feed me Jesus, teach me Holy Spirit. Father, release your zeal into my life. I love you! Reveal the secrets of your heart as I read. I
cry out for wisdom, knowledge of God, insight, understanding, impartation, prophetic revelation. Make me like glue that your Word would stick to me that I would absorb it and that I would become the leader, the servant, the husband, the father, the man you want me to be because of it. Praise you Jesus! Amen.

(November 21, 2011, p. 97)

There was no other book that moved my heart the way that God’s Word did.

**Desire for Fasting**

> Grace and endurance for fasting I ask. Amen.

*(Schroeder, October 1, 2012, p. 157)*

Fasting from food for at least one day a week was a personal commitment that I made to God (June 15, 2010), with a heart that was willing to enter into voluntary weakness so that Christ could continually be lifted up and positioned in the center of my heart. Many people in the Bible fasted, as did many great Christians throughout church history, and witnessed to its value (Foster, 1998, p. 48). Fasting is not an attempt to get from God what we want or to earn anything, but rather a spiritual discipline motivated by a desire to glorify Him with every morsel of our body, soul, and spirit. Hong (2008) described the result of sincere, faith fueled fasting and praying as a catalyst to seeing the invisible hands of God move and receiving the grace of God released to strengthen one’s faith in the midst of struggle, thus producing spiritual maturity (p. 161). It can cultivate a heart that is ready to be tuned and aligned with the heart of Christ. I was crying out to know God more, and because “fasting can bring breakthroughs in the spiritual realm that will never happen in any other way” (p. 60), I decided to commit myself to it so that I could know and love Jesus more.
Jesus declared that His followers would fast when He, the Bridegroom, was no longer with them, but until then they were to enjoy His close friendship and companionship. At an ancient eastern wedding, the attention was on the bridegroom who prepared a mighty celebration full of food, drinks, and celebration. The silence and sobriety of the atmosphere shifted significantly if the bridegroom died prematurely, before or after the wedding. Jesus, as the Bridegroom, explained that His followers would fast when He was no longer on the earth with them (Mark 2:20), because they would long and mourn for His presence, it was then that they would fast, out of the desire to be intimately encountered by the Bridegroom one day again in heaven.

Love quickly rearranges our priorities and schedules, and exhibits itself as a commandeering abandonment to the things that once were more valuable to us. Those things grow dim when compared to embracing and surrendering to the love offered by a God who meets all of my needs and longings in this life (Troccoli, 1997, p. 137). We live differently when motivated by a violent, holy love in the Kingdom of God (Matthew 11:12). The pursuit of intimacy with Jesus that involves the fasting of food, positions our body, soul, and spirit so that we can experience God in deeper measures (Bickle, 2006, p. 126; Hong, 2008, p. 162). Our thoughts and emotions are accentuated as we lay down what our physical body craves, in order to satisfy the spiritual hunger deep within our spirits by the power of the Holy Spirit. This mindset is directly linked to the truth of aiming to “lose our life,” or in other words “let God have His way” so that we can truly experience life as God meant it to be experienced (Matthew 10:39; Wright, 2007b, p. 53). In my spiritual hunger, I regularly entered into a time of fasting to express my wholehearted recognition of my need for God the Father to give me more grace to
seek His face, hear His voice, be filled with His Spirit, and be transformed to be like His Son (Schroeder, April 9, 2013, p. 185).

**Desire for Worship and Prayer with Others**

| We worshipped and then went up front for prayer. |
| We were standing with open hands asking the Spirit to come. |

*(Schroeder, July 7, 2010, p. 7)*

The more I yearned to be in God’s presence, the more I went out of my way to sing and pray with others who shared a similar heart. I attended a church in Brandon with my family, but often I would also go to worship and pray with friends on a different day of the week at a different church because it had a focused prayer time. In my home church, I would often go up for prayer at the end of the church service solely because I wanted to know Jesus more (Schroeder, July 7, 2010, p. 7; Schroeder, July 17, 2010, p. 9). Sometimes I would be in tears because my desire to experience God and feel His presence was so strong. It was always tempting just to go home after singing or sitting through the sermon. However, God loves it when his children worship Him together, and He enjoys giving good gifts (Luke 11:13) to His children.

He gave His one and only Son (John 3:16) as an atoning sacrifice (1 John 2:2) on the cross, once and for all (Luke 23:44-46). Therefore, my desire to know Jesus more led me to the front of the church again and again, in order to receive prayer in anticipation that I would be refreshed and “loved on” again by my Heavenly Father (Schroeder, September 14, 2010, p. 19). Foster (1998) articulated, “To worship is to experience Reality, to touch Life. It is to know, to feel, to experience the resurrected Christ in the midst of the gathered community. . . . worship is the human response to the divine initiative (p. 158). I therefore often refused to leave the
worship setting “empty handed.” Worshipping and praying with others was part of my journey of pursuing to know and love Jesus with all of my heart.

Desire for the Fullness of Christ

*Jesus, I ask for the fullness of Christ,*

everything you have for me in this age,

to be poured out in me and through me that I may

know and love and worship you and that your name may be glorified as the King of Kings!

*(Schroeder, February 28, 2011, p. 48)*

The fullness of Christ cannot be explained, but it can be pursued because He is alive. The Word of God describes the Church as the body of Christ, and Jesus as the head. He gives gifts to people so that they can serve, teach, encourage, help one another build up the body of Christ, see it expand, and welcome new believers, until the whole body reaches unity, intimacy, and maturity. The apostle Paul described those high points and end goals as the whole measure of the fullness of Christ because –

then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of people in their deceitful scheming. Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will grow to become in every respect the mature body of him who is the head, that is, Christ. From him the whole body, joined and held together by every support ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work. *(Ephesians 4:14-16)*

The apostle Paul walked in incredible revelation and knowledge of God, and showed it by his faith in his prayers that the Ephesians would, by the power of the Holy Spirit, comprehend and experience the deep affections of Christ, in order that they would be filled to the measure of the
fullness of God (Ephesians 3:19). This statement is beyond understanding and is “one of those things that, were it not in the Bible, would sound like heresy” (Wiens, 2004, p. 252), because the fullness of God is unfathomable. The whole book of Ephesians captivated my heart and mind and increased my faith. As I took time to talk to the Holy Spirit about it and ask Him for understanding, I believed that I could experience the fullness of Christ and started to cry out for it (Schroeder, November 19, 2011, p. 93; Schroeder, December 7, 2011, p. 102; October 27, 2012, p. 169).

I was willing to give up anything to walk in closer friendship with Jesus than I had ever walked. I cried out to the Holy Spirit to empty me of dull worldly desires and even good desires, because I wanted the best of the best. I asked that the Holy Spirit would “fill me with life, light, all of God that I may walk in the fullness of knowledge, understanding, power, love, joy, thankfulness, humility, boldness, hope, grace, selflessness, and Jesus Christ himself” (Schroeder, November 25, 2013, p. 253). I did not relent in my pursuit of Jesus because those who pursued Him in the biblical stories found Him, and I wanted to find all of God so that I could be filled with His love (Schroeder, January 2, 2012, p. 106) and let it overflow into loving others. I kept asking God for more revelation of His beauty and His heart, more fear of the Lord, more forgiveness, more truth, more love, more understanding, more of Him and less of me, because I really wanted to receive and experience everything that Jesus would allow me (John 3:30; Schroeder, June, 20, 2012, p. 137). I know that for Jesus to walk in full obedience to His Heavenly Father, He had to suffer and endure intense persecution, even to the point of death, and I believe that His obedience to His Father brought victory over the grave, and life over the sting and permanency of death. Hallelujah!
Conclusion

My great desire to know Jesus Christ wholeheartedly motivated me to rearrange my priorities, habits, and schedule so that in my ardent pursuit to hear His voice, I could experience His fullness. I relentlessly sought Jesus, as a flame leaps out desperately hoping to find more oxygen in order to grow and burn with fueled intensity, because nothing else would satisfy. I longingly desired to encounter the fullness of Jesus, the source of knowledge, wisdom, and revelation, in worship, prayer, fasting, and His Word. I expressed my raw thoughts and motions in my journal and simply wanted to know my Creator. I was strengthened with comfort, encouragement, and inspiration when I became aware of other people who could relate to my insatiable hunger to know and love Jesus Christ wholeheartedly. God was overhauling my heart and my mind as He moulded me into a humble servant leader who was called to build a strong, purposeful, and caring school community (Crippen, 2010, p. 28). He knew what needed replacing, repairing, and refurnishing in order to equip me as an effective principal. Everything changed in my life when Jesus began to answer my heartfelt cries by opening up my spiritual eyes and ears and revealing Himself and His call on my life as we fellowshipped in closer and closer friendship.
CHAPTER V

FELLOWSHING WITH GOD

I felt the Lord say to me,

“Keep doing what you’re doing Bryan. You are doing good. Wait for me.

I will lead you. Listen for my voice. Go when I say “Go.” Stop when I say “Stop.”

Remember how I led you in the past, remember how you gained confidence in Me through the prophetic words of encouragement given to you to be strengthened.

Do the same for others now, staff [members] and students and parents alike.

Just be sensitive to my voice.

You are my child.

I am your King. Your Bridegroom. Your Jesus.

I love you.

(Schroeder, January 5, 2012, p. 108)

The word fellowship simply means partnership, friendship, or companionship, with mutual affection. Many of my journal’s pages became the expressive and receptive canvas from my experiences of fellowshipping with God. A “deep fellowship means being closer to God” (Hong, 2008, p. 161), and I recorded those interactions that I had with God. The image that brings a smile to my face when reflecting on the word fellowship is envisioning two fellows on a ship. It is just them, the two of them, alone. They voyage together through calm and stormy seas. Where the boat goes they go together, and the more time they spend together the better they get to know one another and enjoy each other. It takes time to develop deeper relationship. I learned to enjoy simply being with God. I was beginning to believe that He enjoyed being with me. The adventure of pursuing to know and love Jesus wholeheartedly was rooted in a desire for
deep communion with Him. Living in daily fellowship with the living God takes faith and surrender to His voice, influence, and will (Little, 1988, p. 168; Murray, 2002, p. 81), and I believe that because I had exhibited a desperate realization and longing for the indispensability of God and pursued Jesus wholeheartedly, He kindly and generously responded. The prior chapter is riddled with my personal expressions of desire, want, need, and asking; this chapter presents a plethora of answered prayers to my cries, as I believe that God began to reveal Himself to me in response to my prayers. Our interactions were two sided and consisted of God speaking to me through the scriptures – the “logos” word of God, and speaking to my spirit, also known as the whisper of God or the internal voice of God – the “rhema” word of God. In my journal, I wrote out many praises of thanksgiving and adoration, and declared to God who He is and what He has done, and I also declared my personal resolves to obey God and walk in submission to His leadership.

By taking time to intentionally fellowship with Jesus, He opened my spiritual eyes and showed me visions that strengthened my faith and transformed my mind. I learned from His leadership. He taught me about the importance of having a “servant’s heart and mind, a servant’s values and attitudes, but a leader’s skill, a leader’s vision and ingenuity, and a leader’s creativity” (Hansel, 1987, p. 160). I fell in love with Jesus and His way of doing things. I grew in my understanding of what He thought and felt about me, I learned to hear His voice, and I also expressed to Him how much His friendship and love meant to me. I had discovered what Piper (2003) expressed to be true, “Knowledge about Him will not do. Work for Him will not do. We must have personal, vital fellowship with Him; otherwise, Christianity becomes a joyless burden” (p. 175); therefore, I truly began to experience a two-sided relationship. I scrawled my prayers and prayed with my spirit. Hong (2008) affirmed,
The only way to know and meet God is through prayer. Free-style Prayer is a good model of prayer for personal fellowship with God. It is a sincere and loving act of giving our spirit to God. We have to learn how to talk to God before trying to offer an eloquent prayer. In other words, we have to learn how to offer our hearts. (p. 78)

It was a desperately lovely time of my life when I felt like I was continually offering my heart to be encountered and transformed, because I was crying out to know Jesus more and the Holy Spirit began to reveal the character, nature, and person of Jesus Christ to me. Nothing is more exhilarating than that! We began a fellowship of deep friendship.

**Speaking To Me through His Written Word**

*Then I started to read Psalm 71 and God said “This is just for you.”*

*Wow! Was it ever. I will meditate on these scriptures for weeks and months to come.*

_Praise the Lord._

*(Schroeder, October 26, 2013, pp. 239-240)*

The holy scriptures, God’s special revelation to all people, are in a book that was written by men, yet inspired and breathed into by the Holy Spirit. In other words, it is unlike any other book ever written. In my pursuit to know and love Jesus, during my times of being with the Holy Spirit, I would wait and listen, and sometimes I would feel like He was highlighting a specific book, chapter, and verse or verses from the Word of God to encourage and strengthen me with (Schroeder, May, 2012, p. 131; Schroeder, July 12, 2012, p. 141; Schroeder, December 24, 2012, p. 166). Remarkably, the passage of scripture that the Holy Spirit led me to read would often be exactly what I needed to be filled with faith, peace, love, or joy. God’s words bring victorious perspective to our trying circumstances, fleeting feelings, and human weaknesses (Troccoli, 1997, p. 27). R. C. Chapman, a widely respected Christian leader in
England during the 1800s, believed the Bible to be God’s very voice, and would spend much of every morning reading and meditating on the Word of God until his soul was filled with truth and the very breath of God (Peterson & Strauch, 1991, p. 16), which is what I was beginning to believe and experience. I knew that I could not know Christ without knowing and believing what the Bible said.

God spoke to me through His Word. Often, right after I expressed my thoughts on paper, I would then have a thought that I learned was from the Lord. For example on February 26, 2013, I wrote “Jesus, what are you saying to me now?” (p. 183) and then I thought of Jeremiah 20. The verses from that chapter were exactly what I needed to hear in that moment. The verses speak of the Lord being with me and rescuing me from my enemies, and essentially prevailing over my circumstances. I left that conversation being really encouraged and strengthened in my faith. Foster (1998) proclaimed that the “meditation of Scripture centers on internalizing and personalizing the passage. The written Word becomes a living word addressed to you” (p. 29), and replaces my thoughts and emotions with God’s. I began to make commitments before God to read His Word more and more every day, and trust Him to equip me to do His work and allow His Word to teach, rebuke, correct, and train me in righteousness (2 Timothy 3:16-17) as He saw fit. Peacock (2014) penned, “The keys to rebuilding the individual are in the Book. . . . the whole onslaught of problems rebellious man has created are to be solved by studying and applying God’s Word systematically and strategically” (p. 13). It was in my studying of God’s Word that I found freedom, restoration, and enhanced fellowship with Jesus.

On a different day, I asked Jesus what He was thinking and feeling about me, and immediately the scripture from 2 Corinthians 12:9 came to mind (Schroeder, January 2, 2013, p. 171). God definitely encouraged me with that verse because in it Jesus says, “My grace is
sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness” (2 Corinthians 12:9). The Holy Spirit is very gentle. He enjoys letting people know what Jesus, the King of kings, is thinking (John 16:15) and does it in a variety of ways; however, one common way is through the written Word of God. I believe that God the Father loves to reveal Himself to His children, His sons and daughters. It is like He is playing hide and seek but wants to be found so that we can interact with Him. He is everything that we need, yet He patiently waits for us to call out to Him so that ultimately we realize that He wants a steady friendship with us, rather than being pursued as a performance-oriented, distant, “Santa Claus” or worse – a vending machine that distributes exactly what is demanded, as some people perceive Him.

I often wrestled with accusatory thoughts and negative emotions during the first couple of years of serving as principal. I easily became caught up in selfish or proud thoughts, rather than embrace servant leadership as the “understanding and practice of leadership that places the good of those led over the self-interest of the leader” (Cerit, 2009, p. 602). I would cry out to God to help and speak to me through His Word. I knew that I could find truth and solace in His precious word. One night I prayed the following:

I am the principal of a Christian school, the leader. Where am I leading? What is the significance of this role? How am I to conduct myself, how do I speak, how do I act? I am scared, not scared of doing a bad job, scared of not being wholeheartedly obedient, scared of speaking truth. I hate myself for it. . . . Jesus help me. I need to go deep in the Word and in prayer. Holy Spirit, I believe you revealed to me what was on the King’s heart for me personally the other day when I asked you. Luke 5:4 says, “Put out into deep water, let down your net for a catch.” Peter obeys despite logical reasoning, and despite his experience and despite his tiredness. He obeys because Jesus said so. He
trusted Jesus. Jesus revealed and gave Peter more than Peter expected in a miraculous way. Thank you Holy Spirit. (Schroeder, August 26, 2013, p. 205)

I needed to learn greatness by trusting and obeying Jesus and serving people. The people at school needed to experience me as a servant if I wanted to be a great leader (Spears, 2004, p. 8) in the school community. Peter and his colleagues had been fishing all night and returned in the early morning with no fish. Jesus, a rabbinic teacher, comes on the scene and tells the experienced fisherman, Peter, to try again. Peter was faced with a decision to trust and obey, or to use his logical reasoning, expertise, and past experiences to do it his own way. He chose to trust Jesus and caught more fish than his boat could hold, thus encountering the person and love of the Son of God, Jesus of Nazareth.

God led me to trust Him despite what my circumstances and logical thinking were pointing toward, and I was encouraged because of Jesus’s revealed heart and gentleness through His Spirit and written Word for me. I discovered on my journey to know Jesus that often when I would be praying about something for a week or month, God would suddenly provide a clear answer through His written Word. The other way God seemed to reveal His will and ways to me was when I would read the same larger passage of scripture over and over and the same verse seemed to be highlighted to me each time (Schroeder, March 18, 2012, p. 119; Schroeder, September 25, 2012, p. 151), which ended up being meaningful to me and enriching our times of fellowship.
God’s Whisper

_I have been struggling this week with the nearness of God,
sensing His manifest presence is not here._

_He spoke to me, right before I started writing. He said,_

_“I have you right where I want you.”_

_This put a smile on my face and peace in my heart,_

_because I was feeling lately that I was not really being used by God;_

_the devil was attacking me._

_Then I began to feel peace._

(Schroeder, January 11, 2013, p. 173)

God has consistently revealed Himself as One who speaks. From the book of Genesis to the book of Revelation, God spoke to people. Elijah was an obedient man of God who was zealous for the things of God, particularly during a period of time when Israel was in a rebellious stage under the leadership of King Ahab, who reigned in the 9th century B.C. Elijah had a close friendship with God and heard God’s gentle, yet clear whisper (1 Kings 19:12-18). Elijah was filled with peace, faith, hope, and strength when he heard God’s voice. As I cried out to hear God’s voice and positioned myself to hear His voice, I started hearing and recognizing His voice. This happened the most when I was meditating on the Word of God, writing out my prayers in my journal, and then waiting to hear Him speak.

The Holy Spirit often spoke to me in order to encourage me, remind me of my calling and strengthen me in it, comfort me in my struggles, highlight what God the Father was doing, and direct me back to the Word of God. Goll (2012) taught,
As we wait before God, He graciously gives us a teachable spirit. Our goal, of course, is to bring this contentment into everyday expressions of life, but this does not normally come quickly to us. However, as we experience more and more of the inward attentiveness to His divine whisper, we will begin to carry His presence throughout our days. Just as smoke is absorbed into our clothing and we carry its smell with us, so the aroma of God’s presence is seeping into our beings, and we will likewise become carriers of His gracious fragrance wherever we go. That is one of the benefits of communal [fellowship] prayer: basking in the presence of this brilliant One. Then, when we have been in with Him, we go out into the world, and we carry the brilliance of His great presence. (p. 207)

I began to realize that God has a lot to say, which makes sense since the context of the Kingdom of God is family as my Heavenly Father calls me son, and Jesus calls me brother and friend, and His Spirit lives within me. It is difficult to have fellowship without communication. God values people so much and has a lot to say.

There is no greater feeling than when God reveals Himself to me and I hear His voice, feel His presence, or experience His love and power. I had been practicing asking the Holy Spirit what Jesus was thinking and feeling and then would wait, expectantly, and then write down what I felt like He was telling or showing me. Sometimes I heard the Holy Spirit telling me that He loves me, sees my love for Him in my heart, is pleased with me, and wants me not to give up (Schroeder, December 4, 2011, p. 100; Schroeder, 2012, May 1, p. 129). Other times He would give me little pieces of wisdom like “Guard your heart for it is the wellspring of life” (Schroeder, February 9, 2012, p. 113) or invitations to come closer like “Come here. Listen to me. I want you to walk in my voice” (Schroeder, September 8, 2012, p. 153). Whenever God
would speak to me it would strengthen, encourage, or comfort me. Learning to hear and recognize God’s voice freed me from all fear because I was growing in confidence of who my Heavenly Father is, and who I am, from His perspective.

As I grew in my sensitivity to His voice, I was amazed at how clearly I could hear Him because I had disciplined and positioned myself to hear Him (Thompson, 2000, p. 62). God spoke to me, as He often did, during an evening of praise and worship,

During prayer, I was off to the side, holding Mayla [my two-month old] and I was overcome with the deepest love I have ever felt for her as I was inviting the Holy Spirit to come. I heard God telling me, “I delight in you. When you feel pain, I feel pain. When you are sad, I am sad. When you smile, I smile. I am here to meet all of your needs. As you hold your daughter in your arms, that is how I hold you in my arms. I am watching you.” I was crying because the love I have for my daughter only comes from me being designed to love and from me being loved by my Heavenly Father! God was speaking to me so clearly. (Schroeder, May 17, 2011, p. 57)

Even now as I write this reflection of those experiences and journal entries, I am moved emotionally and am so thankful for a God who is full of tender love. The gentle voice of God often brings encouragement or personal instruction in an internal and quiet manner (Thompson, 2000, p. 51); such revelation spurred me on to want to know Jesus more.

Repetitively, the Holy Spirit would speak to me about how God the Father feels about me and what Jesus thinks about me (John 17:26), and how He wants to use me powerfully. In the realm of education, servant leader theorists affirm this process of trust development between students and staff members, based on the key characteristics of excellent servant leaders. The stronger the trusting relationship between the leader and the follower, the more likely the
follower will feel cared for, valued, and see the leader as a person not just an authority figure (Herman & Marlowe, 2005, p. 176; Stewart, 2012, p. 238; Taylor et al., 2007, p. 407). It was pivotal that I continue to exemplify those characteristics and have a repentant and obedient heart out of love (Schroeder, May 10, 2013, p. 195; Schroeder, September 24, 2013, p. 215; Schroeder, November 21, 2013, p. 250). Jesus said that people need to live off of every word of God, not bread alone (Luke 4:4), and “the word ‘word’ that Jesus used here is referring to the rhema word . . . the spoken word of God” (Niebergall, 2016, p. 30). My life changed when I started hearing and recognizing God’s voice.

God loves to reveal the good things that He sees in people, and the purpose that He has for them on this earth. The story of Gideon in the scriptures shows God calling Gideon, who was known as the weakest and lowest in his family, “mighty warrior,” and used him to save the nation of Israel from their surrounding enemies (Judges 6). While Gideon was still weak and had not won one battle, God saw him as victorious and mighty, because He created Gideon and determined the purpose for his life, in the midst of national oppression. God will always do His part, and is merciful by giving us every opportunity to do our part and trust Him to do His part (Schroeder, April 11, 2011, p. 53). Gideon’s spiritual eyes of understanding were opened to who he was created to be, and he trusted and obeyed God faithfully despite challenging circumstances. God actually directed Gideon to go to battle with much fewer numbers than the opposing nation, so that when Gideon and the Israelites experienced victory, the whole nation of Israel would praise God and turn to Him and trust Him again, rather than praising the efforts of the triumphant soldiers. The Holy Spirit would sometimes tell me what God the Father was doing or wanting to do in a city or nation (Schroeder, November 10, 2012, p. 165; Schroeder, November 21, 2013, p. 251). Goll (2012) agreed, “[God] is after cities and nations. . . . His
promise is for everyone – individuals, families, and communities. It is a city-transformation promise” (p. 225).

One of the scriptural prayers that I prayed persistently out of faith and quiet patience (Murray, 2002, p. 106) was that God would open the eyes of my heart so that I could know the calling and work (Ephesians 1:18; Wiens, 2004, p. 247) that He specifically has for me to do on this earth. In my quest to know God’s calling and direction for my life, He progressively revealed “pieces of the puzzle,” ranging from what seemed like a large revelation to a smaller one that simply confirmed the direction that I was going (Schroeder, October 21, 2010, p. 22). God whispered to me one day while I was by myself looking at the clouds admiring His creation, “I will lead you as I led Moses and Joshua” (Schroeder, July 17, 2010, p. 9), and I believed that He was drawing me into deeper friendship with Him so that I could powerfully serve and love people in my role as principal.

On a different day, I was sitting outside on the deck at my house and I wrote,

The Lord impressed upon me my role as being one who SPEAKS His Word, and what He lays on my heart to speak. I feel this is the area I am weakest in because I would rather listen to another speak, I do not like to “boss” people around, I do not like to make other people uncomfortable, I do not like to disagree with other people. Usually, I am not an opinionated person. See Jesus, that is what you have to work with. I do not know what to do. My heart simply wants to worship, seek Jesus, and read His Word.

(Schroeder, July 7, 2012, p. 139)

The Holy Spirit was calling me to action. It was great to worship, seek Jesus, and read His Word; however, the Holy Spirit was revealing that in order to mobilize a group of people, I, as a principal, not only needed to serve them but confidently lead and instruct them. God was
teaching me how to lead with character and conviction, because “leadership has to do with who
you are – your character, your motivation, and your relationships with people” (Taylor et al.,
2007, p. 403). I was exhorted as the Holy Spirit continued to reveal the unique calling on my life
of speaking the words that He impressed upon my heart to strengthen, encourage, and comfort
people. I have learned that God made me the way that I am, in order to do things on this earth
that He designed me to do. Most of them have to do with children (Schroeder, November 17,
2012, p. 165; April 19, 2013, p. 190), boldly and fearlessly standing upon the Word of God, and
loving people no matter what (Schroeder, July 27, 2011, p. 70). I continue to trust God to guide
me in my commitments, as I strive to obey Him and grow in my love for Him and for people.

Jesus instructed His disciples that when He returns to His Father’s side in heaven, the
Father would send them the Comforter, the Holy Spirit (John 14:16, 26). The Heavenly Father
delights in comforting people; this was one reason that He sent the Holy Spirit. My times of
prayer were often saturated with cries out to God to help me, or with complaining or shouting,
asking God questions that seemed to have no answers, or I would bellow to Him out of
frustration or emotional hurt. And He comforted me. He is bigger than all of my problems and
emotions and thoughts: He loves me and therefore consoled me in the secret place. Then as I
was refreshed by His comfort, I was ready again to serve and interact with people confidently
and joyfully. When He would speak, I was filled with peace (Schroeder, September 22, 2012, p.
150), assurance (Schroeder, December 7, 2011, p. 102; Schroeder, Jan. 2, 2013, p. 172), joy
(Schroeder, April 1, 2012, p. 122), and hope, and I was no longer afraid (Schroeder, December 4,
2011, p. 100). He often whispered simple phrases like “I will make you grow, in my time – I
will do it” (Schroeder, July 24, 2012, p. 145), which encouraged me to focus on loving and
knowing Jesus, and even serving staff members as a principal, without expecting anything in
return. The Holy Spirit loves the written word of God. He is the One who wrote it, and would often redirect me to it (Schroeder, October, 23, 2011, p. 89) so that I could be strengthened by God’s Word and receive more instruction from it.

**Praising God and Giving Him Thanks**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Jesus, I praise you! You are marvelous.</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>You value and delight in people so much.</td>
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<tr>
<td>You are awesome.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Thank you for your love, promises, Truth, presence, Holy Spirit, power, meekness, and grace.”</td>
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<tr>
<td>(Schroeder, August 30, 2011, p. 81)</td>
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Praising Jesus and being thankful for who He is and what He has done and is doing, is a natural response when someone begins to understand Him and fellowship as a close friend with Him. God gives grace to all people and when people realize God’s kindness and generosity, the response of the recognition or the cognizant reception of the working of grace is thankfulness and praise. Yancey (1997) stated, “Trace the roots of grace, or charis, in Greek, and you will find a verb that means “I rejoice, I am glad” (p. 13). A story in the scriptures highlights God’s grace being given to a barren woman who wanted a son, not only because she was barren and desperately wanted a son, but also so that her son could help change the nation of Israel and lead them back to God. Her name was Hannah and the story is found in the second chapter of the first book of Samuel. God granted her a son and her response was to pen and sing a hymn of thanksgiving that acknowledged God’s ability to make the weak strong, the poor rich, and the barren to have children (Birch, Brueggemann, Fretheim, & Petersen, 1999, p. 224). Hannah did not deserve God’s grace, nor had she done anything to earn God’s favour; that would not be grace (Yancey, 1997, p. 37). God’s grace is His ability to give freely what is needed, hence His
uneared and undeserved operational power, in a period of time to accomplish His will and work in a person, organization, city, or nation.

As I pursued to know and love Jesus Christ wholeheartedly, and as He began to reveal Himself to me and fill me with His love, I was overcome with thankfulness and I could not stop praising Him. I was being filled with the love of God and it was flowing out of me (Meyer, 2009, p. 79) as I expressed in my journals, but more importantly it emerged in my relationships. I was thankful for His presence in my life, and I was thankful for who He is – His character, His nature, His person; I was constantly filled with joyous praise for His goodness and generosity to me.

I was thankful for the presence of God. He really wants to be with people. That is why God the Father sent His Son, the exact representation of Himself (Hebrews 1:3) in the form of a man to reveal everything about the Father to those who would receive Him. The apostle John said that everyone “who did receive [Jesus], to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God – children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband’s will, but born of God” (John 1:12-13). This reveals who God is and what He desires, because the day “that we said yes to Jesus, God placed His seed within us and birthed into our spirits His very own Spirit” (Russell, 2012, p. 27). John also spoke about Jesus being the Word in the flesh who makes His dwelling among people as One full of grace and truth (John 1:14) and Paul wrote something similar when he declared, “The Spirit you received brought about your adoption to sonship. And by him we cry Abba, Father. The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God’s children” (Romans 8:15b-16). As I cried out for understanding so that I could know and love and worship and serve Jesus with all my heart, soul, mind, and strength, the Holy Spirit gave me grace to feel, experience, and encounter His manifest presence (Tozer, n.d.,
p. 37) and that made me thank Him for such a mighty gift (Schroeder, January 1, 2013, p. 169, Schroeder, October 5, 2013, p. 230). In His goodness and gentleness, my heart and mind were being captured by His love (Ethridge, 2007, p. 84), and I was essentially intoxicated with it because there is nothing more influential on the human spirit, soul, and body than the very presence of the living God.

The prophet Jeremiah described that when individuals seek the Creator with all of their heart, they will find Him (Jeremiah 29:13) in an intimate and undeniable way; I found Him and I praised Him (Schroeder, January 2, 2013, p. 171). A wise woman once wrote,

> What in the world, in all this world, is grace? I can say it certain now: All is grace. I can see through the woods of the world: God is always good and I am always loved. . . . The hard discipline to give thanks for all things at all times because He is all good. . . . All is grace only because all can transfigure. (Voskamp, 2010, pp. 100-101)

God’s grace is always available in its fullness to anyone who reaches out for His goodness and help. The Holy Spirit was slowly transforming me to become the person that God the Father had planned me to be from the beginning; I was being transfigured, by the grace of God, to think, love, laugh, and forgive more like Jesus as I spent time being with Him.

As God released grace for me to know Him more, I grew in my understanding of who He was as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. As I began to understand God as the good and generous Father (Luke 11:11-13; Luke 15:11-32; Ephesians 3:14) who is filled with pleasure (Ephesians 1:5) and delight (Zephaniah 3:17) for me, whom He calls son and wants near Him, I thanked Him for everything that I could think of (Schroeder, November 12, 2010, p. 24; Schroeder, January 1, 2013; Schroeder, January 1, 2013). I learned that Jesus is the happiest man who ever lived because He fully represented His Father’s joy,
And no one need be downcast, for Jesus is the joy of heaven, and it is His joy to enter into sorrowful hearts. We can exaggerate about many things; but we can never exaggerate our obligation to Jesus, or the compassionate abundance of the love of Jesus to us. (Tozer, n.d., p. 26)

I learned to see Jesus as a happy, friendly, relational man who loved me and I was filled with thanksgiving.

I began to study and understand why Jesus referred to Himself as the Bridegroom. He is betrothed in covenantal love to His Bride (the Church), consisting of those who believe in their heart and confess with their mouth that He is Lord (Romans 10:9) of their lives. That means that He is willing to pursue me, as one whom He desires out of the purest and fiercest love. I thanked Jesus for His jealous, fiery, unrelenting love for me, even though I was dark of heart, weak, and desperate (Schroeder, October 10, 2012, p. 159; Schroeder, January 29, 2011, p. 41; Schroeder, December 6, 2011, p. 101). He says that my face is lovely and my voice is sweet (Song of Songs 2:14; Tozer, n.d., p. 27) and when I receive His mercy, His holiness, and His righteousness, then I am renewed by the blood that He shed on the cross for my sake. Then I can truly live in freedom, and I thanked Him for it and started to live with internal freedom in Christ (Schroeder, April 8, 2012, p. 123). The more that I knew Jesus, the more that I trusted in His leadership, power, and authority (Schroeder, June 14, 2012, p. 136). I told him “Jesus, I bow before you. You are the honoured one. My Bridegroom. My Judge. My Friend. My King. Thank you for your grace, for your provision, for your leadership” (Schroeder, December 23, 2011, p. 104), because I was overwhelmed with His meekness, humility, and perseverance to obey, love, and serve His Father in heaven. Even Jesus, the penultimate servant leader, followed someone and embraced the same characteristics that His Father exemplified toward Him. The Father, desires
to give His Son, the Bridegroom, an inheritance – a pure and spotless Bride (the Church) – who is filled with love, empowered with truth, and the partner of Christ.

I fell in love with the Holy Spirit when I took time to honour His presence, talk to Him, and truly believe that He lived inside of me (1 Corinthians 2:12-14; Meyer, 2012, p.115). I discovered how much He wanted to tell me (John 16:13), show me (John 16:15; 1 Corinthians 2:9-10), and let me experience (Ezekiel 1; Isaiah 6). The Holy Spirit always glorifies the Son (John 16:14), Jesus Christ, who is in the Father and the Father is in Him, and anyone who has seen Jesus has seen the Father (John 14:9-11). The Holy Spirit became my best friend.

God’s Word is full of powerful stories of what He has done. I wanted my life to be full of these same types of stories that I could share with others. I saturated my prayers with thanksgiving for what He has done. I gave Him glory (Schroeder, December 18, 2012, p. 167), I thanked Him for His creation (Schroeder, July 16, 2011, p. 69), I thanked Him for His perfect timing and His grace (Schroeder, December 23, 2011, p. 105), and I praised Jesus for suffering for me (Schroeder, January 1, 2013, p. 170). David incessantly expressed his thankful and praise-filled heart for what the Lord had done (Psalm 9:1; Psalm 26:7; Psalm 68:7), and he wanted all people to know the deeds and the ways of the Holy One of Israel, God Almighty (Psalm 67:2; Psalm 107:1-9; 2 Samuel 7:22-23). David was consumed with expressing gratitude because he was not only a desirous seeker of God, but a glad finder as well (Tozer, n.d., p. 12). David’s journey with the Lord is recorded in the scriptures. God blessed me with such wonderful family and friends that I often thanked Him for my beautiful wife (Schroeder, October 23, 2011, p. 87), my delightful children (Schroeder, January 2, 2012, p. 106; Schroeder, December 20, 2013, p. 264), and my close friends (Schroeder, October 10, 2012, p. 159). God is good and He is always faithful; I experienced His kindness while at work (Schroeder, February
at home, and while relaxing and resting, and I discovered that I could fellowship with Him anywhere. I continue to ask God to use me powerfully in my family, school, church, community, city, and nation — however He chooses.

**Visions**

*I kept my eyes closed and did not care what I looked like.*

*I was there to glorify God and sing my heart out and give Him all my praise!*  

*It was so freeing.*

*I prayed against some distractions, but made a resolve to sing before my King and honour Him.*

*At one point while I was worshipping I was given an extremely clear picture of myself being suited up for battle with armour, the breast piece was a highlighted piece.*

*Next I was kneeling before the King’s throne and He knighted me.*

*It was so clear and moving. I started to cry and continued to praise God.*

*(Schroeder, April 19, 2011, p. 55)*

Receiving a vision from God is a unique and powerful way that the Holy Spirit can reveal what God is doing or wants to do with, or what He is showing or highlighting to, a certain individual or group of people for a certain reason. I had been praying, as the apostle Paul prayed, that God would open my spiritual eyes (Ephesians 1:18) so that I could know Jesus more, and be equipped to do His will and work (Ephesians 4:11-13). Jesus of Nazareth lived as a man who relied on the Holy Spirit (Ferguson, 1996, p. 47) to show him what His Heavenly Father was doing, in order that He could do exactly what He saw His Father doing. Jesus, talking about himself, said, “the Son can do nothing by himself; he can do only what he sees his Father doing, because whatever the Father does the Son also does. For the Father loves the Son
and shows him all he does” (John 5:19-20a), and the Holy Spirit continues to do that today with people (Goll, 2012, p. 284), often through visions.

When people seek God to know Him and fellowship with Him, the Spirit of Christ (Ferguson, 1996, p. 63) “speaks” to them through visions, as He did in both the Old (Daniel 7-12; Numbers 12:6b; Joel 2:28-29) and New Testament (Acts 9-10) accounts (Bickle, 2008, p. 25; Meyer, 2007, p. 50; Thompson, 2007, p. 54). Goll (2012) taught, “How can anyone ‘see’ what the Lord ‘speaks?’ The simplest answer is that God has more than one way of speaking. His speech is not limited to audible words or, indeed, to words of any kind” (p. 301); therefore, it was a little to my surprise when God started speaking to me through still pictures, glimpses in the spirit or mental visions (Bickle, 2008, p. 24; Thompson, 2007, p. 54), and then through open visions (Thompson, 2007, p. 55) where a short scene was being played out, which I could see with my spiritual eyes whether my physical eyes were open or closed.

Bickle (2008) described revelation from the Lord as coming in small pieces that required interpretation and understanding, in order for the person receiving it to know what God was specifically saying or revealing (p. 25). Wisdom and caution are needed to test the spirits (1 John 4:1-3) and follow the scriptures’ instructions, in order to ensure that people are not being misled but are truly receiving direction and revelation from the living God. Visions are often experienced by people who are seeking the Lord on their own (Bootsma, 2014, pp. 90-91), while praying for someone or being prayed for by others (Goll, 2012, p. 297; Meyer, 2007, p. 50; Thompson, 2007, p. 50), or while worshipping Jesus; my experiences of seeing with my spiritual eyes fell into those three categories. Paul wrote in the book of Ephesians that one of the roles of the Spirit of God was to make known the hidden mysteries of Christ (Ephesians 3:3-5) and essentially invite believers “into the revelation of Christ and all that was accomplished through
His life, death, resurrection, and ascension. He now beckons the hungry to come through this doorway, to come and see” (Russell, 2012, p. 78), and that is what I experienced when God began to open my spiritual eyes.

The visions that I received while fellowshipping with the Holy Spirit (2 Corinthians 13:14) always encouraged, strengthened, or comforted me. For example, while talking to Jesus the Holy Spirit once showed me God’s hand holding the earth while He admired it (Schroeder, February 25, 2011, p. 47). Another time in a vision, I saw that I was on an airplane and a bright blinding light, that I thought resembled the glory of the Lord, moved around the airplane (Schroeder, September 3, 2012, p. 149). I found encouragement in these types of smaller visions because God’s goodness, protection, or something about His character was revealed to me and I felt blessed and joyous as a result of the revelation.

I have sought out wisdom from people who have a gift for interpreting visions and other revelations that God gives, and have been blessed because of the insight shared with me by those people. Sometimes interpreting a vision is easy, and other times it is not. For example, one time the Lord showed me an old government building linked to a mountain, which had a door in the side of it that I entered, and others followed me. We climbed up the inside of the mountain and then in the next scene I was back outside the mountain by myself. I pulled off my boots, looked inside them, and tried to put my feet back inside but could not because of something prickly. Then someone walked up to me and gave me new shoes (Schroeder, April 19, 2011, p. 55). I do not know exactly what God was trying to show me. However, it could mean that I was trying to lead people, as a Christian school principal, in a culture or sphere of influence that really was not producing genuine followers or disciples. Therefore, I needed to be ready to try new approaches or strategies and even get ready to start over, and willingly receive a new direction or way to
walk so that I can obediently expand the Kingdom of God, His way. I believe that the Holy Spirit was revealing my need to embrace the same servant leadership that Jesus embodied, and lead people in my sphere of influence by compassionately serving them. I needed God to remove my prickly pride, and replace it with confident humility.

In July, 2011, my wife Amanda and I, and our 4 month-old, went to explore the International House of Prayer in Kansas City. I was hungry to know and love Jesus, hear His voice, and receive His direction as I entered the first year of my principalship at the age of 30. We had a powerfully exciting and uplifting time singing, praying, and learning with others at the house of prayer, but I was still longing in my spirit to receive more from God. After Amanda and Mayla fell asleep in the Minneapolis hotel room, I took my Bible, journal, and pen into the bathroom where I had privacy and light, sat on the floor, and began to talk to Jesus. The following excerpts from my journal highlight the two-sided fellowship-filled conversation that I had with Jesus, and what the Holy Spirit showed me in my mind’s eye (mental pictures) as I was talking to Jesus as a friend. I wrote the following:

I just sat for a while conversing with the King of kings, my friend, my brother. He told me He loves to love me. He enjoys me and He is jealous for me. I talked to Him about His life until His ministry started. Afterward His ministry started, He acted and spoke differently, because his goal was to faithfully complete the work His Father gave Him to do. I asked the Lord what my mantle was and I felt like I was going to receive it as I waited with my hands held out. In the spirit (thank the Lord my spiritual eyes are slowly opening) I saw a slowly rotating horizontal wheel with velvety red cushions that were holding the jewels that go on believers’ crowns when they die. Three cushions were for me to read the word inside of it. These words popped into my head as the Lord
showed me more. The first was Perseverance. I was a little confused because I was thinking it would say something specific about my assignment at school. Then the Lord said “if you obey me fully, you will NEED perseverance.” The next cushion was Holiness and the last Justice. I was not sure if it was combined with Righteousness, but I naturally put them together as they are the foundation of God’s throne, although it was only “Justice” that came clearly to me.

I believe the words have to do with my character and my assignment at school. More Grace Lord! WOW. I asked the Lord for more. He said to believe the words of prophecy I have received so far, that they are from His heart. Thank the Lord for encouragement from Him. This “seeing and hearing” in the Spirit is new to me, some things I receive clearer than others, and I obviously do not want to make anything up, so as to take me off the path God has for me. I ask the Holy Spirit to remove anything not of the Lord by the fire of His presence so all may be for the glory of Jesus Christ. Thank you Jesus! I love you. I asked for more from Jesus. I told the Spirit I felt He wanted to give me something. I said, “Jesus, what did you have in your ministry that I have not yet received for/in mine?” A sword immediately came to mind. I pictured it. I thought of why I had not received [it] yet. I thought of Jesus saying “It is written” and then quoting Scripture, and it was His weapon. I thought of how I have thought it was cliché in the past to say “God’s Word says . . .” I felt God say “You must speak my Word, you cannot just act it out. You must SPEAK it.” Thank you Lord. I receive this sword with gratitude. Sitting here on the bathroom floor of this Minneapolis hotel at 1am, I was marveling at what God had revealed to me already. His Word open before me.”

(Schroeder, August 3, 2011, pp. 77-79)
That encounter changed my life, because I was basically experimenting with my faith, desperately wanting to hear and know God, without knowing any “protocol” or “how to” do this or that. My hunger drove me to pursue to know and love Jesus Christ wholeheartedly and He revealed His will, ways, and work to me in many different ways.

The Lord showed me a few visions on different occasions while I was singing to Him at church with other believers. I have learned that God the Father enjoys His children more than people could ever imagine, and He loves to show them pictures of Heaven, His beauty, and His creation. One time while worshipping, “I saw a bright light over above some hills high high up on the mountain, it was the throne room, then the most beautiful waterfall flowed from the throne” (Schröder, June 18, 2013, p. 198). I was left in awe because God had revealed something so beautiful and what could be a very part of heaven. Most of that vision could be backed up with scripture to prove that the Holy Spirit was likely giving me a glimpse of heaven where God the Father and Son currently reside.

One time during praise and worship, I sensed the Holy Spirit wanted to give me something, so I held out my hands and then I could see a small scroll in my hands with my spiritual eyes. I felt that the Holy Spirit wanted me to eat it. Feeling a little odd, and sort of hoping that no one was watching, out of faith I slowly moved my hands to my mouth and acted out eating this scroll that was “in my hands” (Schröder, November 20, 2013, p. 248). I acted out of obedience because of the biblical account where the apostle John was having a vision of a huge angel and a voice from heaven told John to take the scroll from the angel and eat it, so John obeyed (Revelation 10:8-10). Ezekiel had a similar encounter with being told to eat the prophetic scroll given to him and then speak God’s words to the people (Ezekiel 3:1-4). Another time while worshipping with others, I was just sitting in my chair with my eyes closed, and the
Holy Spirit revealed to me the “top of a tree and its leaves kept changing and new buds formed over and over then the Lord said, “Seasons are changing Bryan, I am changing you into the man of God I want you to be” (Schroeder, September 25, 2012, p. 151). That was such an encouraging experience and I went home overjoyed and filled with peace that God was leading me and guiding me and that He was in control. I was thankful that Jesus heard my prayers and answered them in ways that left me stronger, happier, and freer.

Sometimes when other people are praying for me, the Lord will give me a vision and I have to decide if it is for me or them. A pattern seems to have evolved that if I am moved emotionally, it is usually for me; however, God is not committed to doing the same thing twice. My friend was praying for me, and all of a sudden I envisioned this “long and winding road which eventually led to a river which I believed to be streams of living water” (Schroeder, September 7, 2010, p. 17), and I was really encouraged by it. I felt the Lord was highlighting the need for me to persevere and keep doing my best to love Him and love people, and that every good thing that I faithfully invest into will be worth it and produce fruit.

A few months later, a different friend was praying for me and I was encouraged because the Holy Spirit revealed to me that I was entering a body of water, like a river, and I went in up to my waist (Schroeder, January 9, 2011, p. 34), and the vision moved me emotionally.

Druckenmiller (1999) expounded,

The outpouring of the Holy Spirit comes in stages. The “waters” rise first to the ankle, then to the knee, then to the waist. Finally, they flood over our heads and back again. These water levels are very significant, and the Lord wants each of us to experience each succeeding level. The water at our feet represents carrying the gospel. . . . Water up to our knees represents worship and lordship. Philippians 2:10-11 says that one day every
knee will bow and every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord. When the waters reach our waist, covering the reproductive area, we will see a level of outpouring that will bring forth many new births. This is also the point at which new dreams will be born and entire ministries will come forth. The waist is also related to truth and balance . . . The water over our heads will cause the gospel to go out to the entire world. At this level we must learn how to swim in the river of God, letting go of our man-made ideas and philosophies, being fully yielded to the Holy Spirit, and allowing Him to flow forth from our lives. (p. 52)

The vision was divinely timed because of what I had been asking the Lord to do in my life. Because I was crying while receiving prayer and having this vision, I believe that Jesus was changing my heart, birthing new dreams in and through me, and bringing truth and balance to my life through times of fellowship, prayer and worship.

Sometimes I asked others to pray for me because I believed that God could speak through them and that the Holy Spirit wanted to use them to encourage me. Therefore, when a lady from the church was praying for me to receive spiritual rest, I all of a sudden was overwhelmed with the most gracious manifestation of peace that covered and filled me. Right when she asked God to give me spiritual rest, I received a picture in my mind of me “sitting on our living room chair listening to praise and worship music while I worshipped the Lord” (Schroeder, July 12, 2011, p. 68). That was freeing to me because I was gearing up to start my first year as principal in the Fall of 2011, and I was thinking that I needed to read stacks of books and would not have time for my family, etc. Then I experienced that vision while receiving prayer and realized that I needed rest in my spirit and body and time to enjoy my family. I had just finished an intense year of teaching, and needed rest before I started to prepare earnestly for the next school year. I
am thankful that God heard my prayers and opened up my spiritual eyes so that I could see what He wanted me to see, in order to encourage, strengthen, and comfort me during this new stage of my life.

**Declarations of Who God Is and What He Has Done**

| You are faithful, you are true, you are righteousness, you are merciful, you are everlasting. |
| I enter into full hearted agreement with Jesus Christ and your Kingdom values. |

*(Schroeder, November 21, 2013, p. 249)*

My journals were saturated with simple expressions of my thankful, worshipful, and admiration-filled heart for who God was and what He had done. I wrote them with faith and knowledge of God’s Word, because “declarations are a form of prayer in which we simply speak out those things we know are in agreement with God” (Bootsma, 2014, p. 46), trusting that it is always the right thing to do. When people in the Bible needed help, they followed a basic pattern of prayer that essentially reminded themselves of who God was and what He had done so that they could find courage and wisdom in their circumstance (Little, 1988b, p. 66). The journey and transformation process that I was experiencing had caused me to continually willingly lay down my selfish desires and trust that Christ’s desires, ways, and will were better than mine, even if they were more difficult. The apostle Paul identified with this powerful exchange of his flesh’s desires for the Holy Spirit’s desires (Romans 8; Moore, 2002, p. 247) when he repetitively told his story through his epistles to the first century churches. He considered everything that he profited from his name, reputation, and citizenship a loss once he realized “the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them garbage that I may gain Christ and be found in him” (Philippians 3:8). A
glorious exchange was taking place inside of my heart where I became willing, like Paul, to give up everything in order to know Jesus, not just know about Him.

John the Baptist was a fiery and powerful preacher who drew large crowds to hear him preach about repentance and the Lamb of God who would take away the sins of the world. John recognized and publicly declared that he must decrease so that the One who was worthy of man’s praise, Jesus, would increase (John 3:30) in people’s hearts and minds as the highest example of godliness, holiness, joy, love, redemption, and more. Tenney (1998) wrote about the combination of spiritual hunger translating into selflessness so that the Holy Spirit could transform any sacrificial life to become like Christ,

The more of me that dies, the closer He can get. How far can this go? . . . Do you want God’s blessings on your life? The greatest blessing doesn’t come from God’s hand; it comes from His face in intimate relationship. When you finally see Him and know Him, you have come to the source of all power. It is true that all flesh must die in the presence of His glory, but it is also true that all that is of the Spirit lives forever in His glory. The eternal part of your being that really wants to live can live forever, but first there is something about your flesh that has to die. Your flesh holds you back from the glory of God, so you are most likely locked in an unending wrestling match between the flesh and the spirit as you read these words. It is time for you to just go ahead and tell Him, “Lord, I want to see Your glory.” The God of Moses is willing to reveal Himself to you but it’s not going to be a cheap blessing. You will have to lay down and die. He can only come close to you to the degree you are willing to die. (pp. 63-64)

This lengthy quotation describes the wrestling match that seemed unceasing until I surrendered wholeheartedly and invited the Holy Spirit to reign over my mind, emotions, and will every
single day. One result of that steady surrender of myself was that my understanding began to deepen in who Jesus really was and how desperately I needed Him in every area of my life.

My declarations ranged from honouring Jesus as faithful, the source of life, and my rock (Schroeder, February 1, 2013, p. 177), to articulating God the Father as sovereign, glorious, righteous, holy, and good (Schroeder, January 28, 2011, p. 40; Schroeder, February 7, 2011, p. 42; Schroeder, May 20, 2013, p. 196). God had already done great things in my life and I was thankful for many things and praised Him for His power, provision, creation, and purposes (Schroeder, November 22, 2010, p. 27; Schroeder January 12, 2012, p. 110; Schroeder, January 2013, p. 201). I found relevant Bible verses and became excited about them as I agreed with what they said, and decreed them back to God in my journals (Schroeder, June, 20, 2012, p. 136; Schroeder, August 20, 2013, p. 204), or wrote out verses or choruses from worship songs that declared God’s greatness (Schroeder, February 28, 2011, p. 48). Through the constant glorification and acknowledgement of God’s goodness, name, and power (Hebrews 13:15), it is as if the enemy, Satan, was pushed back by an offensive blow of a sharp sword (Ephesians 6:17; Hebrews 4:12) that helped me to win life’s battles (Meyer, 2015, pp. 61-62) during difficult circumstances and damaged relationships, thus maturing me relationally and spiritually.

As Jesus revealed Himself to me during our times of fellowship, I fell more in love with Him and would stand or kneel in awe of who He was and how He lived as a perfect man in this fallen sinful world (Schroeder, April 27, 2013, p. 190; Schroeder, September 30, 2013, p. 218; Schroeder, December 28, 2013, p. 269). Jesus lived with passion and zeal. Paul wrote that believers have the mind of Christ (1 Corinthians 2:16) and access to the enthusiasm and zest of Christ (Fontaine, 2016, October 26). I learned from studying Jesus’ life that He was a man who was continually connected with His Heavenly Father and His Holy Spirit. I believed that I also
could live in unbroken communion, and total reliance on the Holy Spirit to empower me to live obediently and joyfully through times of rejection, suffering, and hardship as Jesus did. I told Jesus,

You know my heart. You are Truth, you are my creator. I worship you. I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live. The life I live in the body I live by faith in the Son of God who loved me and gave himself for me.

(Schroeder, November 3, 2013, p. 240)

Meyer (2015) explained that the Word of God refers to people who embrace suffering for the sake of loving and knowing Jesus more as ones who “die to self;” subsequently, their souls fill with joy, rest, and peace as they trust God while living in the center of His will (pp. 54-55). I had set my heart to exalt God’s name again and again over my own (Schroeder, August 4, 2013, p. 203), and as a result was experiencing victory and great treasures of grace (Tozer, n.d., p. 57) because I was willing to do whatever it took to resist temptations, sacrifice myself, remain pure, and follow Jesus, rather than embrace my selfish ambition and proud thoughts (Ethridge, 2007, p. 59; Jeremiah, 2011, pp. 275-276). I had made a resolve to deny myself, take up my cross, and follow Christ, in order to find true life (Mark 8:34-35). The natural product of those choices was a continuous flow of declarative praise of who Jesus was and what He had done, even if I struggled to keep my vows during the journey.

**Intimate Friendship with Jesus**

*Jesus, I love being here with you.*

*(Schroeder, May 7, 2013, p. 193)*

I fell in love with Jesus. The hunger continued to grow inside of me to fellowship more with Jesus until I discovered new truths and revelations about His character and person. He let
me experience His intimate affections. The scriptures refer to people in the Church who love Jesus as His Bride, He is the Bridegroom (Mark 2:19-20). That never really interested me until I started listening intently to a preacher online who continually emphasized this identity and taught it from the scriptures. Therefore, I decided to search the scriptures myself and ask the Holy Spirit for fresh understanding about Jesus’ identity as the Bridegroom and my own identity as [part of] the Bride of Christ. As I started praying short phrases from the scriptures about this new found identity and paradigm, God began to remould my heart and inner being to see Jesus not only as my King, Judge, Saviour, High Priest, and Shepherd, but also as my Bridegroom. I started living with a bridegroom paradigm. There is nothing weird or sexual or feminine about it: John the Baptist simply explained, “the bride belongs to the bridegroom. The friend who attends the bridegroom waits and listens for him, and is full of joy when he hears the bridegroom’s voice. That joy is mine, and it is now complete” (John 3:29-30). John understood that God the Father sovereignly designed the context of marriage between one man and one woman to demonstrate and house the deepest, most intimate friendship (George, 2004, p. 62) possible on earth between two people. The bridal paradigm is rooted in that understanding of friendship, partnership, and love.

The pattern of the natural relationship of intimate marriage provides an allegorical parallel for the spiritual relationship with Jesus, the Bridegroom, who is betrothed to His Bride (Eldridge, 2000, p. 133; Wright, 2007a, p. 73), and thus reveals one of his most revolutionary identities. In His wholehearted jealous love, He anticipates the reception of a pure and spotless Bride, the Church, made up of people who love Him wholeheartedly as their Bridegroom. The Bride will see Jesus as beautiful and attractive in righteousness, character, and friendship (Troccoli, 1997, p. 39). The Bride will learn to receive the feelings, thoughts, and love of the
Bridegroom. The Holy Spirit revealed to me on deeper and deeper levels how important it was to embrace the thoughts and emotions that Jesus, the Bridegroom, had for me.

My journal exhibited the joy and delight that I found by worshipping and talking to Jesus. The more I worshipped Jesus, the more He tenderized my heart to receive His intimate love. I started expressing my love for Him in different ways and resolved in my heart to obey Him out of love, rather than duty. I was awakened by other passionate voices in the body of Christ, like Hartley (2006), who broadcasted that it was the “hour for believers to develop a deep personal intimacy with God, and to cultivate a true knowledge of God in our hearts. This is the only way we will be able to stand in the days ahead” (p. 30). I intimately expressed my affections for Him, in order to glorify Him (Piper, 2003, p. 95). I connected closely with Him and often experienced His presence through prayer (McManus, 2002, p. 207). My capacity to love Him expanded as my capacity to receive His love increased (1 John 4:19; Fontaine, 2016, October 18). My perspective of Jesus and myself changed as I grew to believe that He really loved me because He created me, rather than because of my efforts or productivity or hours invested into prayer or serving people.

God revealed in the book of Revelation that once His judgements have removed everything that hinders His love, the greatest event of this age after Jesus returns will be the wedding of the Lamb of God. Jesus Christ, the Bridegroom, will marry His Bride (Revelation 19:6-7). His Bride is made up of those who love Jesus with all their heart and who love people as themselves during their days on earth. It will be those believers in Christ who have such intimacy with Jesus through prayer that, as Humphrey (2009) emphasized, “Jesus desires to rule and reign with His Bride (Rev. 1:5-6, 20:4). How amazing it is that He actually shares His government with His beloved! Our companionship with Him gives us authority in the heavenly
courts of God’s kingdom” (p. 101) because of the alignment and understanding of God’s mission, vision, values, and love. I started to trust Jesus with deeper levels of my soul than ever before, and I embraced the bridal paradigm as representative and pivotally contextual to the maturing of the Church in unity and intimacy with the Holy Spirit (Eldridge, 2000, p. 134; Revelation 22:17). The more I meditated on and spoke the scriptures that highlighted the Bridegroom Jesus’ affections for me, the more my heart and mind were transformed.

I expressed simple statements of thankfulness in my journal, which aligned with the scriptures, that Jesus loves me and that it is in His presence that I belong (Schroeder, July 27, 2011, p. 70; Schroeder, July 1, 2012, p. 138; Schroeder, October 23, 2012, p. 161). I learned that if I really wanted the scriptures to change my heart and mind, I needed to speak them, sing them, and actively link them to the faith that was stirring within me. Just reading or studying the scriptures was not good enough. My heart was being exhilarated and overwhelmed by the love of Jesus (Schroeder, July, 12, 2011, p. 68; Schroeder, August 29, 2011, p. 81; Schroeder, May 27, 2012, p. 132), to the point where all I wanted to do was worship, sing, and soak in His loving presence. That was a significant contrast to what I was like prior to 2010. The Holy Spirit often tenderized my heart during times of worship when all of a sudden I would begin weeping while singing to Jesus (Schroeder, June 27, 2010, p. 3; Schroeder July 17, 2010, p. 8; Schroeder, December 6, 2011, p. 101).

I learned to accept His powerful and moving presence when I became emotional, rather than rejecting the emotions that come with a heart that is being softened and encountered by God. During those times when the Holy Spirit was refashioning my soul, I wrote, “I love to worship Jesus, I need it, it refreshes and refills me. I just love doing it more than I ever have in my entire life, I love Jesus now more than I ever have” (Schroeder, November 2, 2011, p. 90),
because He was answering my prayers and causing me to experience His powerful love. I found a new level of confidence and freedom because of the depth of understanding that I was growing in, related to who Jesus was and who He said I was. In November 2011, I wrote,

My life vision is to know love and worship Jesus wholeheartedly. I want to experience His love, His power, His Holy Spirit. I set my heart to fully obey Jesus and enjoy his presence. I love reading books, but I love God’s Word more.

(Schroeder, November 19, 2011, p. 94)

As I continued to keep my eyes on Jesus, He continued to honour my vision and transform my heart during the adventure of my growing friendship with Him.

As I grew in my understanding of Jesus as a Bridegroom, I started to grasp my identity as [part of] the Bride who Jesus is lovesick over. This revelation causes the Bride to love Jesus wholeheartedly in return. I really wanted to love Jesus more, but could only love him to the extent of my understanding of how much He loved me. That is why I continually positioned myself to study and receive God’s deep affections for me. It strengthened me. It caused me to grow in confidence of who Jesus was, and who I was. The bridal paradigm of the Kingdom of God was –

given by Christ in His final earthly message, [and] is the most powerful method used to transform the human heart. It is the last paradigm Jesus emphasized at His First Coming and it will be the final one the Holy Spirit emphasizes to the Church worldwide before Jesus’ Second Coming. (Bickle, 2006, pp. 14-15)

As I grew in confidence that Jesus loved me even in my weakness and through my greatest struggles and failures (Bickle, 2004, pp. 20-21; Song of Songs 1:5), I grew in my view of and love for Him as my Bridegroom who saw me as beautiful, clean, and obedient (Schroeder, June
I expressed my love to Jesus frequently, mostly through prayer and worship, but also through my journal entries (Schroeder, November 8, 2011, p. 91; Schroeder, January 1, 2013, p. 169; Schroeder, August 2, 2013, p. 202). I began to understand that He really did desire me.

Jesus wants to be with me, He wants to hear my voice, He wants to see my face, and He wants me. I discovered that He really loves me! Ethridge (2007) proclaimed that Jesus still is a person with feelings and longings Himself; He created and redeemed us so that an intimate friendship could be enjoyed with Him (p. 75). Jesus’ disciple John walked out a deep friendship with Jesus that was rooted in love to the extent that John confidently referred to himself as “the one whom Jesus loved” (John 21:20). He was simply sharing the revelation and experience that he received from knowing and loving Jesus, and “John did not have to wait until he walked in complete maturity before he could know Jesus like this. It was knowing Jesus this intimately that made him mature” (Niebergall, 2016, p. 123).

I could feel Jesus’ love in my own heart and expressed to Him, “Your eyes are on me. Your eyes of fire burn because your heart burns with affection for me” (Schroeder, December 7, 2011, p. 103). As I discovered and believed that Jesus longed for my bridal love (Ethridge, 2007, p. 79) my heart and mind were changed, but what was the appropriate response to experiencing such powerful, humbling, and intoxicating love? Austin (2004) wrote,

If the Bride is to be equally yoked to the Bridegroom, she must wear the same wedding garments He wore. If Jesus, the King of Kings, chose a crown of thorns, how much more should we adorn ourselves in the beauty of meekness? If He forsook His divine robes of righteousness for earthly burlap robes, how much more should we wrap ourselves in a mantle of humility? (p. 151)
It is the mantle of humility that servant leaders must carry, because humility is always relational as is servant leadership. It is effective because the leader empathizes with humility, cares with humility, serves with humility, befriends with humility, and makes bold decisions with humility. Love and humility are inseparable; therefore, where there is humility there is love and where there is love, people and communities are powerfully transformed. By the fresh revelation of experientially knowing Jesus Christ, I was truly being stretched and changed by the power of His love for the purpose of love. I was in love with Jesus.

**My Wholehearted Resolve to Trust and Obey Jesus out of Love**

*Jesus, I push delete on everything behind me.*

*I set my heart to fully obey you.*

*Come, lead me, teach me, kiss me with the kisses of your Word*

*for your love is more pleasing than wine.*

*(Schroeder, September 2, 2013, p. 211)*

While my spirit was stirred by the rawness of the zeal and jealousy that Jesus felt for me, and how much He valued me, I was strengthened and transformed on the inside during our times of fellowship. I set my heart to obey Jesus because I loved him and enjoyed His presence (Schroeder, May 17, 2011, p. 56; Schroeder, September 24, 2011, p. 85; Schroeder November 2, 2011, p. 90), rather than obeying primarily out of fear or duty. I also set my heart to trust Him (Schroeder, September 5, 2011, p. 82; Schroeder, March 29, 2013, p. 184) and fully submit to His leadership (Bickle, 2004, p. 41; Schroeder, October 27, 2012, p. 164). I surrendered my dreams, strengths, weaknesses, reputation, rights, and theology to Him (Schroeder, July 1, 2011, p. 61; Schroeder, Oct. 1, 2011, p. 86; Schroeder, November 2, 2011, p. 91); all I wanted was Him! Chan (2008) concluded, “God desires true intimacy with each of us, and that comes only
when we trust him enough to be fully transparent and vulnerable” (p. 144), which is a result of a synthesizing and maturing friendship with the Holy Spirit (Fontaine, 2016, November 24). I had experienced fellowship with Jesus on a level that I never knew existed and although it caused me to hunger for even more, it also caused me to step out confidently in faith to do my best to obediently respond to the leading of the Holy Spirit with my words, actions, and thoughts (Schroeder, January 5, 2012, p. 108; Schroeder, January 23, 2012, p. 112, Schroeder, September 22, 2012, p. 150).

The Spirit of God strengthened my spirit (Ephesians 3:17) and transformed my soul (Romans 12:2) so that I could think, feel, and influence others as Jesus did. The confidence and biblical perspective that formed in me, thus giving insight into the identity of God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, matured significantly (Bickle, 2006, p. 129). I also matured in my understanding of whom I was created and called to be as a principal at a Christian school. Truly finding Jesus and growing in an intimate friendship with Him deeply affected my thought and emotional life (Schroeder, December 30, 2010, p. 30) toward Him, myself, and others. Bickle (2006) taught that people’s emotional health needs wholeheartedness; people who love God are less satisfied with sin, and being abandoned to God by living out of love revolutionizes Christian lives because of the strength that they find in God’s embrace (p. 121), and I could relate. I was no longer primarily selfish or afraid, but was encouraged and strengthened in my spirit from the times of fellowship with the Holy Spirit (2 Corinthians 13:14; Schroeder, July 9, 2011, p. 67) during those years of my life. I enjoyed waiting on Him (Schroeder, November 22, 2010, p. 27), worshipping Him (Schroeder, November 15, 2010, p. 24), letting Him set me free from spiritual bondage (Schroeder, November 16, 2010, p. 26), and having Him reaffirm that He was with me (Schroeder, November 19, 2010, p. 26). Jesus described this as “abiding in Him,” as a healthy
branch is continually connected to and receiving nutrition and life from the vine, and that apart from Jesus I can do nothing to produce good fruit (John 15:4-9; Murray, 2002, p. 196). I was learning how to love Jesus wholeheartedly and rely on Him for everything because I had experienced His power love and invited Him to lead every area of my soul.

Occasionally I would even feel “electricity” surge through my body, by the power of the Holy Spirit, when someone was praying for me in the Name of Jesus (Schroeder, September 21, 2010, p. 20). I felt loved when it happened, even though it was powerfully strange and sensational. The journey itself was odd and extraordinary. It seemed like life started finally to make sense and I finally found the peace and joy (Schroeder, November 22, 2010, p. 27; Schroeder, December 18, 2011, p. 103; Schroeder, November 16, 2013, p. 245) that I was hoping I would find on the journey. Waves of peace and joy would come here and there, and now and then; I could not predict when they would come, but they started coming more and more often. I wanted my outer life to match my inner life, and so I engaged my will by making declarations in my journal entries and praying in a way that showed I was serious about seeing my actions change as well. Jesus had revealed Himself to me in very personal, real, and tangible ways that increased my faith and stirred my spirit within me so that I responded by resolving to surrender completely to Him and to set my heart to obey Him no matter what the cost.

I expressed my love and devotion to Jesus by articulating “I surrender every aspect of my life to you O’ God, I surrender and I trust you to change anything you need to accomplish your purposes in me” (Schroeder, November 25, 2013, p. 253), because I wanted to love Him and see the desires of His heart be manifested on earth. Obedience is a hallmark of the surrendered Christian life because when God asks someone to do something there is always a moment, short or long, before a choice is made to obey God. God requires obedience and has commanded it in
His Word (McManus, 2002, p. 207). In the Old Testament, Joshua was told by God to be strong and courageous and to obey all the laws that were given to Moses by God (Joshua 1:7). Jesus made it clear when He said that if we love Him, then we will obey Him (John 15:10), so I told Jesus, “You are doing something with my faith Jesus. I must choose to believe and to obey. Sometimes I will be wrong, but I must be willing to learn and willing to take risks in my walk with the Lord” (Schroeder, January 6, 2013, p. 172). As Jesus revealed Himself to me in different ways, I would feel like He would slowly be testing me, stretching me, and maturing me in ways that required more faith; therefore, in the moment I would make a choice to either trust and obey Him or not, but my declaration to trust His leadership (Schroeder, January 2, 2012, p. 106; Schroeder, January 2, 2013, p. 171) and obey Him (Schroeder, December 22, 2013, p. 266) remained the same.

Jesus was training me to have a consistent response of instant obedience to His leading so that my decisions to trust and obey would become quick and easy (Fontaine, 2016, November 25). Tozer (n.d.) announced, “At that testing place, there will be no dozen possible choices for us; just one and an alternative, but our whole future will be conditioned by the choice we make” (p. 21). He taught how to allow the Lord to do surgery on our heart so that Jesus could reign where selfishness and pride used to reign. In my zealous pursuit of sanctification I proclaimed,

I will seek you and obey you for the rest of my life whether I feel your presence or not. Jesus, you are worthy of my time, my praises, my hidden good deeds, my love . . . YOU ARE WORTHY JESUS. IT IS ABOUT YOU, NOT ME! I repent. Please forgive me.

Thank you for your forgiveness. (Schroeder, April 6, 2012, p. 123)

If I messed up, I would repent, receive His forgiveness and His invitation to try again, and run toward Him because of His kindness, mercy, joy, love, and purpose for my life. I identified with
Chan’s (2008) prayer to Jesus, “I believe You are worth it, that You are better than anything else I could have in this life or the next. I want You. . . . Be all in me. Take all of me. Have Your way in me” (p. 111). Jesus was my only hope to make me into the man that I wanted to be, or better yet that He wanted me to be (Schroeder, January 1, 2013, p. 170), and I believed that it would happen as I continued to surrender to Him and His ways and will, as I trusted and obeyed Him.

**Conviction, Convincing and Confession**

*Jesus, here I am. Forgive me where I have sinned – for my pride, my selfishness, my lust.*

*Cover me with the blood you shed on the cross, purify me.*

*Thank you for the cross, thank you for your sacrifice.*

*You are the One I follow.*

*(Schroeder, July 7, 2012, p. 138)*

During our times of fellowship, the Holy Spirit did an awesome job of gently yet fervently showing me areas of my life that needed changing. He did it in a way that was encouraging and that highlighted a higher vision for my life in the area that He was convicting me, which I had invited Him to do (Schroeder, November 28, 2011, p. 98). The question that I became comfortable facing during those times of the Holy Spirit cleansing the darkness from within me was, “How will I respond?” The tenderness, not the nature, of my relationship with Jesus suffered when I lived in conscious unrepentant sin, and so I discovered that confession nourished my spirit and relationship with Jesus (Lucado, 2000, p. 133; Wright, 2007b, p. 102). Jesus said that the Holy Spirit was the Spirit of truth and would guide people into truth (John 16:13) and convict them of the sin in their lives (John 16:8). The reason was that only through
repentance could they experience God’s mercy and forgiveness because of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ (1 Corinthians 6:11; 1 John 1:7; Foster, 1998, p. 143).

I was being changed because I took time to fellowship with God and allow Him to have His way in me, check the priorities of my heart, and transform me to be more like Christ, but it also took courage (Hansel, 1987, p. 55; Mohler, 2012, p. 23; Wright, 2007a, p. 112). I cried out to God for his forgiveness because selfishness, pride, and fear (Schroeder, November 14, 2011, p. 92; Schroeder, November 21, 2011, p. 96; Schroeder, April 6, 2012, p. 122) had crept into my soul and needed to be washed away and removed by the cleansing power, Word, and Spirit of God (1 John 1:9; Ephesians 5:26; John 15:3). Foster (1998) succinctly summarized, “Confession begins in sorrow, but it ends in joy. There is celebration in the forgiveness of sins because it results in a genuinely changed life” (p. 153), and I experienced that joy and change whenever I confessed my sins.

I believed that Jesus was birthing freedom, truth, and righteousness inside of me by shining the light of His presence into every area of my life wherein I welcomed the Holy Spirit’s perfectly targeted conviction (Luck, 2004, p. 164). It was not easy or fun because the soul naturally resists the light; however, if I embraced God’s perspective of me, others, and Himself – I always ended up thankful and at peace because of His mercy. I vulnerably admitted,

I grip the things of this world so tightly. I am fearful, I am angry, I want more, so I just keep trying. I am in a place of testing. I am in the wilderness, the Lord is revealing to me great truths about what spiritual maturity is, how I need more faith, how I need humility, how I need to respect and honour those who are bringing others to know Jesus. . . and that I need an increase of love for the lost. Have mercy on me O God. God is refining me right now and, it is hard. (Schroeder, November 19, 2011, p. 93)
The Holy Spirit showed me how insecure I was at times (Schroeder, July 3, 2011, p. 62; Schroeder, May 1, 2012, p. 128), and continually refines me so that I turn to God the Father to find my security as His beloved son (John 1:12-14; Romans 8:15).

My insecurities were often related to or surfaced because of the responsibilities that I had as principal. It is a hard job and I want to serve and lead like Jesus, so I learned to admit when I was wrong, which seemed way too often, and decided to let people speak into my life so that I could change and improve as a servant leader. I accepted my weaknesses but did not become friends with them, because servant leaders know, there is a perpetual burning interior desire to serve others more effectively in order to improve them and the community. I learned to be less stubborn, apologize quicker, humbly listen to people’s criticism, and accept God’s conviction when I was in the wrong. The Holy Spirit is an expert convincer, directing the sons and daughters of God into their purposes in the Kingdom of God and their identity in Christ. I needed to hear what God was saying through the Holy Spirit and through people around me whom I trusted. I was thankful that I learned the importance of confession, in order to catalyze the Holy Spirit’s transformation of me to be more like Jesus as He convicted, convinced, and corrected me with God the Father’s great mercy.

**Praying in Tongues**

*Had a great time of raw-heart prayer today before my nap.*

*Praying in tongues today felt intimate and connected, thank you Jesus.*

*(Schroeder, December 7, 2011, p. 102)*

The apostle Paul thanked to God that he prayed in tongues more than his friends in the Corinthian church (1 Corinthians 14:18). He was not boasting, but rather was correcting their disorderly, ungodly, and loveless actions. He did this by contrasting the true purpose, power,
and practice of a personal devotional prayer language of tongues (Clark, 2015, p. 92; Russell, 2012, p. 68) to the Corinthians’ chaotic and illogical method of using the gift of tongues to instruct fellow believers without honouring one another or godly protocol (1 Corinthians 14:19). Praying in tongues is the God-given ability to speak in a spiritual and foreign language (Meyer, 2003a, p. 137), when the Holy Spirit speaks through people, in order to increase their prayer power (Clark, 2015, p. 81; Ferguson, 1996, p. 234; Hong, 2008, p. 145). I did not really know much about it and thought it was really strange, but I knew it was in the scriptures and I became close friends with people who regularly prayed in tongues.

As I started going to prayer and worship evenings during the week at the church where these friends of mine attended, I started seeing and hearing more people pray and sing in these foreign tongues or languages. The practice of it did not bother me, unless people were insincere, but what irked me was that if praying and singing in a spiritual language would help me know Jesus more, then I wanted it too! Paul admonished believers to desire spiritual gifts as they pursued love (1 Corinthians 14:1; Clark, 2015, p. 91; Meyer, 2003, p. 139) and expressed that he wished everyone spoke in tongues (1 Corinthians 14:5); therefore, I had peace in my heart to desire the gift of speaking in tongues. I searched the scriptures and listened to biblical teachings about praying in tongues, spoke with pastors and friends about it, and began to ask God for it (Schroeder, July 20, 2010, p.11). My journey in prayer and my relationship with Jesus deepened when God gave me the gift of speaking in tongues. As I grew in my understanding of the purpose and power of the practice of praying in tongues, I was motivated to use it regularly as a devotional prayer language to fellowship with God.

The key purposes that Paul highlighted in 1 Corinthians 14 of speaking in tongues or in the “Spirit,” are to fellowship with God by praying (v. 2) or singing to Him (v. 15-17), to speak
mysteries to God by the Holy Spirit (v. 2), and for personal edification (v. 4). I experienced deep connection with God when I prayed in tongues for longer periods of time (Schroeder, October 22, 2013, p. 237). It seemed like it would take fifteen to twenty minutes of praying in tongues before my mind and emotions would settle from the day’s activities (Schroeder, November 3, 2013, p. 241), and then I could commune with the Holy Spirit in peace (Russell, 2012, p. 69). When believers pray in tongues, they cannot understand what they are saying (Hong, 2008, p. 149; Meyer, 2003, p. 140), because it is the Holy Spirit speaking through them. It is a private prayer language that I grew to enjoy. “[God] not only wants to be united with us by the Spirit, He wants us to talk directly to Him in the Spirit. He wants to hear our voice” (Hong, 2008, p. 69), because He desires communion with us. Speaking in tongues is an enjoyable present from God for us to use to grow in fellowship with Him (Hong, 2008, p. 146; Meyer, 2003, p. 231), and I was experiencing these rewarding facets of this unique spiritual gift and practice.

I learned to sing and worship in tongues (Schroeder, August 7, 2012, p. 147) and thereby released declarations of praise and thanksgiving to God when I ran out of things to say in English (Clark, 2015, pp. 97-98; Hong, 2008, p. 149). God began to reveal hidden mysteries about Himself to me, and He unveiled mysteries about me to me (Russell, 2012, p. 77; Hong, 2008, p. 149). The revelation of Jesus Christ is the foundation of the Church and He loves to reveal His desires, character, and plan, which are His mysteries so that His Bride can walk in fullness of relationship, maturity, and unity (Ephesians 4:11-13; Russell, 2012, p. 79). Praying in tongues caused me to be charged, strengthened, and refreshed in my spirit. I was edified, as Paul wrote, because my spirit was renewed and revitalized with power (Hong, 2008, p. 149) by the Spirit of God. After practicing praying in tongues for a couple of years, I recorded in my journal, “I love to pray in tongues now. I try to do it whenever I can. I believe it is a key to my devotional life
in the Lord, but I am in an experimental process with it” (Schroeder, November 16, 2013, p. 244). In my own weakness, I discovered comfort, strength, fellowship with the Holy Spirit, and a revelatory gateway by praying and singing to God in the Spirit.

**Conclusion**

Nothing compares to having a real, personal, powerful friendship with Jesus Christ. I asked to know Jesus, and the Holy Spirit graciously revealed Jesus to me through powerful encounters. My spiritual ears and eyes were opened when I began to hear God’s voice and see pictures and visions that stirred my spirit. He gently brought loving conviction and correction to my soul. The more that the Holy Spirit revealed Jesus Christ to me and conversed with me, the more I wanted to be near Him and know Him. I declared to the heavens and earth who the living God was and what He had done and was doing. The Holy Spirit caused the zeal of God to consume me as I read His Word and sensed Him speaking directly to me through it. I could not help but praise and thank Him for His goodness, kindness, and love for me. I was overwhelmed that He deeply loved and valued me. From a servant leader perspective, I grew in understanding of how Jesus modeled servant leadership to build His community of united and genuine believers. I learned much about the power of the sense of belonging and the feeling of being authentically valued as a result of His servant leadership (Stewart, 2012, p. 238; Sultan & van de Bunt-Kokhuis, 2014, p. 4) as I followed and fellowshipped with Him.

The more I discovered who He was, the more I communed with Him and expressed my love for Him. I fell in love with Jesus and realized that He is a passionate Bridegroom who wants to see His Bride, the Church, living victoriously with power and love, eschewing the lesser things of life. I submitted my life to the Lordship of Jesus, so that His will and ways would work their way through my spirit and soul, and then I set my heart to trust and obey Him no matter
what the cost. Each transforming truth that I embraced, caused me to think, feel, and act differently because I was growing in confidence of who Jesus was and who I was. These changes affected me at home, at work, and in the community. I perceived Jesus differently, myself differently, and others around me different. I learned to love myself with more balance, love others similarly to how God does, and love Jesus more as my understanding of His love for me deepened. I also received a spiritual language of praying in tongues that God gifted me with to strengthen me, know Him more, and receive more revelation of the hidden mysteries of God. I was deeply and forever changed because I spent time daily in the presence of the sovereign God.
CHAPTER VI

RECEIVING PROPHETIC MINISTRY

She felt the Lord was telling her that I was chosen,
placed for a reason and I am being made ready,
and that the Lord is walking with me side by side, brother to brother, friend to friend,
whether I go to another country or continent.

She prayed that I would have many times of sweet intimacy with Jesus.
She also felt the Lord saying that I will speak with confidence in the Lord,
it will clearly be from the Lord, and I will speak without arrogance.

Amazing! Hallelujah! These were fears of mine as of late.

Fear of man, huge lately; doubt about principalship, huge lately;
fear of speaking boldly, but doubting it was clearly from God, huge lately.

(Schroeder, November 16, 2010, pp. 25-26)

I knew that there were prophets in the Old Testament scriptures and that the gift of prophecy was something given by the Holy Spirit, as demonstrated in the New Testament scriptures; however, I had no idea what prophecy really was, how it worked, or what its main purpose was. In 2010, when I began attending a weekly prayer and worship evening as part of my pursuit to know and love Jesus Christ wholeheartedly, there was always an opportunity to receive prayer after the time of singing. I would go to the front of the sanctuary and stand and wait until someone from the church came and talked to me, asked me what I would like prayer for, and then prayed for me. What was different from my past experiences was that often when people at this church were praying or had finished praying for me, they would share with me what they believed God was telling or showing them about me, in order to encourage, strengthen,
and comfort me. I was delightedly shocked by how these believers in Christ would share what they felt God was thinking or feeling about me; often it was exactly what I needed to hear to be cheered up and strengthened in my faith. I would leave those times of prayer filled with joy, hope, and peace because it seemed like the living God spoke directly to my heart through other people. Those times of praying, singing, and receiving prayer became part of my faith adventure.

Those experiences contributed to the most amazing and significant personal transformations of my life. After each evening of prayer and worship, I would go home and record in my journal, the best that I could remember, what people felt the Holy Spirit was showing and telling them about me. For example, one day before supper I was in my room desperately praying and slowly reading Psalm 25, because it is the psalm that I read when I feel like my life is falling apart and I cannot do anything right. I was stunned by a verse that said that the Lord would confide, share the secrets of his heart, in those who feared him (Psalm 25:14), those who gave Him all of their attention out of reverence and adoration. I became really excited about positioning myself so that God would tell me things that are very dear to his heart, but I figured that it would take some time and work on my part. I went to the worship and prayer evening later that night and walked up to receive prayer after singing.

From a lady whom I did not say anything to about Psalm 25 or how I desperately wanted to know Jesus more, I received prayer. After she prayed for me,

She told me she felt the Lord was walking alongside me (she referred to the road to Emmaus) and that my heart was burning for the Scriptures and that the Lord was forming me and teaching me and had Psalm 25 for me. That He was going to reveal the secrets of His heart to me. That I would increase my ability to see into people’s hearts. Also that
God was with me and leading and teaching me, even when it does not seem like it or if He does not feel close. It was amazing. . . . The Psalm 25 bit and everything spoken to me completely lifted my spirit and encouraged and affirmed me in my choices and desires to seek the Lord, know the Scriptures, and lead diligently. Praise the Lord for His goodness, presence, power, and purpose! (Schroeder, September 7, 2010, p. 10)

These types of transforming experiences happened to me again and again as I humbled myself to hear what God the Father wanted to express through other believers when the Holy Spirit impressed upon them the thoughts and feelings that Jesus had for me. I was experiencing, receiving, and being introduced to New Testament prophecy. The pastors of that church created a safe place with scriptural parameters and protocol for people to comfortably practice hearing from God and sharing it (Thompson, 2007, p. 33), in order to comfort, exhort, and edify someone else (Clark, 2015, p. 73).

In this chapter, I briefly present Old and New Testament prophetic similarities and differences, and share multiple experiences from when I received prophetic ministry. I recorded those experiences in my journal of how Jesus edified, exhorted, and comforted me through other people while or after they prayed for me on their own, in person, or over the phone. These experiences changed my perceptions of God, myself, others, and the world around me as I struggled to be the best principal that I could be. I also emphasize three prominent ways that the Holy Spirit spoke to the people who prayed for me. Scriptural bases and Christian literature parallels provide further insight into my transformative experiences as I persevered to know and love Jesus Christ more.
Old Testament Prophetic Ministry

In order to understand the prophetic ministry of the New Testament, the practices and protocol of God’s prophets from the Old Testament must be understood. In the Old Testament, the divine role of the prophets was to receive direct unmissable revelation from God (Deuteronomy 18:18-19), in order to bring correction by pointing out people’s sins and hope that they repented (Bickle, 2008, p. 50; Niebergall, 2016, p. 14; Vallotton, 2015, p. 115). If they did not repent, it was “the prophet’s job to declare the repercussions of their stubbornness through condemnation and judgement” (Niebergall, 2016, p. 14), because God was a holy God who wanted to dwell among His people and required holiness from them (Exodus 29:45; Numbers 35:34; Revelation 21:3). The people were afraid when God revealed Himself on Mount Horeb, and spoke directly to them, after Moses led two to three million of them (Israelites) out of oppressive Egypt. Therefore, He determined to speak to and through men, in order for the people to hear His voice (Deuteronomy 18:16-17) and hopefully obey it and receive all the blessings that God wanted to share with them.

The Holy Spirit did not live inside people before Jesus rose from the dead, and their spirit was not directly connected with God, since Adam and Eve sinned in the Garden of Eden. Therefore, when God gave a message to His prophets, His spokesmen, they received the information by the Spirit of God, declared or demonstrated it to the targeted audience as instructed, and waited to see how it came to pass. The Holy Spirit still could temporarily fill or fall upon someone; however, the Holy Spirit did not dwell inside people permanently. If the message of the prophet did not take place during the prophet’s lifetime, it either was not a message that the Lord had spoken in the first place (Deuteronomy 18:22), or had yet to be fulfilled. The Lord said through Moses, “A prophet who presumes to speak in my name
anything I have not commanded, or a prophet who speaks in the name of the other gods, is to be put to death” (Deuteronomy 18:20). God had a lot to say to His people and would not compromise on the purity of the message or the significance of the character and obedience of the prophet. Since the time of Creation, God desired that people would draw close to Him and know Him; He knew that the people would only obey Him if they knew His love and purposes for them (Vallotton, 2015, p. 55). God provided the Law, the Torah, and animal sacrificial system as a temporary concession until a sacrifice of true righteousness, Jesus Christ, could atone for people’s sins and redeem them for reconciliation into right relationship with God the Father.

The Law was given to make people aware of their sin and their need for God, but it did not justify their spirits (Galatians 5:4) as Christ’s sacrifice did; therefore, it was not truly propitiating in nature as Christ’s death on the cross was, in order for people’s spirit’s to be justified by faith and saved by grace in Christ (Galatians 3:11-14; Romans 8:2-4). Subsequent to the great deliverance out of the Egyptians’ mass slave camp, the Israelites rebelled against God and His goodness. It pained God to see His people stray from His heart and enter into adulterous lifestyles that pursued idols (Ezekiel 6:9), so God spoke to and sent His prophets, in order to clearly share His message of fierce love, judgement, and justice that highlighted sin, reminded the people of His goodness, and revealed what would happen if they did not repent and return to Him (Campbell, 2008, p. 87) with all their heart, as He desired (Isaiah 44:22; Lamentations 3:40; Hosea 6:1). Old Testament prophets enforced the Law as God’s Spirit directed them.

The true prophet’s spoken word to a person or the people was intended to be heard and obeyed as if the Holy One of Israel Himself spoke it to them (Haggai 1:12-13). False prophets did arise in Israel and neighbouring nations, who prophesied what people selfishly wanted to hear in an attempt to give them hope, though it was false. It was not from the Lord (Jeremiah
in fact, it fostered rebellion (Bevere, 1999, p. 98) because it did not lead to repentance and restored relationship with the Lord. The prophetic ministry significantly changed after Jesus Christ died, rose from the dead, and released the Holy Spirit to dwell inside of people and be connected with the spirit of anyone who received and believed in Jesus Christ as Lord (John 1:12-13; Romans 8:15-16; Vallotton, 2015, p. 115). Chironna (2013) explained,

> Although the Church views the Old Covenant through the lens of the New, we neither discard nor disregard the Old, because God never deviates from His fixed principles. Jesus Himself said that He came not to abolish but to fulfill the Law and the Prophets. (p. 34)

Thus, a New Covenant or “relational agreement” was established for true life and the Kingdom of God to be experienced in its fullness.

### New Testament Prophetic Ministry

The purpose, protocol, and standards of the New Testament prophetic ministry are different from the Old Testament (Clark, 2015, p. 64). According to the Law and judgement-filled Old Covenant, people experienced liberty through obedience to the given Law. Righteousness was credited to those who believed in God and obeyed His laws, yet God wanted to release so much more of His Kingdom and His presence. Therefore, God the Father sent His only Son, not to judge the world or abolish the Law, but rather to save the world and fulfill the Law as the only One worthy (John 3:16-17; Matthew 5:17; Vallotton, 2015, pp. 60-61) to do so. Jesus qualified all people to enter the Kingdom of God because as a sinless human, He met the requirements of a just and righteous God by dying for all sinful humans and then conquered death by rising from the dead. Therefore, when I use the phrase “New Testament prophecy,” I am referring to the ministry practiced by Christians after Jesus died and rose from the dead.
Since that time, there is a new relational agreement, called the “New Covenant,” which is often interchangeably used with “New Testament” to emphasize a new dispensation of the Kingdom of God. On earth, Jesus modeled how believers are to be in communion with the Holy Spirit, in order to love people and reveal their value and divine calling to them through the spirit of prophecy. He was not “behaviour focused” but rather “heart focused.” Jesus made a way for the Holy Spirit to dwell inside people who receive and believe in the Name of Jesus Christ, causing their spirits to come alive as they are connected to the powerful life source of the Spirit of God.

When Jesus rose from the dead and appeared to His disciples, they believed that He was the Messiah, and then Jesus released His Holy Spirit to dwell within them (John 20:22). The Holy Spirit led them (Romans 8:11-14), taught them (John 14:26; Luke 12:12), told them what was yet to come (John 16:13), strengthened them (Ephesians 3:17), and revealed to them what Jesus wanted them to do, say, or even think, in order to walk in victorious power, love, and freedom (1 Corinthians 2:9-13; Romans 8:26-27). Jesus trusted that as people received His words into their hearts, then they would mature in their faith over time and be transformed to become like Him. He did not come to condemn people (Romans 8:1), but to reveal the relational and jealous love and exact nature of His Heavenly Father to mankind (Hebrews 1:1-3; John 17:20-26). The Holy Spirit transforms all believers who continually surrender to His leadership, to fully become like Jesus Christ.

The Holy Spirit is one of God the Father’s greatest gifts (Luke 11:11-13) to His children. Jesus decreed that it was to the advantage of His disciples that He, Jesus, return to the Father in heaven so that the Spirit would come (John 16:7) to empower believers to accomplish the great commission (Matthew 28:18-20) and great commandments (Matthew 22:37-40). An angel boldly declared to John, “It is the Spirit of prophecy who bears testimony to Jesus” (Revelation
19:10). In other words, the Holy Spirit who now resides within believers can inspire them to speak forth the testimonies and revelations from Jesus (Moyer, 2011, p. 39). Bickle (2008) succinctly stated, “The revelation of the testimony of what is on Jesus’ heart is the focus of prophetic ministry. It involves more than simply communicating His ideas; it also involves feeling and revealing the deep things of His heart” (p. 141). Therefore, New Testament prophecy has nothing to do with condemnation or judgement, and very little with correction that is confrontational (p. 156).

As Paul wrote to the church in the city of Corinth, “He who prophesies speaks edification and exhortation and comfort to men” (1 Corinthians 14:3), so that the testimony of Christ is released through the Church (Chironna, 2013, p. 25; Goll, 2013, p. 118). Prophecy, under the New Covenant, is speaking the heart or thoughts of God or declaring what God is already speaking, which is usually about an individual’s calling, destiny, or value (Bickle, 2008, p. 40; Goll, 2012, p. 25; Niebergall, 2016, p. 16). The Holy Spirit can reveal the deep things of God to people through people.

The most significant link to the Old Testament practice is the understanding that God the Father wants to use people, who are in relationship with Him, to faithfully and obediently declare and demonstrate His thoughts, feelings, and desires, by the power of His Holy Spirit. Moses walked as a close friend with God and knew “that God’s purpose would be strengthened and His people would be blessed if more prophesied” (Bickle, 2008, p. 145). Therefore, God was foreshadowing 1500 years ahead what He wanted to do under the New Covenant when all people would walk in the power of the Holy Spirit and hear God’s voice (Numbers 11:25-29). When the Spirit of God speaks through people, the transformation of others to become like Jesus Christ is the paramount purpose, but it must all be done in love (1 Corinthians 13:2). Vallotton (2005)
described, “The goal of the gift of prophecy is to bring out the best in people” (p. 20), because Jesus wants to release encouragement, edification, and comfort by His grace to transform people to see themselves, Himself, and others as He does.

The person sharing what God reveals to them uses his or her own words to communicate the idea that God brings to mind (Bickle, 2008, p. 40). The expression of prophecy has changed because the covenant has changed. Now believers are under the New Covenant (Niebergall, 2016, p. 15), and Paul makes it clear that all believers are to desire the gifts that the Holy Spirit gives, use them out of love for others, and earnestly desire or lust after the gift of prophecy (1 Corinthians 14:1; Vallotton, 2005, p. 19). People receive grace to help them through their problems and bring them forward into deeper transformation and perspective, by receiving prophetic utterances (Vallotton, 2015, p. 114) that are truly from God. All believers can hear God’s voice and prophesy and are encouraged to do so according to the scriptures (Jacobs, 1995, p. 99; Moyer, 2011, p. 29), because God wants to speak to people and through people (Goll, 2013, p. 116). My journey of pursuing to know and love Jesus Christ wholeheartedly led me into one of the greatest discoveries of my adventure with Jesus, the transformative power of His prophetic ministry.

Edified

A friend prophesied that I would be one who when I walked, people would say, “There goes a man who knows the Lord.”

She was talking about me being in intimate relationship with Jesus.

(Schroeder, January 9, 2011, p. 34)

One primary purpose of prophecy is to edify or “up-build” others (Jacobs, 1995, p. 105; Thompson, 2007, p. 9; Vallotton, 2005, p. 20). Edification means to build up, strengthen, and
make more effective (Goll, 2012, p.25; Niebergall, 2016a, p. 15; Vallotton, 2005, p. 20). I was edified many times when other people prayed for me. In my hunger to search out Jesus and discover what He was thinking and feeling about me, I learned that He had a plan to make me more effective in His Kingdom as I was built up and strengthened in my spirit. Paul prayed that the Ephesians would each be strengthened in their inner man (spirit), so that Christ would dwell within them (Ephesians 3:16-17) and so that they would be confident in the identity of Christ and in their identity in Christ. Paul desired to see individual believers equipped to stand firm in their faith because he knew that the emotional roller coasters of life would come with trying circumstances and even false teachings, bringing possible deception and testing. Paul prayed that the Ephesians would be strengthened in their spirit to be faithful and obedient to Christ through those trials and testings (Ephesians 4:12-15).

The Holy Spirit began to speak to me through other people so that I would hear the edifying thoughts from my Heavenly Father. For example, after fervently praying for something in my personal life for weeks or months, it was encouraging to receive a “prophetic word” from someone who prayed for me that was about the exact thing that I had been praying to God about. One gentleman prayed for me and felt that God impressed upon him that “I am becoming a man in the Spirit and that I do not need to fear. God was bringing me to a place of spiritual maturity” (Schroeder, July 9, 2011, p. 66).

Becoming a principal at the age of 30 was a challenge, because I had little professional teaching experience at that point, but was convinced that God called me to the principalship. Stepping into the role came with many doubts, insecurities, and conversations with others who had more experience and wisdom than I did. I often struggled with knowing how to lead when people disagreed with me because I was not a “yeller” nor did I talk about people poorly behind
their back. I began to ponder if I should lead with more of an abrasive edge to make people a little scared of me. However, that contradicted the theory that servant leaders genuinely care about people and sacrificially serve others and focus on their followers’ needs (Buskey, 2014, p. 125; Cerit, 2009, p. 601; Taylor et al., 2007, p. 417). I needed to learn how to bring resolution to conflict without dishonouring the people whom I was called to serve and lead. I remember the peace I felt after going for prayer one night and having a man pray for me. He said that he felt the Holy Spirit was saying to me, “Gentleness is not weakness, it is the heart of a loving and kind God” (Schroeder, June 18, 2013, p. 199). I was edified to lead with godliness and righteousness by being gentle, loving and kind, with a resolve to trust God with the rest.

God heard my prayers and answered them. On a different night during an evening of prayer, my friend felt God say,

The Lord is increasing your authority in the spirit . . . You have been faithful.

Administrators in the Public Schools will come to you seeking to know your system and ideas and how you lead. Your role will be significant . . . even as an old man in this age.

(Schroeder, September 25, 2012, p. 151)

Words like those spurred me on with greater joy and vision for what God was doing in my life and perhaps wanted to do yet. Such powerful edification increased my confidence to further pursue the servant leadership model by serving teachers, building trust, and increasing teachers’ self-efficacy (Cerit, 2009, pp. 602, 614). Out of faith in God, I wrote all of these prayers and thoughts in my journal because I trusted and hoped that they were really from God. The prophetic words that I received were not promises or guarantees, they were invitations for me to grow in my faith, develop as a servant leader, trust God with His plan for my life, and keep fervently seeking to know and love Jesus Christ.
I began to expect God to change me as I surrendered more to Him. I was particularly edified when multiple prophecies that came from different people on different days aligned in content. I was encouraged to believe that God would give me wisdom and power to know how to advance in spiritual battles as I carried the spiritual mantle of a “shepherd” at home, at work, and in ministry (Schroeder, June 15, 2011, p. 60; Schroeder July 29, 2011, p. 73; Schroeder November 20, 2013, p. 249). It was edifying to be prophesied to that I would be a mighty man of God who knows the Lord (Schroeder, January 9, 2011, p. 34; Schroeder, January 29, 2013, p. 176; Schroeder, June 18, 2013, p. 199), but I knew those words were not a guarantee, but rather a loving call from my Heavenly Father to continue to pursue His beautiful Son. My faith in the Lord increased, even if I did not understand everything that was said to me from other people. It was my responsibility to search out and find what the interpretation was to the revelation shared with me. I trusted Jesus that He was building me up in my spirit with thoughts from my Heavenly Father so that I could be changed to become more effective for His glory.

**Exhorted**

A sister in Christ said to me,

“God says that you are doing well, you do not need to change anything,

God just wants you to walk, just walk.

When He wants to change something,

He will speak to you and you will recognize His voice.

You are a good husband and a good father. Dance. Play. He sees your love.

He is changing you from glory to glory. You are at the ‘to’ part right now.”

(Schroeder, October, 23, 2012, p. 162)
Another primary purpose of prophecy is to exhort (1 Corinthians 14:3), which means to encourage (Niebergall, 2016, p. 15), call near (Vallotton, 2005, p. 20), and incite or prod others on in their faith (Goll, 2013, p. 108). When I was prophesied to by someone who loves Jesus, and the words struck the deepest chords of my heart, I was provoked to reach for the highest vision for my life that I could see and reject any ensuing fear or condescending voice. The prophetic ministry of Christ always points people to “the light of the gospel and the glory of Christ” (2 Corinthians 4:4) and truly brings hope, which manifests as courage in the changed lives of receptive people (Chironna, 2013, p. 109). The spoken prophetic word of God has been a key factor in influencing decisions of great servants of God to bring the gospel where it has never been preached, or guide people to move across the country to start a healing ministry or go to Mozambique to start hundreds of churches (Clark, 2015, p. 63). These are people’s stories who have been revolutionized because they heard God’s confirming voice through the prophetic ministry. Prophetic words will never contradict the written word of God, only clarify it so that people are exhorted.

As I received prophetic words, I grew in confidence that God has everything under control and that I have His promises (Jacobs, 1995, p. 107) and presence to give me courage to make decisions that honour Him. I would go to the worship and prayer evening beaten up emotionally and mentally, and then I would leave with prophecies of exhortation that gave me peace, hope, and encouragement (Schroeder, December, 4, 2011, p. 100). I was hungry to hear from God. Simple phrases such as God is going to take me deeper into His Word (Schroeder, April 10, 2011, p. 52), or God is going to do a great work in me so that I can lead well as principal (Schroeder, April 11, 2011, p. 53), encouraged me to advance in my faith with confidence and conviction. Isaiah the prophet wrote, “The Lord has given Me the tongue of the
learned, that I should know how to speak a word in season to him who is weary. He awakens Me morning by morning; He awakens My ear to hear” (Isaiah 50:4). God delights in finding people who are listening for His voice so that He reveal to them what He wants them to say to those who are weary and need encouragement.

God loves to draw people near to Him. As I would receive prayer, God used people to speak tenderly to my heart; He was drawing me near, which is one clear purpose of the gift of prophecy (Vallotton, 2015, p. 114). If I would not have positioned myself to hear from Him, I would not have felt the kindness of God in the midst of many divine invitations to draw near to His heart. In the first chapter of the book of John, it is recorded that Jesus could see that there was no deceit in Nathanael’s heart, one of Jesus’ eventual disciples. The prophetic revelation that Jesus shared with Nathanael was a gentle call for him to draw near to God’s heart, and Nathanael responded by acknowledging in faith who Christ was. He said “Rabbi, You are the son of God; you are the King of Israel” (John 1:49). The revelation that Jesus shared broke through Nathanael’s original skepticism and drew him closer to God’s heart (Goll, 2013, p. 139). As people prayed for me, they would hear God say that I have the heart of David (Schroeder, July 29, 2011, p. 73; Schroeder, September 2, 2013, p. 210) who was a man after God’s own heart (1 Samuel 13:14; Acts 13:22), won many battles (2 Samuel 8:1-13) because God helped him (2 Samuel 8:14), and knew what it was like to be a caring shepherd (1 Samuel 16:11-13). It was exhorting to hear that God compared my heart to King David who wanted to love and serve God wholeheartedly. I drew closer to God than I ever had experienced during this time, partially because the prophetic words that I received caused me to trust Jesus more (Schroeder, November, 8, 2011, p. 91) and dive fully into the river of His loving presence (Schroeder, June 18, 2013, p. 200).
The prophetic words and prayers of exhortation helped me to understand what characteristics I needed to develop, in order to advance in my faith. The Holy Spirit used people to gently exhort me, by highlighting that I needed more patience and boldness in my life (Schroeder, January 29, 2013, pp. 176-177) so that I could be faithful to God’s calling on my life in my various roles. He revealed that He wanted the seeds that He had planted in me to grow so that His work could be accomplished through my hands in the land for His splendour (Isaiah 60:21-22). Jesus mercifully demonstrated this truth to a woman who was drawing water from the well outside of the Samaritan town, Sychar, and who had been engaging in multiple ungodly relationships with men. She went to have her natural thirst met, but Jesus invited her to receive His Living Water and have her internal thirst quenched, and be forgiven and released to step into His calling for her life. Through the prophetic revelation that Jesus shared with her, she received God’s love and stepped into His purpose for her life with bold faith by going and telling everyone in her town that she had met the Messiah. The people in the town heard her testimony and responded with spiritual hunger and faith by dropping what they were doing to leave the town to go find Jesus (John 4:4-30). “Not only did she experience a swift change in her personal history, but she turned her city upside down. Personal transformation can lead to a city transformation” (Goll, 2013, p. 140), as the ones who are changed testify to what God has done in their lives.

A person praying for me exhorted me to speak forth Truth with courage because he heard the Holy Spirit whisper “Bryan the Lion” (Schroeder, May 24, 2012, p. 131) to him while he was praying for me. A lion has great patience and boldness and displays its splendour in all the land. I was exhorted to advance in my faith by praying for more patience and boldness and believing that God had given it to me; however, I needed to trust God by putting those characteristics into
action. I had been experiencing exhortation as Bickle (2008) taught, “Prophecy includes exhorting people to persevere instead of giving up on God’s promises in hard times or giving in to sin during temptation. By the Holy Spirit we exhort them to persevere in their calling and in righteousness” (p. 170). My character was growing as I did my best to live out my faith wherever I was, and I was thankful for the words of exhortation that I received to help me mature as a principal, father, husband, and friend.

**Comforted**

_A brother in Christ said to me,_

“*God is the answer to your problems.*

*God is the answer to all of your problems.*”

*(Schroeder, September 8, 2012, p. 154)*

Another primary purpose of prophecy is to comfort people (1 Corinthians 14:3; Niebergall, 2016, p. 72), which means to cheer them up (Goll, 2012, p. 25; Vallotton, 2015, p. 114) and help them hear the positive and tender directing voice and presence of God (Bevere, 1999, p. 52; Goll, 2013, p. 108; Jacobs, 1995, p. 108) that brings consolation, perspective, and assurance during difficult times (Bickle, 2008, p. 170). When people encounter the true voice of God, enduring strength is supernaturally released so that people are comforted and remain standing on a firm foundation when the storms of life come (p. 52). They may be beaten and bruised, but they are left with God’s intimate thoughts and His confirmation to stay focused on being faithful in doing His will (Goll, 2013, p. 121). Satan loves to condemn and discourage (Goll, 2012, p. 25), particularly when life is hard and people are vulnerable to deception; however, the comforting and refreshing word of the Lord brings joy and reminds us that God’s promises never fail and He is with us.
I was stretched thin as I was striving to be the best principal that I could be, love my wife as a faithful husband, and develop as a present and trustworthy father. A primary role of servant leaders is to make those around them “the very best they can possibly be” (Barna, 2009, p. 17), and I needed comfort and positive voices around me so that I could continue to do that. I also needed to hear God’s voice and feel His presence when I was emotionally, mentally, and physically exhausted. There was one place that I wanted to be more than any other, in God’s house that was full of worship and prayer to Jesus Christ. I would often go and simply sit with my eyes closed and hands held out, palms up, as the reverberations of the songs being sung washed over me and eventually rang deep into my soul and spirit. I would whisper the melodies to Jesus, believing that He heard my faintest murmurs that were birthed in the smallest amount of faith and greatest amount of authenticity. Then I would feel a supernatural strengthening in my spirit and I would inhale deeply, enjoying the renovating of my soul that the Holy Spirit was doing as I waited upon the Lord. God’s Word says, “Those who wait for the Lord will gain new strength; they will mount up with wings like eagles, they will run and not get tired, they will walk and not become weary” (Isaiah 40:31). I experienced that strengthening and would then go and ask people to pray for me; it was renewing and comforting when they declared that they heard God saying that He was overjoyed with me, proud of me, and that I was to celebrate with joy what He was doing in my life (Schroeder, April 12, 2011, p. 52; Schroeder, March 18, 2012, p. 118).

It is supernaturally empowering to be strengthened with joy from God. A powerful verse of scripture is found in the book of Nehemiah wherein Nehemiah is recorded doing a great work for God by rebuilding the broken down walls of Jerusalem – the city that bore God’s Name, in the midst of international opposition to the project. He confidently declared that the joy of the
Lord was his strength (Nehemiah 8:10). Wisdom and insight can be gleaned from that declaration because the joy of the Lord sustains people through persecution and heartache.

Paul the apostle was proclaiming the gospel of Jesus Christ and performing powerful signs and wonders in ancient Philippi, which disturbed the Roman magistrates to the point that they beat him and his missionary friend Silas with rods, stripped them, had them flogged, threw them in prison, and fastened their feet with stocks (Acts 16:22-24). The next verse says that they were praying and singing hymns to God, and the other prisoners were listening to them. Paul and Silas, who were beaten and bruised physically, had unfathomable spiritual joy to overcome their negative circumstances, provide comfort, and motivate them to sing to God when all rationality would be screaming for them to grumble, complain, and give up. It is not surprising that God caused a violent earthquake to shake the foundations of the jail, which freed all of the prisoners and resulted in the jailer falling in trepidation before Paul and Silas, crying out to them asking what he must do to be saved. Paul and Silas replied,

Believe in the Lord Jesus and you will be saved, you and your household. Then they spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all the others in his house. At that hour of the night the jailer took them and washed their wounds; then immediately he and all his household were baptized. The jailer brought them into his house and set a meal before them; he was filled with joy because he had come to believe in God – he and his whole household. (Acts 16:31-34)

I am fascinated that at the end of the story it is being filled with joy that is distinguished in the new believer’s life as a result of believing in God. The joy of the Lord brings enduring and eternal comfort in one’s spirit and soul.
Although I cannot relate to a lot of what Paul and Silas experienced, I can identify with having more confidence and faith through hard times. I have been comforted and encouraged before, during, and after onerous circumstances by the prophetic ministry. The people who prayed for me felt God saying things related to me being in a divine training season for His purposes, going the direction that He wanted me to go, and being loved by Him as I love my daughter (Schroeder, May 17, 2011, p. 57; Schroeder, February 9, 2012, p. 113; Schroeder, October 10, 2012, p. 159). The author of the book of Hebrews highlighted that the motivation of Jesus of Nazareth to embrace the derisiveness and disdain of the cross was deep, unshakeable joy (12:2). It brought Him comfort as He obediently did the work that His Father gave Him to do on earth, despite being humiliated, beaten, and killed as a criminal, so that all people who believed in the Name of Jesus could have access to the Heavenly Father through the Holy Spirit. Jesus knew that He needed to be faithful as the servant of all so that all who followed after Him could look to Him and be comforted and encouraged by His perfect trust in the Father’s plan, in the midst of apparent failure, to reconcile people to Himself through His death and resurrection (Romans 5:6-10). God the Father’s heart yearns for His sons and daughters to know how valuable and precious they are; therefore, when He reveals such important truths to people they cheer up because of the great comfort and joy that they have prophetically received (Goll, 2013, p. 109; Jacobs, 1995, p. 92). Joy is the ultimate confidence in a loving Heavenly Father and a necessity to motivate, comfort, and walk steadfastly through difficult circumstances.
My Calling Revealed

A friend from church prayed many encouraging things. He said,

“You are not a spectator in what is coming, you are called to be right in the middle of it.
You come to praise and worship because you are called to be there for deeper things.
God wants to take you into the Spirit and improve your ability to see in the Spirit. . . .
There is something with your intellect that God is going to use.”

(Schroeder, August 23, 2011, p. 80)

God the Father uses the prophetic ministry to reveal His unique calling and purpose for individuals. Timothy first met Paul the apostle in the first century A.D. in the city of Lystra in central Anatolia, which is now part of modern-day Turkey. Paul referred to Timothy as his son (1 Timothy 1:2), meaning a spiritual son, whom he was discipling in the ways of Christ so that Timothy could continue the missionary work that Paul had been doing. Paul wrote the two scriptural letters of encouragement to Timothy, wherein he affirmed and exhorted Timothy that the Holy Spirit had revealed Timothy’s calling to him when other Christian leaders had laid hands on him, and prayed for and prophesied to him (1 Timothy 1:18; 4:14-15; Vallotton, 2015, p. 149). “Prophecies were used to reveal Timothy’s appointed ministry calling” (Goll, 2013, p. 111), and God the Father continues to use the prophetic ministry to impart, disclose, and release His calling and divine purpose for people’s lives today (Clark, 2015, p. 64; Jacobs, 1995; p. 91; Niebergall, 2016, p. 78). I was repetitively internally strengthened by the testimony of Jesus Christ, which was prophetically released through people who prayed for me. The heavenly revelation caused my confidence in who I am to grow as I was being transformed into the man and principal that God wanted me to be. God was answering the cries of my heart, because for years I had been praying the verses,
I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give [me] the spirit of wisdom and revelation, so [I] may know him better. I pray that the eyes of [my] heart may be enlightened in order that [I] may know the hope to which he has called [me]. (Ephesians 1:17-18a)

God was allowing me to know and have assurance in my spirit about the divine calling that He had for my life. The categorization of those supernatural revelations are that I am to boldly declare God’s Word, I am chosen and predestined by God to serve Him in this hour of history, and I am a forerunner who is to spiritually shepherd and prepare the next generation for Christ’s second coming.

The Holy Spirit spoke through different people at different times to reveal and confirm the divine calling on my life to be a vessel of God’s Word and heart (Schroeder, October 23, 2012, p. 162), inquire of the Lord and speak His truth boldly (Schroeder, May 20, 2013, p. 197), and be a voice not an echo (Schroeder, May 8, 2012, p. 130). When I would go up for prayer after an evening of worship, thus demonstrating my weakness and great need and desire to hear God’s voice in the present, it was reviving to hear such poignant words spoken about me. I wanted to be like the prophet Jeremiah, who declared, “His word is in my heart like a fire, a fire shut up in my bones. I am weary of holding it in; indeed, I cannot” (Jeremiah 20:9) because I was convicted that the truth of God must be spoken, however spoken in love (Ephesians 4:15). A friend had prophesied to me, before I had theunction to be like Jeremiah, “You will stand before kings and governors declaring the Word of God” (Schroeder, June, 2010, p. 3), and I received those words as an invitation from God to believe that He wanted to mightily use me to speak His words wherever I go.
I believe that God was beginning to impart or reveal His gift of prophecy (Goll, 2013, p. 109) in me and give me a vision for a possible prophetic calling on my life in the future. Niebergall’s (2016) explanation provides clarity,

While being around or under a prophet’s anointing, people will often experience an increase in the accuracy concerning their prophetic words. They will also often experience an increase in visions, dreams and prophetic encounters. While people who move in a gift of prophecy may speak into the lives of many people, prophets will often have favour to speak into the ears of those with great influence. If you look in the Old Testament, we can see that prophets had the ears of kings and governmental leaders to speak to. (p. 33).

I really did not know what God was doing in my life during those transformative years, and that is why I wrote those words down in my journal and continued seeking Jesus wholeheartedly, trusting that He would clarify what I did not understand. A friend prayed for me on a different occasion and prophesied, “God will give you wisdom as you speak and will direct you to say one thing and not another. He will give you what you need. You may only realize after that it was the Lord’s words on your lips” (Schroeder, January 29, 2013, p. 176). These encouraging words strengthened me to want to know Jesus more and discover what He desired for my family, school, city, and nation. If I can know what He wants, then I can tell others, too.

The definition of a prophet relates to the function of speaking for another (Jacobs, 1995, p. 21) as Aaron did for God 3500 years ago, and Jesus modeled perfectly the role of being God the Father’s spokesman (Hebrews 1:1-2; John 12:49) and wants His followers to do the same. However, it seemed like He was intentionally highlighting the role of “spokesman” to me as part of His specific calling on my life. Goll (2012) taught,
People anointed with a prophetic ministry speak the word of the Lord in the name of the
Lord. They carry weight in the Church by virtue of the ethical, moral, and spiritual
urgency of their message. Their credentials, credibility, and status as prophetic vessels
stem not from birth or by official designation, but by the power of their inner call and by
the response of those who hear them. (p. 41).

God used the prophetic ministry to reveal that part of my inner call was to proclaim God’s words
boldly wherever I went.

When people walk in humble convictional confidence that they are chosen by God and
are being used by God, they make an impact wherever they go and whatever they do. God
revealed to me through the prophetic ministry and His Word that He had chosen me and
appointed me (John 15:16) to serve Him in this hour of history (Schroeder, July 5, 2011, p. 64).
I was overjoyed and overwhelmed that He would make such declarations about me. I welcomed
and allowed God to speak to my heart about how He fashioned me (Psalm 139:13-18) and had a
calling on my life from before I was in my mother’s womb, as He said about Paul and Jeremiah
(Galatians 1:15-16; Jeremiah 1:4-5). I learned that He wants to use me (Schroeder, July 29,
2011, p. 73; Schroeder, August 23, 2011, p. 80) and I believed that I was chosen and appointed
by Him. Clark (2015) testified how God powerfully uses the prophetic ministry to increase
people’s awareness of God’s sovereign purpose for their lives and bring confirmation that they
are chosen to do a specific work on the earth for His Kingdom. Both Heidi Baker and Leif
Hetland, two missionaries who have each led over one million people to know Jesus, were
strengthened in their faith when they received prophetic utterances confirming that they were
each chosen by God to do great works in specific nations of the earth (p. 62).
Jesus identified Himself as the Good Shepherd and wants to see His followers understand and fulfill the role of spiritual shepherds. A cry of Jesus’ compassionate heart was to make God the Father known to the weak, vulnerable and defenceless people whom He referred to as “sheep without a shepherd” (Matthew 9:36), and help them understand their value in God’s eyes, too. In the midst of Israel’s idolatry and faithlessness to God in the eighth century B.C., Jeremiah trumpeted the message from God, “Return, faithless people . . . for I am your husband. I will choose you – one from a town and two from a clan . . . Then I will give you shepherds after my own heart, who will lead you with knowledge and understanding” (Jeremiah 3:14-15). The scriptures reveal God’s compassion and mercy for people, even while they are sinning; that is the relational shepherd-heart of God. He wants to see shepherds arise in the Kingdom of God who value what He values, and have compassion for whom He has compassion. To love Jesus wholeheartedly and submit to His perfect leadership requires an outpouring of knowledge and understanding that is rooted in intimately knowing Jesus and having confidence in His deep love as John the apostle did (John 21:20; Niebergall, 2016, p. 123).

Paul warned the early church leadership, “Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood” (Acts 20:28). Jesus wants shepherds after His own heart who help other people. I was encouraged in my faith and calling by people prophesying that I would be a shepherd (Schroeder, July 29, 2011, p. 72) who was like Joshua (Schroeder, May 3, 2010, p. 2), called as a forerunner (Schroeder, September 25, 2010; Schroeder, May 20, 2013, p. 197) to lead the next generation to know, love, and worship Jesus Christ wholeheartedly. Bevere (1999) wrote, “A shepherd not only feeds; he also protects. It is time for the leaders to rise up and protect their flock” (p. 15). Shepherds must have compassionate
hearts, and fierce hearts ready to die for the flock because of the value that they see in them for the future. I believe that part of my calling is to prepare the next generation to get ready for the second coming of Christ (Schroeder, July 22, 2012, p. 144), so that people are not unaware of the time of His return, as was the case for His first coming. There is much understanding that the Church needs in the hour that we live, and the spirit of prophecy will help bring clarity to Jesus’ purposes (Bevere, 1999, p. 27) for His Bride at the end of this age.

**Written Word of God**

*Thank you for your confirmation of me hearing you*

– *when my friend brought those verses from 1 Timothy 4:11-16*

*and said they were for me from you,*

*I was overwhelmed by your love, Lord, and divine poetry.*

*I PRAISE YOU!*

(Schroeder, March 1, 2013, p. 183)

The Holy Spirit occasionally highlighted specific Bible verses to people, who were praying for me, to share with me in order to encourage me. Often, those very words of God resonated deep within my spirit and left me strengthened with courage, tenderized with comfort, or set ablaze with zeal to do God’s will. God’s Word is “alive and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart” (Hebrews 4:12). The personal potency of having God speak directly to me fills me with electric fire that causes every cell in my being to be shocked with delightful love and pure life. My Father in heaven is good and His kind eyes are on me, His smile broadens as I mature through testings and trials, and He knows exactly what I need to hear in order to be inspired and strengthened.
The prophetic ministry is rooted in giving loving expression to an impression from God. If God impresses a certain scripture verse or passage to a person to share with another, that is part of the prophetic ministry. All scripture is prophetic because God deliberately chose to reveal those Spirit-inspired words (2 Timothy 3:16) to all people on earth (Chironna, 2013, p. 31). Niebergall (2016) proclaimed, “It is alive because it is God-breathed. Every word and verse in the Bible is an open heaven for us to come into a revelatory encounter with Jesus” (p. 39). God’s written word is “our primary source of His voice” (Goll, 2013, p. 126), and the Holy Spirit loves to repeat what God the Father has already declared. The Holy Spirit enjoys speaking what He knows the children of God need to hear in the moment; however, people cannot clearly discern God’s voice if they are not rooted in the written Word of God (Goll, 2012, p. 94; Jeremiah 23:21-22; Niebergall, 2016, p. 39). I hungered to hear God’s voice and the words from Joshua 1:6-9 were so precious to me, particularly because people continued to tell me that they felt God gave them those verses to specifically share with me (Schroeder, December 12, 2010, p. 29; Schroeder, July 9, 2011, p. 65; Schroeder, September 27, 2012, p. 155).

The main message of the verses was that Moses’ successor, Joshua, was to lead the Israelites into the promised land and God was telling him to be strong and courageous without fear, discouragement, or compromise. They also said that the Lord was with him; he was to be obedient to the Lord, meditate on God’s words day and night, and lead the people faithfully into the Promised Land. It was encouraging as a young principal to know that God was saying the same things to me. He was telling me that He is with me, His voice is the one that I need to pay attention to, and He will make me prosperous and successful as I faithfully live to obey Him. Bickle (2008) learned, “As we speak simple Bible verses that the Holy Spirit impresses on our
mind at the moment . . . the Spirit moves on that person’s heart even more” (p. 174) and I was experiencing the power of God’s Word being spoken to me prophetically.

The Word of God can bring much comfort, because hearing God’s voice changes people’s hearts (Clark, 2015, p. 58). I need God to help me have a tender heart. I never want to be hard hearted; however, I can become calloused quite easily through negative thinking. God was indubitably stretching me in my leadership position by teaching me how to serve and work with different people, and how to work through difficult scenarios between students and communicate decisions to parents. I often needed His tender and comforting words to cheer me up. On a day when I was doubting my calling as principal, a friend prayed for me and believed God gave him the verses from Isaiah 43:1a-3a to comfort me. The verses are written from God’s perspective,

Do not fear for I have redeemed you by name; you are mine. When you pass through the waters, I will be with you and when you pass through the rivers, they will not sweep over you. When you walk through the fire, you will not be burned; the flames will not set you ablaze. For I am the Lord your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Saviour.

(Schroeder, July 9, 2011, p. 66)

After hearing those verses, and believing that my loving Saviour was speaking those words directly to me, I was comforted, edified, and exhorted!

Another time I had been praying for weeks that I would live in a way that was worthy before God and that I would make a difference in the lives of the people around me. A coworker sent me a note one day and I recorded it in my journal because it affected me so deeply. The part that impacted me was that she sent me Bible verses that I had already been praying and they spoke powerfully to me when she sent them to me. It could only have been by the guiding hand
of the Holy Spirit on her spirit to encourage me with those verses from 1 Thessalonians 2:11-12. I recorded in my journal,

A friend gave me a note today that communicated while she was reading the Word of the Lord, my name came to mind. It is super encouraging because the verses are: We constantly pray for you, that our God may make you worthy of His calling, and that by His power He may bring to fruition your every desire for goodness and your every deed prompted by faith. We pray this so that the Name of our Lord Jesus may be glorified in you, and you in Him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ.

(Schroeder, December 14, 2013, p. 263)

This happened again and again, when people would receive scripture to share with me, which they believed God had specifically revealed to them for the purpose of encouraging and comforting me (Schroeder, October 21, 2010, p. 22; Schroeder, October 23, 2012, p. 162).

God also gave people scriptures to give to me that resonated with my understanding of God’s calling on my life. The Holy Spirit can illuminate parts of the Word of God so that they burn within us like a flame that cannot be quenched, releasing personal revelation and confirmation that only God can orchestrate (Moyer, 2001, p. 28). This happened multiple times when people prayed for me and received Jeremiah 33:3 and Revelation 10:11 to encourage me (Schroeder, April 7, 2013, p. 185; Schroeder, August 2, 2013, p. 201; Schroeder, December 12, 2013, p. 257). The Lord told Jeremiah, “Call to me and I will answer you and tell you great and unsearchable things you do not know” (Jeremiah 33:3), and the angel told John “You must prophesy again about many peoples, nations, languages and kings” (Revelation 10:11). Putting the ideas together, I was left encouraged to fervently cry out to Jesus to know Him more and find
out what is on His heart and mind, so that I can boldly speak it to the nations so that all people can know Jesus and what He is doing on the earth.

After my friend prayed for me and shared that God had given the above verses to strengthen me, he prophesied to me, “The fire is there, it is whether you want it, because it comes with a price tag. John the Baptist was beheaded for being faithful” (Schroeder, December 12, 2013, p. 258). John the Baptist had a powerful message that spoke to people’s hearts and caused them to repent, leading to transformation. A pastor, while praying for me once received a verse for me that was focused on the same message that aligned with John the Baptist’s (Schroeder, March, 22, 2012, p. 121). The verse is God declaring, “If my people, whom are called by my Name, will humble themselves, pray and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and I will forgive their sin and heal their land” (2 Chronicles 7:14). I had been meditating on this verse for weeks before the pastor quietly shared it with me, and it caused my spirit to soar because it confirmed that what I had been praying and meditating about was on God’s heart for me and for the people whom I had been praying for. I realized that each part of that one verse had significant and deep connections to what God was doing in and through my life. I was overjoyed that Jesus allowed me to receive encouragement, confirmation, and insight from His written Word through prophetic ministry by another believer.

**Still Small Voice**

*After a brother in Christ prayed for me, he felt the Lord telling him that I was receiving new shoes, a readying to spread a message of Good News, and that I am ready.*

*More ready than I realized, even though I am continuing to be made ready.*

*(Schroeder, January 9, 2011, p. 32)*
Part of my personal metamorphosis happened while receiving prophetic ministry from people who heard God whisper something to them about me. The soft and gentle whisper of the Holy Spirit in one’s spirit often brings personal instruction, direction, and encouragement as a thought that needs to be received by faith (Moyer, 2011, p. 30; Niebergall, 2016, p. 40; Thompson, 2007, p. 51). While the early apostles were praying and fasting in the first century, the Holy Spirit directed them, with a prophetic whisper, to set apart Barnabas and Saul for a specific work of God (Acts 13:2; Goll, 2013, p. 110). A popular account of Elijah hearing God’s voice was when he was hiding on a mountain from an evil queen who wanted to kill him. Elijah needed the Lord’s comfort and leadership and so the Lord provided a great wind that tore rocks apart, a powerful earthquake, and a raging fire, but the Lord was intentionally not speaking through any of those powerful demonstrations to Elijah. Then the Lord whispered and Elijah recognized the Lord’s voice and received personal instruction, direction, and encouragement from it (1 Kings 19:9-18). He was learning the wisdom and ways of the Lord by listening to the Lord’s gentle whisper, and responded with obedience.

The still small voice of God is a common form of revelation that the Holy Spirit uses to impress God’s thoughts into people’s hearts (Bickle, 2008, p. 57). A man who regularly hears the still small voice of God taught the following:

A lot of the time when we receive prophetic words through the still small voice of God, it will come as a thought. What we need to do is learn to pull on that small thought until it becomes a prophetic word. One time when I was walking around a book store, I saw a man sitting down by himself. I felt like the Holy Spirit was prompting me to talk to him. I went up to him and said, “I believe that God speaks today, and I feel like He has a word for you.” At this point, I actually did not even have a word to give him. I was
just stepping out in faith, believing that God would show up. Suddenly the word “son” popped into my head. I started speaking out what God gave me and began to pull a word right out of the Father’s heart for him. I said to the man, “I feel like God just told me that you have two sons, and that for the past two weeks you have been lying awake in bed at night, daydreaming about having more of an emotional connection with your youngest son. I feel like God is saying that you are going to notice a drastic change in how your son connects with you in these next three months.” The man had tears in his eyes and told me that everything I said was true.

I then felt like God said to me that this man had a desire in his heart to start a business. So I pulled on the word and said, “I feel like God is saying that you have a business anointing over your life and that you have tried to start several businesses in the past 15 years, but they did not turn out the way that you wanted them to. You feel frustrated and stuck now because you did not see the desire of your heart come to pass.” I then said, “You are wanting to start a construction business in fine carpentry, aren’t you?” He nodded his head, shocked. I said to him, “In these next six months, you are going to meet two Christian men who are going to want to help you start up your business. I feel like God is saying that you can trust them because He trusts them.” Notice how this was an incredibly detailed word that I gave this man about his life, yet it did not come through an audible voice from God. God spoke through my thought process. Most prophets or well-known prophetic leaders that I know receive their most specific words through the still small voice of God. We need to be a people who will allow God to fine tune our ears to hear the word of the Lord, even if He is speaking in His faintest whisper. (Niebergall, 2016, pp. 40-42)
God often whispered simple phrases to other people that they shared with me to instruct and encourage me. Some phrases focused on me changing up my thinking to be more focused on truth (Schroeder, July 9, 2011, p. 66), writing down what God was doing in my life so my grandchildren would know one day (Schroeder, January 9, 2011, p. 34), and receiving deeper scriptural understanding (Schroeder, May 28, 2010, p. 2). Other times I was exhorted to trust Jesus’ leadership because He was leading me in a bond of friendship and to run the race with joy and find rest in the journey (Schroeder, July 9, 2011, p. 66). I was astounded by how many times God the Father prophetically whispered to people exactly what I needed to hear to guide, encourage, or comfort me (Bickle, 2008, pp. 173-174). He released His power and I was divinely touched while receiving the prophetic words, because the people that God nudged internally with His whisper, responded obediently to God.

Visions

After she prayed for me,

she said she saw a rainbow,

which represented the promises God has given me

and that He will keep them.

(Schroeder, September 14, 2010, p. 19)

The Holy Spirit sometimes revealed visual insights with a mental snapshot or a short dynamic scene to people who prayed for me, in order that they could strengthen, encourage, or comfort me with the content of the revelation (Clark, 2015, p. 93; Goll, 2012, p. 141; Thompson, 2007, p. 54). The spiritual eyes of believers allow light from the Lord in through a lens that reveals an imprint of an image on their hearts and minds, because the Holy Spirit desires to share what He sees. Daniel saw visions in his mind (Daniel 7:15); however, sometimes people will see
in the spirit by faith what is happening around them in the spiritual realm, similar to how Elisha’s servant did when he saw the Lord’s provision of horses and chariots of fire close by to protect them (2 Kings 6:16-17; Goll, 2013, p. 126; Niebergall, 2016, p. 44). As I received ministry through the spoken prophetic word, I was strengthened for the hardships (Bevere, 1999, p. 59) that lay ahead, similar to Timothy and Paul’s experiences recorded in the scriptures (1 Timothy 1:18; Acts 21:13). Moyer (2011) explained that God uses—

visions and the revelatory realm to communicate with His people for personal direction and personal guidance like He did with Paul in Acts 16. . . . It is the prophetic voice that He wants to use today to guide the Church and to keep us from falling in the pit. (p. 29)

God strengthened me in my spirit with endurance, hope, faith, purpose, joy, and love because of the visions that others shared with me (Schroeder, April 11, 2013, p. 187) from what God showed them about me.

A preacher whom I listened to regularly encouraged his listeners to daily pray that they would be strengthened in their spirit or inner being as Paul did (Ephesians 3:16). Paul prayed that the Holy Spirit would fill our spirit and hearts with the endurance of Christ (2 Thessalonians 3:5), love of God (Romans 5:5), sanctifying work of God’s peace (1 Thessalonians 5:23), and spiritual wisdom and understanding (Colossians 1:9). Jeremiah, Isaiah, and David prayed that God would release the fear of God into their hearts so that they would be united with Him (Psalm 86:11), inspired to follow Him (Jeremiah 32:40), and delight in Him (Isaiah 11:3). I prayed the scriptures so that God would strengthen me in my spirit. The fear of God stays with people after they encounter Jesus, because His presence is imprinted on their spirit, like what happened to the prophet Ezekiel when he saw visions of God (Campbell, 2008, pp. 30-31; Ezekiel 1:1).
I was overwhelmingly encouraged when people who prayed for me would tell me they saw pictures, such as living water flowing out of me (Schroeder, July 17, 2010, p. 10), a strong, flexing arm popping out of my chest (Schroeder, July 9, 2011, p. 66), and a warrior sun shining over me because of my warrior spirit (Schroeder, November 19, 2013, pp. 247-248). I was strengthened and exhorted after each of those encounters. One lady saw the Holy Spirit resting on me (Schroeder, July 7, 2010, p. 7), and another saw streams that were titled “students,” “inner man,” and “principalship” (Schroeder, May 2, 2010, p. 2). I was encouraged to endure when a friend prayed for me and said that she saw a “drainage pipe that I was slowly crawling through; there was light at the end and it opened into a vast meadow” (Schroeder, January 18, 2011, p. 36). A gentleman prayed for me and saw “me with a crown on filled with jewels” (Schroeder, November 23, 2010, p. 27). Those prophetic encounters equipped me in my spirit to resolve in my heart never to give up pursuing to know and love Jesus Christ wholeheartedly and to trust that His Spirit is transforming me to become like Christ through the different experiences and highs and lows of the journey of life.

Jesus Christ is the greatest exhorter and He loves to cheer people on toward their divine destinies through the prophetic ministry. A couple of times, the Holy Spirit revealed visions and spoke more powerfully and detailed than usual through other people about me. A woman prayed for me,

She said the Lord was showing her the word “favour” upon me – favour for purity. God was taking me deeper in intimacy and the students at school deeper too. And that the students would look at me and see my intimacy with the Lord and they would want what I have and would ask me how to get it. Students would have dreams and would come and ask me about them and I would pray for and with them.
God sees the movements of my heart and reveals what He desires to see in the people whom I am called to serve. Teachers and students are empowered and transformed by principals who daily practice servant leadership (Barna, 2009, p. 14; Crippen, 2010, p. 28; Taylor et al., 2007, p. 417), and are committed to following the Lord. On another occasion a different friend prayed for me and said,

I see a mighty warrior rising up, a mighty warrior of God rising up, one who will do business with God, not timidly – and with people – one who will move the hand of God with declarations. I see you have a sword, the sword of the Lord. The power of the resurrection is in you, the power of the resurrection is in you.

Words like those caused my spirit to rise with hope, purpose, perseverance, resolution, and faith. I was maturing in my faith and advancing in the call of God on my life as I humbled myself to learn more and obey Him the best that I could, and repent when I messed up. Each phrase of a prophetic word like that can carry significant divine meaning that does not guarantee anything in my life, rather it is an invitation for me to seek to understand what Jesus is doing in and around me, and partner with Him in His ways, will, and work on the earth. Receiving the prophetic ministry from people who saw what God was revealing about me was a life-altering experience for me through each encounter I had.

Conclusion

Receiving prophetic ministry from people who showed me God’s love through it changed my life. As I became comfortable with the practice of people sharing with me what they believed God was revealing to them about me, I was encouraged, comforted, and exhorted. I
believed that Jesus was revealing, by the power and activity of the Holy Spirit, what He was thinking and feeling about me. I was strengthened in my spirit to trust that God the Father was working out His plan in and through me, but most importantly I grew in confidence in the goodness and nearness of God. I left many evenings of prayer and worship cheered up and filled with joy, hope, peace, renewed purpose, and love. I wanted to understand the biblical grounding for what was happening through the prophetic encounters, and I found solid foundational teachings in God’s Word and other resources about the spirit, gift, and practice of prophecy.

I learned how the prophetic ministry was different under the Old Covenant compared with the New Covenant; however, God’s desire to reveal Himself to people never changed. I was astounded and inspired how God spoke to people by His still small voice, through His powerful and holy written Word, and through visions. When people shared the revelation with me, I wrote it down in my journal at home, compared it with God’s written Word, and talked about it with Jesus. The spiritual, mental, and emotional equipping that I received through the spirit of prophecy prepared me as a servant leader to persevere with humility through hardships, negative thoughts, and temptations from the devil. I was being built up, equipped, and trained as a servant leader who would “truly offer hope and guidance for a new era in human development, and for the creation of better, more caring institutions” (Spears, 2004, p. 9). I do not fully comprehend God’s plan for my life, but I am thankful for the prophetic ministry that I received and how God used it to transform me to live confidently and faithfully, and do my best serving staff members and students as the principal at a Christian school.
CHAPTER VII
DREAMS FROM GOD

One noticeable way through which God answered my persistent wholehearted desperate cries to hear His voice was by speaking to me through dreams. God passionately invites people to seek Him and cry out to Him, “Call to me and I will answer you and tell you great and unsearchable things you do not know” (Jeremiah 33:3). My life was revolutionized on the night that I first asked for a dream from God, because that very night He gave me a vivid dream that was saturated with revelation for the purpose and calling that God had destined me. My friend had encouraged me to ask God for dreams, because she said that God will reveal my prayer language through them. That did not make much sense to me, but because I had faith that God could speak through dreams and I was growing in prayer, I decided to trust my friend and ask God for a dream. I had every reason to believe that the dream I had was from God. Niebergall (2016b) explained,

Not every dream we have is from God. Some dreams are from God, some are from the enemy, and others are because we had pizza before we went to bed. All throughout scripture we can see that dreams and dream interpretation are common ways that God speaks. . . . The Hebrew word for “dream” means to “bind firmly.” When we have a dream from the Lord, it is because He is trying to bind a message firmly to our heart. (p. 45)

The first dream God gave me truly bound a message securely to my heart about my calling. It was a dream of destiny. There are a variety of God-given dreams; however, many are instructional (Thompson, 2007, p. 55), directional (Moyer, 2011, p. 29; Niebergall, 2016b, p. 9), come as warnings (Jacobs, 1995, p. 211), and more. “Prophetic dreams proclaim events, give
warnings, direction, comfort . . . among other things” (Jacobs, 1995, p. 214); therefore, hearing God speak through dreams while we sleep is more common, and important, than most people think.

God desires to cultivate a close friendship with all people, and He has chosen also to invest into the portion of people’s lives that they spend sleeping, the night season, so that they are in continual communion with Him (Niebergall, 2016b, p. 11). Perhaps He finds it easier to speak to people when they are asleep because there is less conscious interference (Goll, 2012, p. 146; Jacobs, 1995, p. 210). “Dreams can be a tremendous, awesome revelation of how much He loves us and cares about even the most minute parts of our lives” (Goll & Goll, 2005, p. 152); therefore, God gives people dreams because He loves them. The Holy Spirit releases dreams as visionary revelation as it says in the book of Job,

Indeed God speaks once, or twice, yet no one notices it. In a dream, a vision of the night, when sound sleep falls on men, while they slumber in their beds, then He opens the ears of men, and seals their instruction. (Job 33:14-16)

God gave me numerous dreams, which I recorded in my journal and sought interpretation so that I could understand and apply the key messages and meanings to my life with wisdom.

The biblical accounts of dreams and interpretation given to Jacob, Joseph, Gideon, Solomon, Daniel, Joseph, the Magi who presented gifts to Jesus, Pilate’s wife, and others display God communicating for many different purposes. Between 2010 and 2013, God spoke to me through calling, end time focused, direction, warning, split, heart revelation, spiritual warfare, intercession, and edification dreams. I was overjoyed and overwhelmed by what God disclosed to me in those dreams. I was thankful for His divine timing and revelation. As a servant leader, Jesus regularly and creatively served His followers in a timely way that helped them transform
their future visions and dreams into their present reality. He did this, as other servant leaders do, by encouraging, retaining core values, staying positive, and striving to meet short term goals (Sultan & van de Bunt-Kokhuis, 2014, p. 2; Taylor et al., 2007, pp. 404, 412). I am thankful that Jesus chose to serve and lead me toward a greater vision for my life by bringing the dreams of His heart into my reality. I, consciously or subconsciously, could not devise or fabricate such contextual clarity, intense instruction, nor divine direction; God actually chose to give me dreams from His fatherly heart and mind. He was communicating with me, as He did with men and women in the Bible, and I was hearing His voice!

**Calling Dream**

The first time that I asked God for a dream, I woke up at 2:12 a.m. on June 28, 2010, and wrote the following in my journal:

I went to bed two hours ago and asked the Lord for dreams and visions. I asked Him to reveal Himself to me. I put on the armour of God before I fell asleep. I had a dream. In my dream, I was aware evil could take many forms. [A woman I know] was dressed in black wearing makeup, I was sitting across from her, the power of darkness tried to draw me to her. I resisted until I fell backward. I felt evil was trying to seduce me. I stood with Amanda [my wife] as 3 of my friends’ wives “casually” came into the room [dressed in black]. I say casually because something was different, almost like they were trying to seduce me with their movements, but seeing Amanda beside me, they would not come any closer. I was very aware evil was trying to draw me into lust away from Amanda. I resisted; the women left. The intensity that evil was trying to pull me away from Amanda intensified.
I was standing on a wooden ledge with Amanda telling her something, informing her of the events and protecting her. [A friend of Amanda’s] was cleaning a wooden ledge, distracting Amanda by talking to her. The feeling and presence of evil intensified again. Then 3 “men,” dressed in black, I could not see their faces, ran through the room we were in and I followed. We entered a large arena where the 3 men started jumping over the balcony to the depths below. Then [a grade six student from school] was there and was going to jump, too. I said to him, “Either you are for Jesus and the Kingdom of God or you are against it.” He started toward the balcony. I stopped him, pulled him back; he was dressed in black, too. I took a knee so I was eye level with him and said, “Jesus loves you so much.” Then I felt the presence of evil coming towards us. This next part desired great faith.

I stepped forward toward the evil, closed my eyes, and placed my hands together. Fire came from my hands and created a circle of fire around [the student] and me, and then around the whole balcony of the arena. Other people were watching and cheering. I ran back into the other room to find Amanda, and when I saw her I was filled with joy and I jumped in the air throwing my fist as high as I could into the air in celebration.

Then I awoke. (pp. 4-5)

I remember waking up after receiving that dream and feeling the presence of God all over my body and in my bedroom. “A Calling Dream is when the Lord speaks to you in a dream about the calling and destiny over your life” (Niebergall, 2016b, p. 53), and I understood a key piece of the dream to be significantly related to God’s calling for my life. God gave Joseph a dream of destiny when He revealed that Joseph would rule and reign over his brothers, because his brothers’ sheaves of grain bowed down to Joseph’s upright sheaf of grain in the dream.
(Genesis 37:7-8). Perhaps Joseph was foolish to share his dream with his brothers; however, it was unmistakably from God and had to do with God’s calling over Joseph’s life. It took over 20 years for Joseph’s dream to materialize, but I believe that he would have relied on and found affirmation in the dream God gave him regarding his purpose through the difficult circumstances that he endured in Egypt. I had been praying that God would open my eyes of understanding so that I would have assurance of His calling on my life, and the dream that He gave me was one answer to that prayer.

Since the time of Adam, God has always delegated rule and a sphere of influence for people to exercise dominion over (Goll & Goll, 2006, p. 101; Goll, 2012, p. 43). Therefore, when the Holy Spirit gives dreams to people, the dreams often have to do with people’s realms of influence and callings, because the “Spirit of God tailors His impartations to match our individual callings . . . [and] matches our dreams to the way we think and perceive individually” (Goll & Goll, 2006, p. 100). In God’s sovereignty, He determines and gifts people with a measure of rule according to their equipping and calling. Destiny and calling dreams leave the dreamers inspired and strengthened in their faith to love and obey God with new levels of boldness and trust (p. 104).

The main point of the dream was that if I am faithful and steadfast in my relationships with Amanda and Jesus, I will resist distractions and temptations, and have a powerful and victorious ministry that saves youth from hell as they receive the love of Jesus Christ. I believe that the colour black in this dream represented death (Goll & Goll, 2006, p. 226) and deception (Niebergall, 2016b, p. 93). I believe that the three men who ran through the room were agents of death, known as demons, whose assignment was to deceive the next generation and lead them down to hades (Luke 10:15), “over the balcony to the depths.” I believe that the grade 6 student
represented the next generation of young people, particularly at the school where I serve, whom
the Lord has called me to raise up as shepherds after God’s own heart (Jeremiah 3:15; Matthew
9:35-38) to release His Kingdom of light. I want to see students thrive and learn how to
overcome all oppressive influences by the powerful love of Jesus, so that their quality of life
surpasses the generation before them. This is the cry of all servant leaders, but it will take the
grace of God, all the characteristics connected to servant leadership, and strategic goal setting to
see that vision come to fruition, “thereby setting up the potential for raising the quality of life”
(Spears, 2004, p. 10) in every school classroom.

I was particularly impacted by this dream, because I perceived my future role as principal
as a calling from God to serve Him by partnering with the teachers to shepherd and disciple
students to become wholehearted lovers of Jesus. Christ’s redemptive work on the cross
demonstrated God’s resolve to do everything He can to turn people away from evil, save them
from hell, and lead them into knowledge of righteousness (1 Timothy 2:4; Ezekiel 33:11; Goll &
Goll, 2005, p. 174). However, people need to receive and believe the truth of who Jesus is, what
He has done, and what He wants to do in their lives. The fire that came from my hands, when I
protected the student from an evil attack, represented the saving power and presence of God that
He releases through people who are doing His work (2 Chronicles 7:1; Ezekiel 10:1-7,
Revelation 19:12).

When I shared the details of the dream with a trusted friend, he oddly noticed that I was
awakened at 2:12 a.m. and asked me, do you know what Joel 2:12 says? I said no. It says
“‘Even now,’ declares the Lord, ‘return to me with all your heart, with fasting and weeping and
mourning” (Joel 2:12). He had helped me to understand and interpret the significance of what
was happening because I had recently committed to fast regularly. God was tenderizing my
heart during worship times resulting in me weeping, and I was mourning for the intimate presence and friendship of Jesus Christ (Schroeder, July 7, 2010, p. 7). In Joel 2:28, the prophet highlights that after one fasts, prays, weeps, and mourns for God’s manifest presence, God says “I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your old men will dream dreams, your young men will see visions” (Joel 2:28). My Heavenly Father honoured His Word and poured out His Spirit into my bedroom that night as I hungered to know Jesus more and hear His voice. He gave me a dream of destiny that revealed God’s calling over my life.

**End Time Dream**

On January 23, 2012, I dreamt the following:

A close friend of mine invited people over to her house, a house of Middle East designs. Amanda and I arrived at different times. I arrived first. I went into the upper room [patio on top of the house] by myself and observed a bookshelf, which from a certain angle looked like the front of an ancient temple. Then I looked up at the sky and realized I was seeing a heavenly vision and the fear of the Lord came upon me. I saw a “temple” far away come closer and closer until it was right in front of me. Then I was left with 4 ribbons or tablets with the dates ranging from January 23 to February 1 [on one of them, the other 3 were blank]. I was instantly in a state of awe, joy, fascination, and groaning of bewilderment. Then, now out of my vision, I looked over the city and saw a tornado tearing through it, causing havoc and fire.

Then we had a meal together, all friends. I did not recognize anyone other than Amanda and [our other friend]. After dinner I was walking outside and saw some guys driving down a hillside for fun. Then I was driving something and I drove through the
back yard of someone’s house. Then I was indoors and I had a chemical spill, something acidic on my hands, especially my left. I saw my skin sizzle and burn and melt before my eyes. Then someone bandaged me up and I healed 100%. Then I woke up.

(pp. 111-112)

This dream is very symbolic and requires more detailed interpretation and explanation to attain understanding. The dream does not make much sense or appear to have much revelatory significance to it when perceived literally. I will explain why it is an end time dream. Jesus said, “When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all truth. He will not speak on his own but will tell you what he has heard. He will tell you about the future” (John 16:13). The sequence of events, dramatic demonstrations of power, and layers of understanding needed to grasp the end time affairs cannot and will not be revealed in one dream to one person. There are over 150 chapters of the Bible that provide the framework and details of those events; therefore, what was God communicating to me through this dream? I needed to understand why God would give me this dream. Niebergall (2016b) commented why God may give people end time dreams,

God could share these things to call the church to co-labour with Him to intercede for what is to take place in the future. Another reason could be to show the church how they should position themselves for what is to come. (p. 48)

Daniel and John are excellent examples from the Bible who were given insight through dreams and visions by the Spirit of God about the coming end time events (Daniel 7-12; Revelation 6-22).

In the dream, I was in a city of Middle East design and I perceived a beautiful awe-inspiring temple coming down from the sky closer and closer toward the earth, where we were.
The city that God chose above all other cities on earth is Jerusalem (1 Kings 11:32). He chose to put His manifest presence in it (1 Kings 11:36; Psalm 135:21), call it the City of God (Psalm 87), and will have all nations gather to it to honour Jesus Christ when He returns, because Jerusalem is the Throne of the Lord (Jeremiah 3:17) and the Faithful City (Zechariah 8:3). God really likes it. The Old and New Testaments, and Jesus' first and second coming, are intensely and intentionally focused on the city of Jerusalem (Isaiah 62; Matthew 23:37-39; Zechariah 9:9-10).

The city of heaven is called the New Jerusalem and will come down to earth when Jesus returns. Jesus said,

I am coming soon. Hold on to what you have, so that no one will take your crown. The one who is victorious I will make a pillar in the temple of my God. Never again will they leave it. I will write on them the name of my God and the name of the city of my God; and I will also write on them my new name. Whoever has ears, let them hear what the Spirit says to the churches. (Revelation 3:11-13)

The author of the book of Hebrews spoke about the time that is coming when the heavenly city will be on the earth, referenced by Jesus, and explained that it will be different from any other time in history.

The author of Hebrews exhorted his listeners to pay attention to what God was saying, because in that day the people of God will –

have come to Mount Zion, to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem. You have come to thousands upon thousands of angels in joyful assembly, to the church of the firstborn, whose names are written in heaven. You have come to God, the Judge of all, to the spirits of the righteous made perfect, to Jesus the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel. See to it that you do
not refuse him who speaks. If they did not escape when they refused him who warned them on earth, how much less will we, if we turn away from him who warns us from heaven? At that time his voice shook the earth, but now he has promised, “Once more I will shake not only the earth but also the heavens.” The words “once more” indicate the removing of what can be shaken, that is, created things, so that what cannot be shaken may remain. Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us be thankful, and so worship God acceptably with reverence and awe, for our “God is a consuming fire.” (Hebrews 12:22-29)

God, in His great mercy and love, has always desired to dwell with people (Ezekiel 37:27; Psalm 132:13-18; Revelation 21:3) and to truly have the dynamics, reality, and environment of heaven on the earth.

Jesus taught the disciples to pray that the Heavenly Father’s Kingdom in heaven would come and be fully released and fulfilled on earth (Matthew 6:9-10). The fulfillment of that prayer, Paul explained, only comes to its fullest effect when there is complete unity in heaven and on earth under Christ (Ephesians 1:10). That epic and history-altering era will be when Jesus returns to the earth, which is recorded by John in the book of Revelation,

“The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Messiah, and he will reign for ever and ever.” And the twenty-four elders, who were seated on their thrones before God, fell on their faces and worshipped God, saying: “We give thanks to you, Lord God Almighty, the One who is and who was, because you have taken your great power and have begun to reign. The nations were angry, and your wrath has come. The time has come for judging the dead, and for rewarding your servants the prophets and your people who revere your name, both great and small, and for destroying those
who destroy the earth.” Then God’s temple in heaven was opened, and within his temple was seen the ark of his covenant. And there came flashes of lightning, rumblings, peals of thunder, an earthquake and a severe hailstorm. (Revelation 11:15b-19)

I write all of that to explicate the significance of the dream I received. God was strengthening my faith, provoking me to seek and attain wisdom, revelation, and knowledge about what His Word says about the earthly city of Jerusalem and the heavenly New Jerusalem. In the dream, I looked at a bookcase. The books signified the wisdom, revelation, and knowledge (Niebergall, 2016b, p. 94) that God would give me as I asked for more. A city can be a literal city, the Kingdom of God, and a symbol of security (Goll & Goll, 2006, p. 227; Niebergall, 2016b, p. 99); such is the case of God’s eternal purposes for the New Jerusalem. The emphasis of a “temple” was also clear in the dream, which symbolized holiness and a call to be set apart (p. 136). The Holy Spirit was encouraging me to seek holiness and ask for wisdom, knowledge, and revelation for the purpose of understanding God’s purposes and plans related to the earthly and heavenly Jerusalem’s.

The main emotion that I experienced in the dream was steeped in the fear, reverence, and awe of God as I was shown the heavenly vision. Niebergall (2016b) wrote, “Understanding our emotions in dreams is a powerful key in discerning whether or not a dream is from the Lord. Emotions can also show us what God’s purpose is behind the dream” (p. 85); Niebergall’s insight caused me to reflect on the particular heightened emotions I experienced in the dream. The fear of the Lord is a combination of having a holy terror and attention on God that produces a heart full of worship, peace, love, joy, satisfaction, and understanding when it is cultivated as a spiritual discipline. However, when God displays His glory and power, it causes people to crumple and tremble before Him because their natural strength to stand in His glorious presence...
is useless. Daniel fell prostrate before the mighty angel of God (Daniel 8:17), and John fell at Jesus’ feet as though dead when Jesus revealed Himself in an increase of His heavenly splendor (Revelation 1:17). Therefore, the connection between the symbolism of the books, combined with the coming down of the New Jerusalem and my reactionary encounter of being overcome by the fear of the Lord, led me to believe that God was binding to my heart the importance of studying the scriptures and searching out biblical understanding regarding the coming events that the Bible depicts.

I received four ribbons in the dream, one of them having ten dates on it and the other three were blank. The ribbons represented anointing and revelation (Niebergall, 2016b, p. 129), and the number 4 in this context indicated worldwide refining and wholeness (Goll & Goll, 2006, p. 229; Niebergall, 2016b, p. 81). The number 10 represented the importance of law and divine order and can relate to the Old Testament and responsibility to follow God’s order, as well (Goll & Goll, 2006, p. 235; Niebergall, 2016b, p. 81). The tornado was causing havoc and fire in the dream; therefore, it was a warning and symbol of the enemy’s plans of chaos (Niebergall, 2016b, p. 137) concerning Jerusalem. Goll and Goll (2006) described,

We also discovered that there is a redemptive way to look at the focus of those same dreams. For example, tornadoes can be very destructive, but a tornado in a dream can also symbolize the violent activity of God when He comes and shakes everything up. He rips out and demolishes the old dead stuff because He wants to bring in the new. (p. 85)

The Bible reveals that the enemy will bring chaos to Jerusalem, and God will allow it to happen until He brings restoration and revival to the nation of Israel and city of Jerusalem (Luke 21:20, Luke 21:24; Revelation 16:19). Eating with people showed the importance of relational connection and times of fellowship.
The end of the dream highlighted three different things. The first was seeing people drive down a hill for fun. Vehicles often represent ministries in the church; therefore, this likely demonstrated that people in the church are not informed and are unaware of God’s plan and perspective concerning the end of this age, even though it is clear in the Bible. The second thing was me driving (ministry related) through someone’s backyard. The backyard represented a sense of being unaware or unsuspecting (Goll & Goll, 2006, p. 238). This was an encouragement that my future ministries or work in the church will have a piece connected to it of awakening and preparing other people for what God’s end times plans are, as described in the Bible. The third event was when I was indoors and suddenly had acid on my hands eating away at my skin, was bandaged, and then healed 100%. Being inside the house symbolized the interior condition of my soul. Acid in this context represented the enemy trying to snuff out something that the Lord had planned (Niebergall, 2016b, p. 87). The main point of the dream is an insightful anointing and exhortation for me, with like-minded friends, to ask God for wisdom, knowledge, and revelation, in a search for understanding surrounding God’s end time plans regarding Jerusalem, and then bring awareness and alignment to ministries in the Church, based on God’s revelatory truth. The enemy will try to snuff out this exhortation and call on my life through lies and accusations, which will target my soul. If I persevere in obedience, God will sustain me and heal my interior wounds, by His grace. Linking the interpretation of this God-given dream with the “calling dream” that God gave me, shows the connection of needing to prepare the next generation with the discovered truths that God exhorted me to search out from this end time dream.
Direction Dream

On August 2, 2010, I dreamt and recorded the following in my journal:

I was doing a type of ministry work and my family and I were camping. I feel Moses had some type of prominent role or influence in my actions at the beginning of the dream. My dream was focused on the end times. It had a dreadful feel to it. I am overwhelmed with sorrow, even to tears now as I write. The feeling I had in my dream was that I was up early in the morning and I felt that something certain was going to happen that day. Not that Jesus was going to come back, that is not what I felt, but that the end was going to come at 8am. I was ready with a literal, holy expectation that something definite was going to happen. I was ready for it, and to demonstrate my readiness I set up four baseball bats in the grass arranged like a square, with overlapping sides. I told my dad that “it” was going to happen today. I expected my skin to melt off as I was transformed at the appointed time. . . . As I walked around where this was taking place, I saw a young man I had been a type of mentor to. He was crying in the bushes, but I did not know why. I had developed some of his pictures for him and I tried to cheer him up by saying that I would go get them and give them to him, so I went and got them.

It was 7:53 a.m. at this point. I brought the pictures to him and I gave them to him. He smiled. At this moment, I was naked standing with my clothes in my hand covering my front. As I was talking to him I looked out of the window to my left, and I saw the sky was tumultuous and black with lightning coming from heaven and a great wind spiraling upward from the earth. I said, “It is happening!” and ran outside the church building we were in (now wearing clothes again). As I was outside, I saw people in a frenzy, running, screaming. I saw people being sucked up into the dark, dark cloud,
and I saw a friend weeping his heart out as he stayed on the earth as a believer. I told those who were unbelievers but had not yet been pulled into the cloud to come into the church, and a believer stopped me and said, “Bryan, it’s too late!” And then I mourned with deep agony for my friend I was a mentor to and yelled, “Why didn’t I tell him?! Why didn’t I tell him?!” I was overwhelmed with grief, knowing that when he was crying I now realized that he needed a spiritual answer, Jesus, not a temporary physical healing or pleasure.

At this point all the unbelievers had been removed. I entered a solemn assembly of about ten where we all had roles to play, and I was told to fulfill [a student’s] role. I was not listening as I was told this, but realized it later. Once everyone was told what they were to say at the appointed time, we began. It was as if we were reading out some type of judgemental decrees upon the unbelievers. Everyone took their turn stating what they were to say. I missed what I was supposed to say because I was not listening earlier.

At this time I envisioned a train full of those who had been taken; they were sitting straight faced, with a kind of black rectangle that encased their eyes. The train was going downhill. At this point, I was briefly scolded for not knowing my lines and the group was told we would come back and do it again tomorrow as if this was a rehearsal of some type. Then I awoke. (pp. 12-14)

A direction dream brings clear direction from God. Although this particular dream appears to have heavy end time implications, I explain it as a direction dream because of the following illumination by Goll and Goll (2006):

Directive dreams often contain a higher level of revelation and are obviously very prophetic in nature. Often frequently they will convey a distinct sense of urgency. Their
purpose is to give specific guidance, which may even include warnings of some kind. . . . Sometimes, directive dreams will fill us with a desire for some spiritual quality or dimension that we do not yet possess and inspire us to begin pursuing it. Ultimately, dreams of direction serve to help us get farther down the road toward fulfilling our destiny and purpose, showing us signposts and helping us avoid pitfalls along the way. (p. 106)

I strongly felt the deep emotion in my spirit of the sense of urgency in the dream, and the signposts were clearly warning me that I was not ready for what God wants me to get ready for. Therefore, the dream did inspire me with a godly desire to pursue understanding of my God-given destiny and purpose, and God’s wise and magnificent plan, rooted in the scriptures, to see all people come to salvation in Jesus Christ before the appointed time of the end of this age. A distinct encouragement for me was to be responsible for discipling those with whom I am in a relationship. The servant leader theory is rooted in the value of relational interactions that are encompassed with care and compassion (Cerit, 2009, p. 607; Hansel, 1987, p. 161; Sultan & van de Bunt-Kokhuis, 2014, p. 2). Servant leaders take responsibility for teaching and training their followers with integrity and strong ethics (Grothaus, 2004, p. 229; Stewart, 2012, p. 235; Taylor et al., 2007, p. 406), and I believe the Lord was strengthening my resolve to grow my character, stay focused on people’s value when serving them, and always keep the larger vision in sight while leading others toward it.

Pharaoh was given a direction dream, which Joseph interpreted by the Spirit of God to help Pharaoh understand what God was communicating, in order to instruct him how to lead his Kingdom (Niebergall, 2016b, p. 52). The story is found in Genesis 41:1-7 where it is recorded that Pharaoh had two different dreams in the same night that had the same meaning. There were
going to be seven years of great abundance in Egypt and then famine would ravage the land for seven years (Genesis 41:29-30). “The reason the dream was given to Pharaoh in two forms is that the matter has been firmly decided by God, and God will do it soon” (Genesis 41:32), and Joseph suggested a wise plan for preparing for the famine. The dream was given to Pharaoh by God’s grace, in order to alert him and give him direction and instruction how to prepare for what was coming. I believe that God gave me this dream for similar reasons, although I understand my dream to be largely for personal direction.

The main symbols in the dream gave me insight into what God was doing in my heart. I was naked at one point in the dream. In a powerful verse related to being ready for His return Jesus declared, “Look! I come like a thief! Blessed is the one who stays awake and remains clothed, so as not to go naked and be shamefully exposed” (Revelation 16:15). Being naked in the dream symbolized my need to become vulnerable and allow the truth of God to flow through my soul rather than the impure thoughts of the flesh that are rooted in self-justification (Goll & Goll, 2006, p. 232; Niebergall, 2016b, p. 123). At the end of the dream, I did not know my lines and it was indicated that it was a rehearsal; therefore, when the real event happens, I need to be ready with the holy words of God on my lips. The fact that I replaced or shared a seat with a student from the school that I work at again linked the dream and its events to my calling to minister and work with students and the younger generation.

In the dream, I looked to my left, which conveys a spiritual change is needed, where God’s strength and understanding is exchanged for the weakness and mind of man (Goll & Goll, 2006, p. 238). At the beginning of the dream, I expected my skin to melt off at the appointed time, which does not sound enjoyable; therefore, it represented “the enemy trying to snuff out something that the Lord has planned” (Niebergall, 2016b, p. 87). There were four baseball bats
and ten people in the meeting at the end. Similar to the last dream, the number 4 represented specific spiritual seasons or eras (Goll, 2012, p. 135) where worldwide wholeness was being attained through a refining process. The number 10 highlighted God’s Law and divine order through the government of His Kingdom (Exodus 20; Goll, 2012, p. 137). God is lovingly serious about His desire to make the earth completely righteous and just; therefore, He is continually revealing Himself and inviting people to trust Him through a saving relationship with Jesus Christ. However, there are real judgemental decrees that the Holy Father in heaven will carry out to remove everything that hinders love on this planet, in order to prepare the people and all of creation for the physical habitation of heaven on earth under the leadership of the King of kings.

The prophet Habakkuk declared, “The revelation awaits an appointed time; it speaks of the end and will not prove false. Though it linger, wait for it; it will certainly come and will not delay” (Habakkuk 2:3). God revealed to David, “When I select an appointed time, it is I who judge with equity” (Psalm 75:2), and to Daniel, “Some of the wise will stumble so that they may be refined, purified and made spotless until the time of the end, for it will still come at the appointed time” (Daniel 11:35). Jesus prophesied about the relational hostility and breakdown that will come in society right before He returns to restore and renew the earth with those who receive Him as the Son of God (Luke 21:16-19; Matthew 24:9-13). The signs in the sky of the turbulent dark clouds are highlighted multiple times in the scriptures pertaining to the worldwide shaking that God will bring to the earth before Jesus returns. Jesus said,

Immediately after the distress of those days, “the sun will be darkened and the moon will not give its light, the stars will fall from the sky and the heavenly bodies will be shaken.” Then will appear the sign of the Son of Man in heaven. And then all the peoples of the
earth will mourn when they see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven, with power and great glory. (Matthew 24:29-30)

The scriptures are very clear what events will happen, and how people can prepare before Jesus returns.

It is a good thing that Jesus is returning; however, people need understanding in order to come into agreement with God the Father’s plan and perspective so that they can trust His goodness in the midst of chaos. The train that was descending with people who had black rectangles over their eyes was the solemn warning and reality that people who are blinded spiritually by sin and the spirit of death (Goll, 2012, p. 133), and who do not repent and turn to Jesus, will unequivocally be on a continuous path down to hades (Goll, 2012, p. 131; Luke 10:15). The main emotion that I felt during, and after, the dream was the sorrowful weightiness of not being prepared with the messages of God in my heart and on my lips. I need to grow in understanding and trust that God’s plan is wise and good, even when circumstances are detrimental.

The significance of the times of 7:53 and 8:00 a.m. in the dream signified completion and fulfillment (number 7) and new beginnings (number 8); however, there is a scriptural reference for the number 53. Sometimes a specific scripture verse is hidden among the interpretation; therefore, after having searched for chapter “7’s” in the scriptures that have a verse 53 associated with it, I found one that carried the fear of the Lord with it in the context of my dream. Luke, the author of the book of Acts in the Bible, recorded the testimony of Stephen, the martyr, who testified in front of the Jewish high priest, teachers of the law, and members of the Sanhedrin what God was doing on the earth, before they stoned him for his declarations.
The Sanhedrin was an assembly or council made up of 70 men plus the high priest, which made up the supreme court of ancient Israel. Nearing the pinnacle of his faithful testimony of Christ, Stephen, full of the wisdom of the Holy Spirit, proclaimed before them,

The Most High does not live in houses made by human hands. As the prophet says: “Heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool. What kind of house will you build for me? says the Lord. Or where will my resting place be? Has not my hand made all these things?” You stiff-necked people! Your hearts and ears are still not circumcised. You are just like your ancestors: You always resist the Holy Spirit! Was there ever a prophet your ancestors did not persecute? They even killed those who predicted the coming of the Righteous One. And now you have betrayed and murdered him, you who have received the law that was given through angels but have not obeyed it. When the members of the Sanhedrin heard this, they were furious and gnashed their teeth at him.

But Stephen, full of the Holy Spirit, looked up to heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God. “Look,” he said, “I see heaven open and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God.” At this they covered their ears and, yelling at the top of their voices, they all rushed at him, dragged him out of the city and began to stone him. (Acts 7:48-58a, emphasis added)

I must take the emphasized phrase, verse 53, and apply it to my own life with the same intensity and urgency as Stephen had. I now understand that there is a high calling for me to obey what God has already revealed in His written Word. I need to prepare myself with a spirit of understanding and obedience to be ready to faithfully and lovingly announce what I hear God saying and do what I see God doing. The direct link of the court-like assembly in my dream to the legal council of the Sanhedrin is remarkable and divinely orchestrated. The potency of the
revelation that God showed me in my dream that a student, who represented the next generation, was in a governmental role of agreeing with the righteous and loving judgements of God, astounds and awakens me to the solemn and approaching activity of God. My heart is set to be a man who never stops learning and leaning on the mercy and grace of God, in order that I may walk worthy in faithful obedience for my God, despite my shortcomings. I am thankful for such a directive dream.

**Warning Dream**

Before going to sleep on January 24, 2011, I asked the Lord to give me dreams and visions in my sleep. I woke up at 2:45 a.m. having dreamt the following:

I was walking outside of a hotel where there was an alumni celebration for Providence [College] students. I was a Prov student but unaware of the party. I saw a few old friends and went and gave them hugs. The next scene is inside the bedroom I had as a child, it overlooks the front yard. I was sharing a bed with a friend from the Prov group. He and I had our backs to each other and were both adults (nothing sexual was there, I do not know why we were in the same bed). I think my wife was in the dream, also.

I awoke [in my dream] to my dad coming into the room, keeping the light off, instructing us to be quiet, and he started to peek out the blinds to the front yard – where there is a gravel service road and then a highway. There was an angry mob or gang or group of young guys terrorizing the neighbourhood. They were so close I could hear them swearing and laughing and threatening in a menacing manner. I immediately started praying against it, while in the bed still, in Jesus’ Name. My friend, however, had no spiritual response. Outside, a car was driving wildly on the grass of the front yard.
closer to the gravel road. There were guys throwing stuff and yelling at cars passing by, and one hooligan had a huge sniper rifle and was targeting our bedroom window.

At that time, for some reason to benefit our safety and chance of survival, we had to go outside and leave my car keys inside a car out on the gravel road. All I remember is a group of 4 or 5 of us returning after doing it. We were running single file, and the sniper was watching us and was waiting for me to leave my hiding spot by the side of the house. Everyone else had left to go back inside, but I had to run across the front of the house and enter the front door. I looked at the sniper and hid again, and then I ran, I ran, but every time he shot I was able to duck, until I got to the door, when I was shot in the chest. But as soon as I opened the front door to enter and call for help, I got a second chance. Like a movie, a second clip, I was outside again and was almost at the front door. This time, when the sniper shot, I ducked and the bullet hit the door and I entered safely. There was an explosion outside and people went flying everywhere. Then I awoke. (Schroeder, January 25, 2011, pp. 37-38)

God gives these types of dreams to warn people of the enemy’s tactics, and to prepare people for coming circumstances. Insight is often given through these types of dreams for people to pray about specific things, to position themselves to be aligned with God’s will, or to receive God’s kindness, in order to receive God’s promises even in the midst of opposition (Niebergall, 2016b, pp. 49-50). These are good reasons to pay attention to what is happening around us and to be aware of potential spiritual opposition with upcoming events and situations, not in a fearful manner, but with a prepared, steadfast, and confidently humble posture. Goll and Goll (2006) described these dreams as inspiring and motivating so that we –
get up and do something for Jesus’ sake. . . . [They] also reveal an accurate, detailed picture of what is going on behind the scenes, especially in the demonic realm. This revelation is for the purpose of challenging us to take action about what we have seen.

Take courage and act! (p. 105)

The reason why this was a warning dream for me as a young vice principal at a Christian school was that I was still teaching 75% of the time as the grade 7/8 homeroom teacher. I had planned the annual retreat for the students to go to a camp nearby on Thursday, January 27, and Friday, January 28. I had this warning dream two days before leaving for the retreat. Certain events of the retreat created backlash from parents who were very conservative in their biblical beliefs, and who also donated large sums of money to the school regularly. One of those parents was on the retreat as a chaperone. I had also invited four adults to the retreat to lead worship and prayer, and the teaching sessions. There was also another teacher and an educational assistant.

The controversy revolved around the adults praying in tongues and singing songs of worship that the parents thought were not doctrinal according to the scriptures. The songs were very focused on walking in intimate friendship with Jesus, rather than “make me a better person God” types of songs. This created unrest, discomfort, and very vocal disagreement after the retreat, when I met with the principal and the parents who were upset. They wanted to know if this would be the “doctrinal direction” of the school in the future as I moved into the principal role.

It is clear that God gave me this warning dream to prepare and position myself in the midst of spiritual opposition, because “our struggle is not against flesh and blood [people], but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil” (Ephesians 6:12). Niebergall (2016b) described that God warns us, “because He cares about keeping us in accordance with His will. As a Friend, He guides us,
bringing clarity to our path, that we may experience the fullness of the adventure that He has set before us” (p. 52). God was graciously giving me insight into the demonic realm and what the enemy’s tactics were, and also showing me part of the divine purpose to the spiritual growth that took place in students’ hearts, for God’s glory. Jacobs (1995) clarified my feelings, “I am convinced God often tries to warn of disasters through dreams, but His people do not always understand what to do with the information in such dreams” (p. 211). Many biblical characters displayed this reality when God gave warning dreams (Matthew 2; Genesis 40; Daniel 2). As it were, after a few weeks when things calmed down I realized the clear connection between the God-given warning dream and the controversy among the parents.

Connecting the symbols in the dream to each other and the context provides clear interpretation to an intense warning dream. The hotel signified a temporary season or circumstance, the school highlighted testing from the Lord and a season of training in my life, and the character of my friend in the bed revealed something about me (Goll & Goll, 2006, p. 229; Niebergall, 2016b, pp. 114, 131). Just as my friend did not respond to the activity in the dream or the targeted attack that occurred, a few days later I acquiesced when confronted by the parents and the principal (I was vice-principal at the time). The bed and bedroom represented an intimate walk with the Lord, my father resembled the protecting presence of God the Father through it all, and the front yard clearly represented the present and immediate timeframe in my life (Druckenmiller, 1999, p. 146; Goll & Goll, 2006, pp. 226, 228, 237; Niebergall, 2016b, pp. 92, 107). The missional significance of needing to deliver the keys to a car outside signified the necessary authority, wisdom, and power to unlock and activate a person (me) and a ministry in the Kingdom of God that was currently locked under the stronghold of the enemy’s power and authority, which was represented symbolically by the gun in the dream (Goll & Goll, 2006, pp.
The keys could unlock something in the Kingdom of light and lock up something in the kingdom of darkness. The ministering to students at the retreat was done in love, with an emphasis on walking in intimate friendship with Jesus. The practice of speaking in tongues was used, as the apostle Paul did, to edify oneself and speak mysteries to God, in order to declare the wonders of God and strengthen people through the prophetic activity of the Holy Spirit.

**Split Dream**

On April 22, 2012, I dreamt the following:

I was on a [school] bus with grade 7/8 students and my family, and we were heading to this house. I did not recognize it but I knew a witch lived inside. The main event inside the house was the witch took a large hook, in the spirit, and put it through Amanda’s [my wife] head. As soon as I realized what was going on I prayed against the witch and her actions and then gained more power by praying in tongues, kept doing it and grabbed the spiritual hook and took it out of Amanda by taking authority over the witch in Jesus’ Name. In the process, I somehow gained the understanding that to save my family I would need to sacrifice myself to this witch. So I entered another room and started painting the outline of a cross on the wall, marking where the three nails will go for my crucifixion, fully believing I was giving up my life right then and there. Then it dawned on me that I did not need to succumb to the lie or deception that I needed to sacrifice my life under the direction of this witch; I rather needed to surrender to Jesus and stand upon the power and truth of his death, sacrifice, and resurrection. As I realized this, I kneeled before the cross I painted in submission, peace, and confident victory. Then I awoke. (pp. 127-128)
As God was speaking to me through the first part of the dream where Amanda experienced deliverance, the enemy tried to interject and thwart the activity and voice of God, by sowing deception and fear, so that I would not receive God’s message through the dream (Niebergall, 2016b, p. 39). However, by God’s grace, He removed the lie that was creeping into my mind in the dream, and solidified the truth of Jesus being the Way, Truth, and Life, and His death and resurrection being the only way to salvation. That is a split dream according to Niebergall.

The first part of the dream clearly established the authority of God being released through me when I was praying in tongues and taking authority over the witch, in the Name of Jesus. Praying in the Spirit (tongues) is mentioned in the scriptures as part of the believer’s weaponry as noted in Paul’s list of the armour of God (Ephesians 6:18). It disarms the spiritual forces of the kingdom of darkness and proclaims the Name and wonders of the living God (Acts 2:11). I had just received the gift of speaking in tongues and was practicing it at home in my devotional time with Jesus, but was hearing the devil taunting me about how dumb I sounded, and that it has no power in it, and then God gave me this dream. His confirmation strengthened my faith and resolve to press into the practice of praying in tongues so that I can know Jesus more and see His Kingdom go forth in victorious power, love, and freedom. Goll and Goll (2006) helped me to understand the broader purpose of my dream when they taught that these types of dreams – relate to your metron or sphere of influence. Sometimes these dreams will be used to call you to something but not fully release or commission you into it yet either. In this case, think of the dreams as part of your learning curve, your training in your spiritual vocabulary. They are God’s teasers to help you get farther down the road. He shows you a glimpse of what lies ahead in order to whet your appetite and inspire you to continue pressing forward. (p. 103)
The hook portrayed a trap from the enemy in the form of a spirit of manipulation, which was shown by the witch putting the hook through Amanda’s head. God revealed a specific mentality that the enemy was trying to deceive her with (Niebergall, 2016b, pp. 113, 114). The house represented the interior condition of my soul; therefore, the Holy Spirit highlighted a potential trap from the enemy to be aware of, which usually targets the realm of the mind. It is astounding that there were students in my dream again. It revealed God’s plans and purposes for me in my sphere of influence to minister to and disciple the next generation, particularly through my role as principal. Submitting to the finished work of the cross, salvation by grace alone through Christ alone, is the only way to freedom and deliverance. Witchcraft is a deceptive ploy of the enemy to trick people through the manipulation of their minds, which affects their perspective of salvation. People are incredibly valuable to God and He desires to walk in deep relationship with each person, no matter what good or bad things they have done. God is good.

**Revealing-the-Heart Dreams**

God uses these types of dreams to bring self-disclosure and reveal the heart. They reveal, by God’s grace, where people presently stand with God (Goll & Goll, 2006, p. 108). They provide an insightful snapshot of the heart. Scripture says, “The heart is more deceitful than all else and is desperately sick; who can understand it?” (Jeremiah 17:9); therefore, we need God’s help to show us areas that we need to agree with His perspective and allow Him to shape us. God gives these dreams to show us where we are, what we need to do or what attitude we need to adopt, and walks with us as we allow Him to change us. I have had a few dreams where I am in some type of vehicle and there are one or two specific simple things that happen in the dream, because God appears to be pointing out those one or two items in my life or my heart that He wants to work on.
In one dream, I was driving my car swerving around corners, nearly losing control, because I had only one hand on the wheel and with the other I was taking clean laundry out of the dryer that was installed in the passenger side of my car (Schroeder, July 31, 2011, p. 75). The significance of the laundry being clean revealed that I was discovering greater confidence and beginning to see myself the way that my Heavenly Father sees me (Niebergall, 2016b, p. 118). That interpretation completely aligns with my reality during that time.

On another occasion, I dreamt that I was preparing to use and operate a large farm sprayer on a field, but then the scene changed and I was in the sprayer in my parents’ garage and my dad blocked the exit so that I could not drive the sprayer out of the garage (Schroeder, August 31, 2012, p. 148). The large vehicle likely represented a large ministry that God wants me to be a part of in the future; however, the garage symbolized a set waiting period (Druckenmiller, 1999, p. 147) and I need to be patient and trust my Heavenly Father’s timing. The fascinating thing is that farming in the dream represented that God is working the soil of my heart so that I am ready to faithfully and obediently do what the Lord wants me to do (Niebergall, 2016b, p. 107). The revelation of the waiting period before my heart and character are ready to step into a larger ministry work made sense; therefore, I focused on being faithful with little things in my role as principal.

In a related dream, I was planting seeds in a field by hand, with two friends. We looked up and saw storm clouds rolling in. We walked to the front yard of my parents’ house where I parked the tractor that was pulling a trailer with a large sprayer on (Schroeder, April 8, 2011, p. 51). The seeds represented God’s call for me to be faithful with little tasks, and trust that He was working in my heart (farming) and would bring the rain to cause growth; then the time will come
for a slow but powerful ministry, represented by the tractor (Goll & Goll, 2006, p. 239; Niebergall, 2016b, p. 132) and sprayer.

**Spiritual Warfare Dreams**

God uses these types of dreams to invite people into more prayer, fasting, and worship. He often reveals hindrances through them and inspires us to overcome obstacles in our lives by the love and power of Jesus Christ (Goll & Goll, 2006, pp. 108-109). Paul the apostle explained that we have spiritual enemies (Ephesians 6:12) and the weapons that believers fight with (prayer and God’s Word) have divine power to break down demonic strongholds and demolish Satan’s accusations and pretensions (2 Corinthians 10:4-5). Niebergall (2016b) instructed,

> The Bible tells us that angels and demons are real. Heaven is real. The tangibility of God is real. What God’s Word shares with us about the spirit realm is not a fairy tale, nor should it be treated as such. We are in a constant state of interacting with what occurs in the realm of the spirit, often without us even realizing it. Consequently, there are also times in our dreams when we are interacting with things that are occurring around us in the spirit. (p. 42)

When I had these types of dreams, the Holy Spirit highlighted the power and authority of the Name of Jesus in every dream. He always gave victory with His power and love when I prayed in His Name.

On January 16, 2011, I dreamt the following:

> I drove to a little rundown shed; I think someone was with me. I do not know why we were there. I opened the garage door and immediately sensed three evil spirits. Next, I was up on a hill and two of the spirits took form. I think one was like a man and the other was a bull that turned into a man. They came up to me on the hill and I began
praying against them in Jesus’ Name. Next, we were back in the garage and I was
preaching Jesus to these same two men. We were crying because they turned their lives
over to Jesus. We decided to meet the following week to learn more. (p. 35)

The symbols in the dream give insight into what God was showing me. The hill
represented a test from the Lord and the bull was a symbol of opposition in the spirit realm (Goll
& Goll, 2006, p. 226; Niebergall, 2016b, p. 114). There was not only powerful deliverance for
these men from the accusing and slandering spirits, but also love and discipleship. The garage
revealed a transition that would occur in my life at a point where I would begin to pray more
powerfully. It was a dream that God gave me to call me deeper into prayer during a season of
testing in my life, and show me how He wanted to use me in the future.

On February 16, 2012, I dreamt the following:

I was praying intensely [at the school where I work] for an evil spirit to leave; two
staff members were there, and every time I prayed, it seemed to wear down the spirit and
the one staff member would let me know if the spirit was still there. When I would
command it to go in the Name of Jesus, I would stomp my foot. Finally after praying in
the authority given to me 3 or 4 times, the spirit left and the one staff member confirmed
it. Then there was peace and I woke up. (p. 117)

God highlighted the victorious power and authority that I had in the Name of Jesus, in the sphere
of influence I had at the school where I was principal. He was showing me that I needed to
persist in prayer and He would give me victory. All servant leader principals want peaceful
school environments that foster understanding, empathy, responsibility, a desire to learn, and
academic learning (Herman & Marlowe, 2005, p. 176; Russell, 201, p. 16; Stewart, 2012, p.
234). What they may not realize is that the kingdom of darkness forcefully resists such
environments, therefore the “house needs to be cleansed” through prayer by inviting the life and light of Jesus, His Word, and His Kingdom of light into it. There were two staff members who were witnesses in the dream. Witnesses give testimony to what is true (John 8:17). The number 2 represented unity as well. The stomping of the foot in the dream affirmed the Word of God. Right after Adam and Eve sinned in the Garden of Eden, God revealed His plan to still accomplish His purposes and will for people and through people on the earth. He told the serpent, Satan, that Eve’s offspring “will crush your head, and you will strike his heel” (Genesis 3:15b). God the Father revealed that Jesus, the Son of Man, traced back through the generations as the offspring of Eve, would be the One to overcome and crush Satan in the future.

Paul the apostle declared, “I want you to be wise about what is good, and innocent about what is evil. The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet” (Romans 16:19b-20). It was an admonition for the believers in Rome to choose to love what was good while living in a world that had easy access to evil. It was also a reminder that the God of true peace wins over Satan, and it is people who believe in Jesus Christ, the Son of Man, who conquer Satan, as God ordained back in the garden. Satan will be crushed under the believers’ feet as they partner with Jesus to do things His way in the Kingdom of God, and they will see good overcome evil forever. Niebergall (2016b) noted the symbol of a foot in a dream represented someone moving forward in their calling (p. 108). That idea resonated with me because of who God has destined me to be in conjunction with my calling as a principal at a Christian school. Therefore, the Holy Spirit inspired me to persist in victorious prayer in my calling as the principal of the school, and to conquer spiritual opposition in the Name of Jesus, and see a powerful testimony go forth from the witnessing and agreeing staff members.

On December 14, 2013, I dreamt the following:
Amanda and I were camping at Spruce Woods, but there was a mountain lion and an actual lion hunting us. I was protecting Amanda from the lion, but it snuck up on me and put my head in its teeth. I took authority over it as the creation of Christ, in the Name of Jesus, and commanded it to release me. It did. We fled to the women’s bathroom. The lion followed us in. Next thing I knew, I hit the lion over the head with a hockey stick, broke the hockey stick in two and speared one end through the beast. Then I awoke. (p. 260)

The Word of God says that creation is frustrated and is waiting to be liberated; it even groans as it eagerly waits to be restored through the full consummation of God’s plan (Romans 8:19-22). In other words, the whole created order was significantly affected by sin and death and knows its Creator is the only One who can restore it. The right to exercise dominion over creation was originally given to Adam and Eve by God; however, they gave up their legal right to rule when they sinned and Satan gained the right to rule due to the disobedience of Adam and Eve. Therefore, a perfect man needed to overcome the enemy in order to reclaim the God-given destiny of men and women to once again rule with authority on and over the earth. Jesus of Nazareth, God in the flesh, lived a sinless life on earth (1 Peter 2:22), overcame every temptation (Hebrews 4:15), and willingly met the legal requirements of a righteous and just Heavenly Father, in order to reconcile humanity with God (1 Peter 3:18). Paul wrote for all people to hear and understand,

When you were dead in your sins and in the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made you alive with Christ. He forgave us all our sins, having canceled the charge of our legal indebtedness, which stood against us and condemned us; he has taken it away, nailing it
to the cross. And having disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross. (Colossians 2:13-15)

Satan, and his kingdom of darkness, no longer has the right to exercise dominion over the created order, because Jesus won it back and shares the power and authority to rule with people who believe that He is the Messiah. That is why people can pray in the Name of Jesus and people are healed, the dead are raised, and demons are cast out of those who are oppressed and tormented. Those are signs of the Kingdom of God being released over the kingdom of darkness and bringing freedom to anyone who wants it.

Jesus’ disciples were afraid of the raging seas while He slept in the boat during a storm. They woke Him up and He commanded the stormy waters to be still. The waters obeyed Him. Then He said to His disciples, “‘Why are you so afraid? Do you still have no faith?’ They were terrified and asked each other, ‘Who is this? Even the wind and the waves obey him!’” (Mark 4:40-41). Jesus was not reprimanding them for being afraid during a storm while out on the lake. He was correcting them for not doing what He did. He wanted them to have faith to command the waves and believe that they would see the waves obey their words. Jesus wanted them to learn to exercise their God-given dominion over the created order out of His power and love. The principle is throughout the Old Testament: Moses, Elijah, Elisha, and others spoke to nature, and because their words were in alignment with the will of God, the created order obeyed.

God was showing me in my dream that when the lion, the pursuing beast, had my head in its teeth, I was not to succumb but was rather to take authority over it and command it to release me. I did exactly that and found freedom. This dream greatly encouraged me to have faith that my spoken words can push back the kingdom of darkness and change circumstances that I am in through prayer, fasting, and worship. Jesus taught that if we have faith and do not doubt, then
we can tell the mountain to throw itself into the sea (Matthew 21:21). We can speak to our circumstantial barriers and hurdles and command them to move and be shifted. “The tongue has the power of life and death and those who love it will eat its fruit” (Proverbs 18:21); therefore, God was teaching me to be a man who used and loved the power of words for the purpose of life and love, because that was the fruit that I wanted to see come forth in my life. As for killing the lion with the broken hockey stick, I was protecting my lovely wife with a fierce jealous rage.

Actually, the symbolism in that act of protection referred to David, the empowered shepherd, who tried to convince King Saul to let him go fight Goliath by telling him that when he, David, was a shepherd he killed a lion and bear (1 Samuel 17:35). David explained that if a lion or bear took a sheep, he went after the wild beast, struck it, and if it turned on him he seized it by the hair and killed it. Goliath was defying the Israelite armies of the living God and David’s zeal for God’s chosen nation compelled him to take action. David confidently proclaimed the following prophetic words of life that bore fruit,

Your servant has killed both the lion and the bear; this uncircumcised Philistine will be like one of them, because he has defied the armies of the living God. The Lord who rescued me from the paw of the lion and the paw of the bear will rescue me from the hand of this Philistine. (1 Samuel 17:36-37)

God was clearly building my faith to take an aggressive and zealous stand for the proclamation and demonstration of the Kingdom of Jesus Christ. The battle is not against people as it partially was in David’s day, the battle is against the spiritual forces and powers of the kingdom of darkness. Therefore, I was inspired to be a man after God’s own heart as David was, and use words rooted in faith and love to declare war against anything that hindered love in my life.
Intercession Dream

On June 18, 2012, I woke up at 3:21 a.m. after I dreamt the following:

I was on the front lawn of my parents’ house, it was at night, and I was hitting golf balls around with two of my other brothers. We were closer to the gravel service road then we were to the house. When I looked at my parents’ house, the bedroom I spent the most time in, I could see the light glow brighter and dimmer. I sensed the evil presence that was there. We kept golfing and at one point I found a jackknife and lighter and one other pocket item in the grass closer to the house right by the evergreen tree. I showed my other brothers and immediately thought of my youngest brother, David. I looked at the window and it glowed again and I sensed the heavy demonic presence and started praying against it in the Name of Jesus. As I prayed, “I speak the light, life, and presence of Jesus over you,” it broke, it released and in the spirit, cascades of fireworks exploded from that bedroom window, the bedroom that David spent the most time in, out of all of us boys. The evil presence was cast out and I was full of peace and joy. Then I woke up. (Schroeder, June 18, 2012, p. 135)

Many intercessors receive insight into how God wants them to pray based on the dreams that God gives them (Niebergall, 2016b, p. 45). God draws people into intercession though dreams, to give them a wider scope of what God wants to see happen in a certain people group, city, region, or nation (Goll & Goll, 2006, p. 103; Niebergall, 2016b, p. 47).

The symbols in the dream that provided meaning and the context of it having a focus of intercession for my brother revolved around the bedroom, the pocket items, the remarkable explosion of light that came from the room and the front yard. The front yard represented the present time, which actually propelled me to pray for my brother when I woke up in the middle
of the night. The bedroom represented his relationship with Jesus, which was clearly under attack by the evil presence associated with the bedroom and the light that was glowing brighter and dimmer. The lighter symbolized the glory of God that was used to break off the word curses, represented by the knife, that the enemy was accusing my brother with (Niebergall, 2016b, pp. 117, 119). The positive representation of the knife was the skill and discernment demonstrated in the direction and authority that I proclaimed the life, light, and presence of Jesus toward the bedroom. Daniel was an intercessor while he was in Babylonian captivity. He knew the Word of the Lord and he knew what God’s plan was because he studied the scriptures and agreed in prayer with what God had already proclaimed through the prophet Jeremiah. Daniel studied God’s Word (Daniel 9:2), intently sought God’s face with fasting and prayer (Daniel 9:3), confessed personal and national sins and repented for sinning (Daniel 9:5-14), praised God for His mercy and righteousness (Daniel 9:15-18), and cried out that God would hear his prayers and act (Daniel 9:19). The result was astonishing, because the chapter continues to explain how God sent an angel to speak with Daniel, confirming that his prayers were heard in the heavens, and went on to give Daniel wisdom, understanding, and insight into future events in the Kingdom of God. The power of intercession is underestimated, and I was thankful that God gave me a dream to show the power of focused prayer for someone who God revealed needed prayer.

**Conclusion**

God gave me multiple dreams that strengthened my faith, character, calling, and relationship with Jesus. He answered my prayers of desiring to hear His voice through dreams. The Holy Spirit continually uses these dreams to confirm how much Jesus loves me and cares for me, and how powerful the Name and Person of Jesus really is. The Holy Spirit instructed me,
directed me, corrected me, affirmed me, called me, equipped me, and encouraged me through dreams. Goll (2012) summarized the key focus of this chapter,

Here is the main point: Dreams and visions are wonderful, but our lives are more than just dreams and visions. Our lives are in our Master, Jesus Christ. Someone may reveal true and accurate information and still be a deceptive tool of the enemy to seduce us and draw us in by fascination, and lead us away from Christ. . . . We must always be on guard not to be deceived. After all, we are not following gifts alone; we are following Jesus. Dreams and visions are wonderful, but they must direct us to Jesus. It is Jesus we really want. Let Him be our goal. In all our getting, let us be sure to get Jesus. In all our “seeing,” let’s see Jesus! (p. 139)

The more dreams that God gave me, the more that I understood Jesus’ thoughts and feelings. The persistence of asking the Lord to open my spiritual eyes and speak through dreams led to life-changing revelatory edification (Goll & Goll, 2006, p. 42) that God provided through the calling, end time focused, direction, warning, split, heart revelation, spiritual warfare, and intercession dreams.

God has given me other dreams as well, where I was a student in a classroom (Druckenmiller, 1999, p. 147; Schroeder, May 27, 2012, p. 131; Schroeder, June 30, 2012, p. 136), a teacher in a classroom (Schroeder, June 3, 2012, p. 132), or praying for God’s justice to be released on earth as it is in heaven (Schroeder, July 29, 2010, p. 11). Such dreams affirmed God’s desire for me to grow as a servant leader and take seriously the divine call associated with it, because “leaders are what they say and do” (Taylor et al., 2007, p. 416). God revealed to me many things through dreams to seal His instruction in me and equip me to know how to transform teachers and students by modeling what I desired to see and hear from them. I am
very thankful that God heard my prayers and effectively spoke to me to influence me as a principal. I am humbled that God chose to give me dreams from His fatherly heart and mind, in order to communicate with me and allow me to clearly hear His voice!
CHAPTER VIII
CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

Part One: Inward Implications and Significance to Me as a Principal

My professional life was influenced greatly as God called, encountered, and changed me in my personal life. The transformations caused me to reflect and examine how my thoughts, feelings, and actions were affected as a principal at a Christian school. In this summary chapter, I reveal how my professional assumptions were challenged and my layers of fears and insecurities were penetrated because of my revised thinking. Ellis (2013) referred to this process of autoethnography as a way of being in the world that “requires living consciously, emotionally, and reflexively. It asks that we not only examine our lives but also consider how and why we think, act, and feel as we do. . . . that we interrogate what we think and believe” (p. 10). For each thematic chapter, I summarize below how my personal encounters, as presented in those chapters, influenced my thoughts, feelings, and actions as a principal at a Christian school.

Seeking to Know and Love Jesus Christ Wholeheartedly

Thoughts

My desperate desires for direct delightful dialogue with Jesus influenced my thinking as a principal of a Christian school in a way that caused me to be hungry and ready to learn. The words that I spoke to myself revolved around phrases such as “I will learn to serve and lead like Jesus, “I will learn about leadership and principalship from other people,” and “I will find more wisdom, knowledge, and understanding to do a better job.” I resolved to learn from many other leaders and principals, who worked in religious and non-religious organizations and schools, who would give me an hour or two of their time. As a young and new principal, I did not have much teaching experience and no administrative experience; therefore, I decided that if I could
gain wisdom, knowledge, and understanding from others’ experiences and perspectives, then I could do a better job as a principal. I believed that Jesus had ordained me to be in the principal role, but I wanted to know the specific vision and mission that He wanted me to pursue and complete. I wanted to do things His way as I followed His perfect leadership. I needed to balance that thinking with learning how to fulfil the actual job description that required teacher support and development, communication with parents and board members, adhering to the Public Schools Act and Manitoba Federation of Independent Schools guidelines, planning staff meetings and team building, school goal setting, policy reviewing and writing, student discipline, improving school culture, classroom “walk-throughs,” teacher evaluations, and more. There was a lot to learn, but I was ready and I was willing.

I struggled to know how to make management decisions that brought stability to the school community while fueling my desire to move the school toward becoming a Kingdom of God school that educated and equipped students to live, learn, and love as Jesus did. Jesus’ teaching ministry comprised approximately one-third of His ministry. The other two-thirds of His ministry were devoted to demonstrating to His disciples (students) how to implement His teaching. It appears that He loved to do “Show and Tell.” It is similar to how a classroom teacher conducts a lesson. Adept teachers use engaging pedagogy and various strategies to activate students’ minds so they begin to think freely and analytically about the idea or concept being taught. There must be a time of application after the lesson when the acquired thought or concept is practiced, rehearsed, or experimented with. Students need more than intellectual knowledge; they need experiential, full sensory-engaging “lived” knowledge.

Students learn to think about their thinking and learning when they have the freedom and support to think for themselves, with opportunity to dialogue about others’ lived realities. Freire
(2009) declared, “Education is suffering from narration sickness” (p. 21), because too often students are not given the freedom to ask genuine questions or have the time, resources, and encouragement to discover their own answers. Therefore, their perception of reality becomes fragmented and their cognitive processes remain underdeveloped. Because of my longing to lead without settling into a “maintain and sustain” mode, I became aware that “good schools and educators who think critically are vital, because as students are provided learning opportunities that consist of critical consciousness, they will be empowered to change their reality and have the ability to make a difference in society” (Schroeder, 2014, p. 21). My perception of making a difference in society is for students to be well educated and equipped, and to discover who Jesus is and who He made them to be, so that they can be confident in their identity and grow into their God-ordained destiny in the sphere of society that their interests and passions guide them toward.

**Feelings**

The influence of my personal encounters and desires on my emotions as a principal at a Christian school led me to a place where I felt challenged, hopeful, courageous, inquisitive, and perhaps disillusioned. Feelings come from thoughts; therefore, in my willingness to learn and search for wisdom, perspective, and knowledge, I felt empowered to believe in a God-sized vision for the school. I did not know what it was, though. As I kept learning, I felt peaceful, until I experienced confrontation from various people in the school community. I remained optimistic and I learned how to communicate better and navigate hard conversations. However, I felt doubtful and disillusioned about God calling me to the principal role, and I was confused about how I should think and act. I felt pressure to act how I perceived people wanted me to act. I felt trapped at times in a role with many opinions of how to improve the school, discipline students, and focus more on academics and less on spiritual growth. Servant leaders focus on the
emotional welfare of their followers (Cerit, 2009, p. 603); however, I needed to be healthy emotionally if I were to fulfill that mandate. It was the Word of God that steadied my emotions.

I felt compelled to ensure that Jesus Christ was honoured and His teachings and Spirit were followed, because the school was founded upon the desires of Christian parents to have their children receive a Christian education. I often felt encouraged after reading the diary of the very first day of school in the fall of 1975. The principal at the time read the following from the scriptures:

> Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. These commandments that I give you today are to be on your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. (Deuteronomy 6:4-7)

I often felt peace after reading those verses because they conveyed the most important thing that children needed from loving parents and educators: a rich education based on God’s Word that guides children to use everything they have to love God wholeheartedly.

**Actions**

I was influenced by my personal encounters to take action, as the principal of a Christian school, in order to learn from as many people and resources as effectively and efficiently as possible. I met with leaders for breakfast in the mornings, coffee in the afternoons, and wings in the evenings. I knew some of them from previous relational contexts, and I was respectful of time and personal boundaries. I wanted to gain perspective, wisdom, revelation, understanding of different definitions of leadership, how other principals handled various situations and managed their responsibilities, and which Christian schools in North America were thriving and
why. I also met individually with all of the staff members who were at the school when I
became the principal, in order to build relationships, seek to understand and hear about their
passions and frustrations, and learn how they thought the school could be improved.

My desire to learn compelled me to invest time and energy into learning. It was
consuming me. There were many areas in which I needed to gain understanding, yet not enough
time to delve deeper into the layers of knowledge that wrapped around educational concepts and
the history that embedded them. I started working on my M.Ed. degree in the educational
administration stream in July 2010, and completed nine of the graduate level courses within four
years. I value reflection; therefore, a contributory part of my learning journey was reflection.
On the drive home or when the house was quiet in the evenings, I often reflected on my thoughts,
feelings, and actions from the day’s work. I journaled because I needed an outlet to express the
surging yearnings in my spirit to honour and share everything with Jesus, and also try to keep
perspective of the gap of my current reality to the visionary reality which I desired. I needed
consciousness of my decision making from each day and whether the emotional alerts and
confirmations that I experienced during the day led me to take wise action or not. I trusted God
that He would do His part if I did mine. My part was to serve and honour the people with whom
I interacted during the day, whether they were students, staff or board members, or parents.

I was determined to be faithful and diligent in my role as principal. However, I had
enough perspective and humility to realize that I had much to learn and that this learning would
come with the cycle of action and reflection. I learned the most from experiences when I
struggled in some regard, made mistakes, said things that did not sound like Jesus, and made
decisions that were based out of selfishness and pride. Lessons learned from those hard times
were founded in my practice of reflection, desire to be better, making amends when I caused hurt
and harm, acknowledgement of poor communication skills, and apology for being selfish and proud. The servant leader theoretical framework supports such practices, desires, and efforts of improvement, because it is founded upon characteristics that infiltrate people with an increase of sincere love, vulnerable and honest communication, and a sense of responsibility to others (Buskey, 2014, p. 125; Sultan & van de Bunt-Kokhuis, 2014, p. 1; Taylor et al., 2007, p. 416). I accepted the reality that if I wanted to hear Jesus’ voice and receive wisdom and revelation from Him, I would need continually to acknowledge that there is always more to learn no matter who I speak with, what environment I am in, or what good or bad decisions I make as a principal at a Christian school.

**Fellowshipping with God**

*Thoughts*

My personal encounters while fellowshipping with God considerably influenced my thinking as a principal at a Christian school. I used to hate conflict, because I was terrible at approaching and resolving it. I had much anxiety in the midst of it. When I found myself in conflict, I would listen too long, not say enough, and not set a clear plan of action moving forward. I ended up thinking that people thought that they could do a better job as principal, which caused my anxiety to increase even more. I was insecure. I was too agreeable to fight or be bold and I was too sympathetic to run from the scenario. I struggled to lead, because subconsciously I wanted to please people and make them happy. My thinking changed as Jesus revealed how much He loved me while I fellowshipped with Him.

As I began to see myself as God saw me, I also began to see others more how God saw them. I grew in understanding how God the Father valued me, and that stimulated and motivated me to value other people more, too. I experienced an increase of confidence in the following
thoughts: I am loved, I am free, I can do it, I am doing it, and I have a lot to offer. I now perceived risk taking as a healthy way to grow rather than seeing it as a sure path to impending failure. I started realizing that I do not have or need all the answers in my role. I began to complete my duties with a mindset of serving and loving people, joyfully. I focused on them, rather than on what I wanted. This was a significant step in my journey toward mature servant leadership because I was embracing the core value of the servant leader theory by being a servant first and leader second (Crippen, 2005, p. 12; Russell, 2012, p. 16; Taylor et al., p. 404). I enjoyed them for who they were, because I came to believe that Jesus enjoyed me for who I am. He sees my sincere desires to do my best, despite my imperfections; therefore, I learned to perceive the people similarly with whom I worked. My thinking soon led me to believe wholeheartedly that God really wanted me in the role as principal at the Christian school where I worked.

He wanted me there, learning, trying, growing, and doing my best. I became more thankful. All of these thoughts decreased the pressure I put on myself, helped me to value people more, steered me to focus on serving first, and increased my level of care for the students, parents, and staff members with whom I worked. I was not afraid of conflict, because I became less concerned about being liked and more concerned about understanding the experiences, perspectives, and emotions that others shared with me. I started to value and enjoy people in a way that I never had before. I was thankful that I began to see other people, even those with whom I was in conflict, as God saw them.

I resolved to lead from my heart and not my head. I learned that I thought too much. Perpetual thinking was exhausting. I decided to be more transparent with staff members about my thinking and processing about decisions. I learned to balance this process of vulnerability
and ownership. I accepted the reality that “I am responsible for what happens at the school.” I started saying it out loud when I sensed that I was beginning to avoid a difficult scenario that had arisen. Responsibility and ownership can be burdensome. I became conscious of my unhealthy and negative thinking patterns when I felt pressure to address challenging topics and conversations. As I increased in consciousness of my poor thinking patterns and tendencies to avoid difficult decisions, I chose to become responsible and seek out advisors. They helped me to approach problematic topics and conversations with an assertive and committed mindset. One reason why I was able to make this change in my leadership was because I accepted the reality that I was going to make mistakes and those experiences would be significant avenues of learning. I chose to learn, work extremely hard, and do my best to apply what I learned to new yet similar scenarios. Then I reflected on how I handled situations, and asked for feedback from trusted individuals to see whether I could improve my decision making process for next time. This was a result of my learning to lead with my heart because I became confident that I was loved, and I was to love others in the midst of resolving conflict. I could not make good decisions without honouring people in the process or while being afraid of making a mistake. Therefore, the school community benefited from my leading more from my heart, and less from my head.

My personal encounters provided me with a new steady, peaceful focus each day as principal. I stopped trying so hard and relaxed as I learned not to try to control so much. I set my heart to be holy, to persevere, and to stand for justice. I decided that I would speak the truth in love, and if I could not speak with love, then I would remain silent until I could. I made decisions during those first couple of years as principal that were rooted in fear and insecurities, and I regret things that I said. I became aware of selfish, proud, and immature or unhealthy
thought patterns in my life during my daily reflection and prayer time. Over time, my broader journey of growth revealed that the Holy Spirit was aligning and renewing my thoughts and feelings to reflect those of Jesus Christ. I did my best to apologize quickly and show humility and a willingness to learn and take ownership of my mistakes at work. I learned the power of praising God no matter what mood I was in, because my declarations of God’s goodness and presence helped to change my negative thinking and aided me in grasping positive perspectives and thoughts. I grew in assurance that I had a lot to offer in my role as principal and I would need God’s help. I also realized that I needed more help from those around me to be effective with the strengths, attitude, knowledge, and assets that I had. I was able to breathe deeper and easier as I became secure in who I was, because I was confident that I was valued and loved by Jesus.

**Feelings**

The influence of my personal encounters on my emotions, while fellowshipping with Jesus, led me to a reality where I, as a principal, felt loved, accepted, and desired by God all the time at work. I had peace through many difficult situations, because I was overwhelmingly convinced that Jesus enjoyed and delighted in me no matter what. Jesus is not primarily performance oriented. He is primarily love oriented. He is not lazy, or disillusioned with productivity. He has revealed what the ultimate motivation is. He consistently expresses unconditional love while affirming one’s value and purpose in life, leading him or her to a faithful and obedient lifestyle full of freedom and joy. As I learned about conflict resolution, my feelings of anxiety changed to feelings of assurance that everything was going to be all right, because I started valuing people more than the desire to resolve the issue. I still was determined to resolve the issue; however, the change of focus and mindset led me to feel confidently
peaceful in the midst of the conflict. Everything did not work out as desired, but I learned to enjoy the people who disagreed with me and consequently they continued to interact with me respectfully in the ensuing months. My hope was that they would feel valued and that I was primarily seeking to understand them, rather than primarily seeking to be understood. With that priority, issues resolved effectively and efficiently because of the shared feeling of belonging in a culture of honour. I had more joy at work, because of my increased self-esteem from receiving the powerfully encouraging words of Jesus. With Him cheering me on, I can fail a million times and continue to keep trying, because I feel unconditionally loved.

My personal encounters also influenced my emotions as a principal at a Christian school in a manner that caused me to live with more expectation and anticipation. The focus was faith fueled because God had revealed Himself to me many different times and ways, causing me to start expecting Him to show up at staff meetings, in the classroom, and during Parent Student Teacher Conferences. What I mean is that I felt more comfortable talking about Him and proclaiming the Kingdom of God reality that Jesus wants to see demonstrated in the school culture. I wanted the Spirit of Christ to be present in every conversation, every classroom lesson, and every interaction between students. School culture is a significant factor in student and staff members’ lives, and it can be affected positively through servant leadership. Servant leadership affects school culture positively by increasing self-efficacy among staff members when principals model behaviour that builds trust and reinforces their verbal commitments to staff members (Cerit, 2009, pp. 602, 614). The students and staff members also influence school culture when they ask for God’s Kingdom to come daily. This happens every time that we say the Lord’s Prayer at school. I believe that God is answering those prayers. I became more
excited to see prayers answered, people honoured, and faith increased because of a higher degree of anticipation of the activity of the Holy Spirit at school.

I also felt invigorated to invest differently into the students and staff members at school. If God had called me to the role as principal at a Christian school and given me so many powerful personal encounters, I needed to be ready to lovingly demonstrate how I had grown and what I had learned. I received much revelation and knowledge so that I could grow in my relationship with Jesus and fall in love with Him; however, He always showed compassion and made time for people so that they could learn from Him and be set free. I wanted to do the same. I am zealous to see students believe that Jesus is real and that they can know Him, not just know about Him. I am driven to see a generation of pure and passionate men and women arise with spirits that are alive, minds that are inspired, and character shaped liked Christ’s. I will give away everything that I have received so that our society can be influenced by young people who are confident in who Jesus is, and confident in who they are in Christ.

Actions

My personal encounters influenced my actions as a principal at a Christian school in a way that led me to take more responsibility. I now took initiative more often and engaged in conversations about decisions sooner as I became more vulnerable and collaborative. I disciplined students differently, because I had more patience and faith regarding what God was doing in their lives. I was also able to make decisions confidently and hopefully more in line with God’s will, as I walked closer with Him. I began to embrace Jesus’ leadership style by using a team approach to accomplish the larger vision, as committed servant leaders do, by increasing empowerment activities and problem-based projects that staff members, parents, and students could work together on (Taylor et al., 2007, p. 416). School communities are improved
by staff members who are impacted by the servant leadership of principals, because everyone in
the school community desires growth, healthy relationships, and unity (Schroeder, 2016, p. 17),
which are byproducts of servant leadership (Russell, 2012, p. 16; Sultan & van de Bunt-Kohuis,
2014, p. 3). I grew as a servant leader because of my increased feelings and thoughts of being
fully valued and loved by Jesus; I did not let problems bother me as much whether they were
small or large. I still thought and prayed about them, and continued to seek out advisors on
different issues; however, those issues did not drain me emotionally and mentally as they used
to. I attribute that change to my prayer times at home and times of meditation on God’s Word. I
was essentially able to transfer my worries and anxieties to God and focus on being me,
honouring people, and taking action on concerns that mattered.

I invested more effort into relationships. That did not always translate as more time
invested, but it did mean a concentrated effort to seek to understand the other person’s heart and
perspective as he or she shared with me, and I empathized with him or her. I became less
concerned with my schedule and things to do list, although I was attentive to it, and tried to
invest in genuine conversations to show people I cared and they were valued. This attitude
applied to staff and board members, students, parents, guests, and visitors. Another relational
investment that I pursued was one of honouring Jesus at work. I cherished the times that
students and staff members could pray and worship at school, and I believe that it changed the
spiritual atmosphere in and around the school. I believed that the Holy Spirit was in me and
leading me; therefore, I tried to obey Jesus by responding quicker without hesitation when I felt
the Holy Spirit prompting me. This usually translated as God helping me give my attention to
what needed it, whether it was returning a phone call, following up with a teacher, disciplining a
student, or calling a parent. God helped me to be divinely diligent.
Receiving Prophetic Ministry

Thoughts

My personal encounters while receiving prophetic ministry influenced my thinking as a principal at a Christian school in many ways. It is difficult to do a job well without having much hope, peace, or joy. I was stretched when I transitioned from working as a teacher to a principal. As a teacher, I basically was responsible for the students in my classroom. My attention was on teaching and I was focused on meeting the needs and the challenges of the students that I had for each school year. I found it fairly easy to discipline students, manage a classroom, and engage learners in a lesson. Transitioning into the role of principal brought a completely different job description. I did not know what to put on my “things to do list” or in what order. I had a few ideas, a familiar context to work within, and relationships with the teachers, since I became the principal at the school that I had previously taught at. However, it was overwhelming because of the new territory and the discovered expanse of responsibilities that came with being the principal. Hope, peace, and joy would vanish fairly quickly during the day’s activities, until I started receiving prophetic ministry.

I began to think differently when I received prophetic ministry. Essentially, I absorbed some of God’s thoughts and feelings about me to replace my dark, weak, selfish, and proud thoughts that I had while at work, particularly when facing conflict with colleagues. Therefore, I became filled with more hope and prepared differently for staff and parent meetings as I became more optimistic. I saw people differently. The challenging situations used to drain me emotionally and mentally, and I found it difficult to re-energize. The struggle was healthy, but what helped was going to the weekly worship evening and receiving prayer and prophetic ministry at the end of it. I always left encouraged, because God’s thoughts and feelings about
me were often revealed to me. I was renewed with hope and desire to do my best in the principal role and be diligent in the little things at school. I chose to equip myself with a hope-filled thought life and share it with others. As I interacted with students or parents, I would listen and encourage them with simple phrases before the conversation ended. I wanted to show them that I cared about them, and I tried to make their day better and leave them feeling hopeful. Thoughts that were fueled and filled by hope strengthened my resolve to “make tomorrow better than today.” My will engaged more effectively and assertively as I prepared for conversations that needed hope infused into them.

The more perspective I had, the more peace I had. As the lens broadens, often so does understanding. I needed strength and peace to gain perspective, and I needed perspective to gain strength and peace. I never give up on people; however, I learned that sometimes people need space before there can be a reconvening. People were always my focus, not programs; therefore, I was often trying to serve people and invest into them without being intrusive. It was by receiving prophetic ministry that I gained a better or different perspective – often of myself or of God – and eventually of others or a situation, too. I was strengthened with peace in my spirit, which translated into thoughts that held less contoured forms that I was trying to fit others into. Instead, I sought to understand sooner than I sought to be understood. I started caring less about results and productivity, and more about people, which inevitably led to better results and productivity with other supporting factors. It is a matter of one’s value system and capacity to draw competently and unconsciously from that value system. Thoughts that were consumed and directed by a peaceful soul strengthened my resolve to make tomorrow better than today, regardless of the circumstance. When I was at peace, I could think clearer and be more effective at work because of the increased perspective that I had gained.
Joy has many definitions and interpretations. I believe that it is proportionate to peace. It is difficult to truly have one without the other. Joy bleeds contentment and an acknowledging of the reality of what one can and cannot change. I discovered that I could change myself. I had to figure out who I was as a principal, and grow as a leader in that role so that wisdom, knowledge, and instruction could support my educational endeavours with the staff members at school, and enhance a culture of honour as well. The tasks of prioritizing students’ needs, safety protocol, teacher support and development, communication with parents, meeting governmental requirements, and more, led to more questions than answers in the first couple of years of being the principal. I made a lot of phone calls and met with other principals and former administrators, in order to learn how to do things well and perhaps differently than what my first approach may have been. At times I was left feeling unsure, particularly if there were multiple large tasks that needed attention simultaneously. Receiving prophetic ministry at prayer and worship nights enabled me to receive divine affirmation that I was learning and leading right where God wanted me to be. The joy I received from such affirmation brought me freedom and confidence, which overflowed into my working as a servant leader to improve what I could at school.

God was revealing His destiny and calling to me. Sometimes someone would share something with me after praying for me that I had never thought of. That was the beauty of it. God loves to disclose His thoughts and His ways and will to me, because mine are often foreign to His. I still have to choose whether I do it His way or mine. Thoughts that were saturated and inspired with joy strengthened my resolve not to take life too seriously and to do my best to make tomorrow better than today. As I listened, prayed, and thought about what was shared with
me, I was strengthened with comfort, joy, and affirmation that I was called by God to uphold Kingdom of God views and values while serving as the principal at a Christian school.

**Feelings**

Feeling hopeful is as life giving to the soul as oxygen is to the body. My personal encounters of receiving prophetic ministry influenced my emotions as a principal in a way that I felt hope in every dire situation. The hope I felt allowed me to see past the outward bad behaviour of students and focus on the inward causes and workings of the student. I envisioned a prosperous hope and future for each student differently now than I had in the past. The Word of the Lord says, “For I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord, plans to give you hope and a future” (Jeremiah 29:11). I saw people differently when God’s powerful hope in my life became stronger, deeper, and fuller. The hope that I felt was secure; therefore, I also felt secure when I had a circumstantial storm swirling around me.

Feeling constant peace enabled me to maintain a soft heart. When I felt like I was in competition or needing to meet certain performance standards as a principal, my natural tendency in the past had been to become hardened and ready to fight, so to speak. It led to harsh words, damaged relationships, and bad decisions. Feeling God’s deep peace increased my ability to keep perspective and remain calm and alert in situations that were more intense. As a result, I was more conscious and competent, thereby leading to better decision making and upholding honour in relationships in the midst of processing sensitive information and making difficult decisions.

Feeling joy brought contentment and freedom. I was happy to work with staff members who were different than I, because I knew that we would do a better job together. I had to learn how to communicate expectations to staff members without sounding authoritarian. The more I
caringly invested into relationships with staff members and demonstrated genuine respect and encouragement, the more I became a servant leader and maintained a healthy school environment (Cerit, 2009, p. 613; Taylor et al., 2007, p. 409). I focused on our mission statement as a school, and emphasized the end product that we wanted to see as students graduated from grade 8. Being joy-filled helped me laugh at my own mistakes and not come down harshly on others who also made mistakes. I loved seeing the students every day and I still continued to teach a couple of classes each year while serving as principal. I learned that Jesus’ joy is contagious and the more of it that I received, the more that I shared; therefore, facing each day with an overflow of joy increased my effectiveness as principal.

**Actions**

My personal encounters of receiving prophetic ministry influenced my actions because of the hope, peace, and joy that was fueling my thriving attitude in everything that I did at work. A principal of a small Christian school needs to be visible to staff members, parents, and students; however, it is easy to hide and avoid people. With an unending inflow of hope, peace, and joy into my soul by the Spirit of God in my personal life, I changed as a principal from unconsciously avoiding people, to consciously avoiding people, to consciously approaching people with a proactive mindset. The pits of anxiety which I had fallen into in the past were filled with hope, peace, and joy, and consequently I could love people better now and choose to be visible and confidently take initiative even when people disagreed with me. This change in my actions was fruitful for the school because honour was maintained in relationships, which still communicated that those people were welcome and that I did not see them as outcasts or less than me in any way. I was still able to invest into those relationships because of Christ’s investment of hope, peace, and joy into me.
As Jesus revealed and affirmed His calling on my life through prophetic ministry, the hope, peace, and joy that flooded me strengthened my faith as a principal at a Christian school to step into the invitation of who Jesus said I was. As a result, I spoke with more boldness. That was direct fruit of growing in assurance of God’s declarations into my life. I naturally was not a bold person. I did not become bold until I was supernaturally filled with God’s characteristics and led by His Spirit, in order to strengthen and encourage those whom I was called to serve and lead. There is a strong connection between how Jesus was leading me by providing me with what I needed and how Taylor et al. (2007), described a servant leader as someone with “an action-oriented state of mind that compels [them] to provide followers with what the followers need in order that the followers might be able to do what needs to be done” (p. 405). It was exciting to see that as my heart became tenderized and as I started to care more about people at work and what mattered to them, I was able to speak with greater boldness and grace into their lives.

As I was filled with hope, peace, and joy, I was able to give them away graciously. What surprised me was how this translated into my trusting people more. I stopped caring so much about the little details and trying to control outcomes that staff members were responsible for, and I started encouraging staff members to make more decisions and take initiative in various areas. It was freeing. I increased accountability, but only where I felt it was needed based on the given factors for each individual scenario, unless there was a formal process such as an official evaluation. It was exciting to experience Jesus confirm that He had called me to serve as principal at this Christian school, to lead the way of educating and equipping students with Kingdom of God views and values.
Dreams from God

*Thoughts*

My personal encounters and dream interpretations influenced my thinking as a principal at a Christian school. God was interweaving my personal life with my professional life by having students and staff members appear in my dreams with apparently very clear, detailed, and specific intentions from heaven. Dreams from God caused me to think differently about my work and while at work. I believed that “God’s eyes were on me” and that was a good thing. It motivated me, with spiritual understanding, to invest into student and staff members’ lives by serving them, believing that I was eternally investing into them. I resolved to make an eternal difference in people’s lives while at work; however, I learned that it would come by serving them, not ruling over them. I chose to trust and obey Jesus. That sounds like a pleasant cliché, but it is rather difficult when I instinctively did things my way. I learned to go slower. God was not in a hurry; therefore, I did not need to be in one either. I relaxed, decided to give my burdens continually to Christ, and to simply love people. I chose to be more deliberate in my partnership with teachers to shepherd and disciple students as they learned at school. My vision of believing in the potential of students expanded, as my faith was strengthened by the dreams that God gave me.

The construction of my worldview regarding the future, through the eyes of a principal at a Christian school, was being built upon as the Lord sealed my instruction through dreams. God had graciously given me glimpses of what lay ahead and I took it upon myself to pay attention to the signposts and possible pitfalls ahead, in order to prepare the next generation. I was inspired as God trained me and I believed that I needed to equip students in a way that ensured the relevancy and interdependency of spiritual learning alongside academic learning at our Christian
school. Part of that training of students was to help them understand and live as the great men and women of faith in the Bible lived. Men and women who were highly educated in literature, language, history, and cultural development among the nations, such as Paul, Daniel, and Esther, were inspirational in this regard. I do my best to model a victorious life in Christ that is filled with His power and love as I lead at school. I now train students to hear God’s voice at school and help them to recognize God’s leading and calling on their own lives. They also need to learn how to speak about their faith as they integrate it into every area of their lives. I truly have been called to educate and equip children with Kingdom of God views and values, and it is a privilege to do it as a principal of a Christian school.

**Feelings**

My personal encounters and dream interpretations influenced my feelings as a principal at a Christian school with great excitement and anticipation. I was overwhelmed that God spoke to me at all through dreams, but as I began to understand that what He was saying was directly related to my role as principal was delightfully awesome. As I trusted Jesus to guide me by His Holy Spirit at work, I expected Him to direct me. I expected Jesus to speak to me while I was at work and to challenge me with tasks and opportunities to help people as I obeyed Him. I was filled with anticipation of believing that He was going to show me when to engage in conversation on a day-to-day basis, and when to introduce and pursue a larger vision at the school. I experimentally expected more from Jesus when I trusted Him more. This overflowed into me feeling less burdened by the problem solving of the day, although the problems never went away. I perceived them differently though, because Jesus already knew about the situation before I became aware of it; therefore, He knew how to solve it and who could work together to resolve certain issues. I learned to follow the prompting of the Holy Spirit and worshipped Jesus
because of His commitment to me as I committed myself to Him. Whatever I did, I tried to do with all of my heart as if I was working for Jesus, and not for anyone else. The beauty of it was the feeling of delight that came with seeing God connect my dreams to my reality, in context of His good desires for my life as I served as a principal at a Christian school.

The more that I understood my God-given destiny to prepare students for the future, with a biblical worldview, the more that I felt the solemnness of that responsibility. It is a serious matter to educate children. They need passionate, committed, caring teachers who facilitate learning environments that produce free-thinking learners. Crippen (2005) described the main difference of schools with servant leadership compared to those without was how teachers related to each other and worked collaboratively, with humility and integrity being the vital characteristics to their functional success (p. 15). Students will find freedom in their learning environments with a servant leadership theoretical framework in effect. Liberty of thinking is not to be taken for granted. Perceptions of reality among students are diverse and need to stay diverse as they learn to navigate their way through the web of connecting their realities with others’. It is an exciting journey to be part of such discovery. It takes solemn wisdom to know how to prepare engaging lessons for critical thinkers who require many elements of learning to go beyond the cognitive domain of understanding. Consciousness is a gift from God that is multi-layered with emotions, biological senses, social and pro-social interactions that all lead to learning. I desired to bring heaven’s perspective and priorities in the midst of such learning, as God directed me to through my dreams, in order to help students understand who Jesus is, how much He loves them, who they are because of Him, and what dreams He desires to see become realities in each of their lives.
Actions

My personal encounters and dream interpretations influenced my actions as a principal at a Christian school. I shared with staff members parts of the dreams that God had given me and emphasized Jesus’ desires about the truths that He had highlighted to me. I partnered with teachers in shepherding students and equipped students with perspective, experiences, and understanding. We do a monthly service project at the school that carries a local or global emphasis to help the poor, the refugee, the widow, the prisoner, or the fatherless. Some of the service activities that we do are the following. We have students go to elderly care homes to sing and interact with people there, students purchase items for relief kits that are delivered to families in crisis in war affected countries, and students also put together Operation Christmas Child boxes full of items to give to children around the world who do not have many or any material items. I also started a voluntary noon hour club for grade 5-8 students called “Deeper,” where they could bring their lunch, receive some teaching that brings biblical perspective and then learn how to fellowship with the Holy Spirit as they position themselves to hear God’s voice. I also plan to lead a four-week course on dream interpretation, because students at school are beginning to receive more dreams from God and are sharing them with me. It is exciting to see God work in children’s lives.

Since I have been principal, the grade 8 students have gone on a week-long mission trip to have an experience away from home where they learn to rely on God and on each other while they serve people experiencing homelessness. Through such an experience, students’ perspectives broaden and servant leadership skills develop, because they learn to love someone who has different circumstances than they have, and yet has the same needs and intrinsic value as they do. It is always exciting to see students and teachers emerge as leaders when they are
specifically given opportunities to serve people. Taylor et al. (2007), professed the greatest method of developing leaders was for servant leaders to set an example for their followers (p. 412) and provide as many opportunities as possible for the followers to replicate their actions. That theory was tried on every mission trip, and proved to develop leaders among the students who went on the annual mission trip.

Receiving dreams from God inspired me with insight and vision to take action and bolder risks to serve teachers and students. In order to give the grade one to four teachers another thirty-minute preparation slot every six-day cycle, I chose to take their students during that time. I took the grade one and two students together, and I took the grade three and four students together. I sent a letter home to parents to communicate what my intent was during that class time. My goal was to create a context where students could meet with God and learn to hear and recognize His voice. It was amazing how simple it is for children to hear God’s voice. They were connecting with their Heavenly Father after some brief biblical teaching on who God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit is and how to hear God’s voice with the ears of their spirit (heart). They would come with a journal, markers, and a Bible. I welcomed them, prayed, taught a simple truth, and sent them with a simple directive to see what the Holy Spirit wanted to reveal about Jesus to them while they listened to praise and worship music. Receiving dreams from God influenced me to take action and walk in the fear of the Lord, as I partnered with teachers to shepherd and teach students who must be prepared with spiritual and academic understanding to trust and obey Jesus, and thrive as the next generation in their spheres of influence.

**Conclusion**

My thoughts, feelings, and actions as a principal were influenced because of how God called, encountered, and changed me in my personal life. Fear was changed to confidence,
insecurity was transformed to boldness, and pride was replaced with humility. The professional mistakes, failures, and regrets became part of my journey of hopeful examination as my story of reflection and revision continues. My great desire to know and love Jesus Christ wholeheartedly invited godly infiltration to the deepest parts of my soul and spirit, in order that I would surface victoriously as a changed man and servant leader in the principal role. Fellowshipping with God, receiving prophetic ministry, and being given dreams from God repositioned my heart and renewed my mind, in order to see Jesus, myself, others, and the world around me differently. Through the consideration of my personal encounters, my thoughts, feelings, and actions as a principal growing in servant leadership were ultimately influenced for the betterment of the students and staff members whom I serve in my school community.

Part Two: Outward Implications and Significance to Education

My study unearthed and refined a few diamonds of abundant worth that those working in the realm of education can learn from. Principals are leaders and are responsible for many people and tasks. Their value systems and leadership approaches influence whole communities, not only their schools. Education is the arena where the potential of a society can be dreamed about and invested into. The experiences that changed my life are available to all principals. The implications of my experiences can stimulate others in education to foster reflective writing and meditation in public and Christian schools. It was my journal writing, the written expressions of my heart to Jesus, that was the independent variable in my journey. Christian schools can introduce and facilitate much of what I learned in my personal journey to know and love Jesus Christ wholeheartedly. Education needs to be continually stirred and rehashed so that those in education do not try to formulize learning with rigid categorizations of preconceived
notions rooted in hierarchical arrogance. The significance of learning from those who are hungry for truth and understanding can never be underestimated.

**Principals**

Implications for (future) principals can be drawn from my shared experiences and their influences on me as a principal. Principals make decisions and interact with staff members based on their personal value systems, which are often hidden in their subconscious; however, principals must remain conscious of their value systems. Principals’ values are key to everything they do, and as school leaders they must continue to reflect regularly on what they are doing and why, so that they stay engaged wholeheartedly in their school mission. Being in relationship with Jesus Christ changes personal values, awakens spiritual senses, and increases spiritual consciousness, which produces change in perspective and leadership. Hearing the voice of God changed my life and will change others’ lives as well. The servant leader theory continues to be researched and developed, and as more principals embrace its foundational ideologies and practice the associated beliefs, they will improve their school communities. I believe that my experiences and God-given revelations contribute to the servant leader theory due to the most important characteristic of humility. Principals can easily embrace the theory if they value the associated characteristics and proven benefits.

My value system changed the more that I grew in a close friendship with Jesus Christ; therefore, I exchanged my selfish and proud values for His humble, others-focused, missional values. It is a continual process; however, value comes from desirability. As I desire to learn and change, I adopt the values that I need and want in order to develop and grow personally and professionally. Principals must reflect on what they truly desire, why they desire it, and how they will attain it. Their value system or what they desire most will be apparent to everyone
around them. Servant leader principals have the potential to meaningfully shift teachers’ minds and worldviews through their personal value systems (Taylor et al., 2007, p. 403) and “increase the intrinsic, extrinsic, and total job satisfaction of teachers” (Cerit, 2009, p. 613). The results of teachers who choose to imitate servant leadership in their classrooms are improved work performance, task achievement, and student attitudes of care and compassion (Cerit, 2009, pp. 603, 616; Taylor et al., 2007, p. 417). Servant leadership value systems are learned and developed from many years of following or observing other servant leaders. Self-reflection is pertinent to consciousness and growing in servant leadership. Journaling is a simple practice of reflection that can result in inner peace, revelation, and professional growth as a servant leader.

Leaders are followers. If principals are unaware of who or what ideas they are following, they are also likely unaware of what their primary values are. They need self-reflection and trustworthy people around them in order to reveal what those primary values are. Knowing Jesus has benefited me. That is the beautiful part of God’s goodness; He opens up the door to His house, my source of love, and He generously grants me insight and access to His value system through His Word so that I can value what He values and become more like Christ. Such spiritual development is a direct result of growing in biblical understanding of who Jesus is, how He views people, and why the government of His Kingdom is a model for all governments to accept for their spheres of influence. Studying the values of Jesus Christ and His methods of leading, serving, and interacting with people will benefit principals in their professional roles.

Principals need to lead and live primarily from the heart, not the head. This implication is about the individual’s attitude and perspective, not knowledge reservoir or experience base. Knowledge and experience can be assets on the job, but only if communicated and used largely with honour and humility. Leaders must be ready and willing to learn. Proud people do not truly
learn until they are humbled. They may think that they are learning by gaining more information. However, while information is cheap, learning with humility is costly but leads to influencing others with honour, which breeds greatness. Humility refreshes the heart, increases perception, and challenges top-down leadership. Jesus encouraged His followers to learn from Him because He was gentle and humble in heart. He said that those who embrace a similar positioning of their heart will find rest for their souls (Matthew 11:29). Principals who learn from Jesus and rejoice and lead in humility will find rest for their souls. Learning is much more than intellectual stimulation or growth. Learning must engage a person’s being. A humble readiness and willingness to learn is an attitude of the heart that welcomes lessons from the most unusual or weakest sources at the most inopportune times.

Learning requires vulnerability. Principals’ competency can either increase or decrease, depending on their response when they become conscious of one or more of their own blunders. A confident acceptance of imperfection leads to a confident understanding of the great need to work interdependently with other colleagues, and persistently work on communication and other vital requirements for leading. Interacting with the Spirit of Jesus and studying His teachings produces an awakening of spiritual senses and an increase of spiritual consciousness that leads to greater understanding of self. Understanding the lack in self motivates people to pursue Jesus and learn His ways in order to live, learn, and lead better. A high standard of excellence will undoubtedly be upheld in a culture of honour and understanding. Professional learning and higher education must also be sought after in the right seasons of a principal’s career. When principals use their intellect but lead primarily from the heart, they can healthily embrace humility and the Spirit and teachings of Jesus, in order to maximize their learning and grow spiritually as they lead their school communities.
Principals need to be open to hearing God’s voice. God is compassionate, loving, and slow to anger. He has a purpose and calling for every human being that He creates. Therefore, as principals learn to perceive God from a biblical perspective, they will grow in understanding of His nature, desires, and priorities. They will also grow in their personal identity and destiny. God speaks in many ways and He knows how to communicate effectively with each individual. As principals open up their hearts to hear God’s voice, they will grow in understanding God’s thoughts and feelings about them. There is nothing more exhilarating than that! This may mean that they practice spiritual disciplines, such as praying, fasting, obedience, meditating on God’s Word, and times of silence, as part of the process. Those practices create a heart posture and context for God to release His peace, joy, and hope into an expecting individual. God is a good father who wants a large family of sons and daughters to be with Him, share everything with, and see them mature into people who live and love like His Son, Jesus Christ. This will only happen if people are open to hearing God’s voice, receiving His love in Christ, and trusting and obeying Him.

The servant leader theory continues to be developed and understood. Although I am still growing in the main characteristics of servant leaders, I believe that my study contributes to the theory and encourages principals to become servant leaders. My study is rooted in a spirit and characteristic of humility as I expressed in chapter four. Humility is not thinking less of ourselves; it is thinking of ourselves less. Although Crippen (2010) acknowledged humility as a top characteristic among servant leaders (p. 28), my study and experiences identify humility as the most important characteristic. Humility is rooted in an understanding of relational perspective before God and people that results in confident and unashamed selflessness. One invaluable product of humility is the skill of listening. It is vital for principals to listen well and
truly hear what staff members, parents, and students are communicating. Principals with humility can impart the characteristic of listening to the school community members by modeling it. When staff members and students have a principal who will listen to the movements and dreams of their hearts, their intrinsic purpose or destiny for which they were created can be discovered, due to the servant leader who honoured their expressive reflective thoughts by listening (M. Sitko, personal communication, November 30, 2017). The freedom found in this understanding spurs individuals to serve and love God and people with more personal risk and less fear. There is no fear in love, and humility anchors people to a loving God and an expectation of good in every circumstance, rather than an expectation of evil.

Humble people know that they need help, yet do not hoard what they have or receive. Humility produces a mindset of generosity, rather than one of self-defense and self-preservation; it is an expression of trust. It releases an atmosphere of honour by perceiving others better than oneself; therefore, the natural conclusion with that value system is to serve others’ needs without excluding one’s own. As teachers embrace humility and become servant leaders in their classrooms, their pedagogy will change for the better, their interactions with students will change positively (Cerit, 2009, p. 605), and their students will have “the freedom to feel and the potential to improve by making caring the expectation” (Herman & Marlowe, 2005, p. 176). Humility produces an awareness that a holy God sees everything and is looking for people to fight for justice, stand for righteousness, and love people from all backgrounds, religions, ethnicities, and nationalities. Humility is not only a characteristic of the servant leader theory, it is the most important characteristic that is a gateway for the other characteristics to flow through.
Public Schools

The implication with greatest significance for public schools is the practice of writing that includes reflection and self-examination. There need to be very few parameters, sometimes none, in order for students to write authentically. The goal is for students to express their thoughts and emotions on paper; sometimes they need a prompt to help them focus or get started. I know that there are many different ways to express thoughts and emotions artistically; however, the importance of journaling unbarred thoughts and emotions in the same notepad or diary over a period of months or years is paramount. The reason is that reflection and free expression over longer periods of time produce personal growth. There is a level of vulnerability and confidentiality that must be honoured, and an understanding that the context of personal writing at school may be less heartfelt than at home; however, it may also be more heartfelt. There is learning that takes place from the internal processing of personal accomplishments and failures, risks taken or risks abandoned, emotional highs and emotional lows, perspectives and desires from yesterday compared to one year ago. A sense of journey is established in the writer’s spirit, and when that sense becomes partnered with the reflective discovery of one’s purpose and destiny on this earth – the result is an increase of hope, motivation, joy, peace, and confidence.

What I needed to help me persevere on my journey were people who could speak gently into my life to give me a vision for something more, to give me an idea that I could experiment with or look at from a different angle, and then write reflectively about it. Teachers have the opportunity to be those gentle whisperers for students to see the world or their circumstances differently, be encouraged to take risks or try something new, and know that someone cares for them when circumstances become awry. Journaling is not to replace human interaction or other
learning activities; it is to enhance them through the maturing and learning that happens during and after the processes and experiences of metacognition and consciousness. It was partially freeing to express my thoughts and emotions on pages and pages of my journal, but greater freedom came when I reread what I wrote and drew meaning, and inferred what I had written. I had to stop and question, ponder, and perceive why I was thinking and feeling those thoughts and emotions, positive or negative. Growth came when I chose not to remain in the same stubborn and destructive mindsets that I operated with the day before and I endured through the resistance of breaking habitual thinking, mostly through worship, prayer, fasting, meditation, and journaling. I rejoiced when I meditated on the moments of glory and memories of celebration and relational or professional breakthroughs. Journaling and the process of self-examination of written reflections and expressions lead to the unveiling and clarification of dreams and destinies, because people have a purpose for which they were created and put on this earth.

**Christian Schools**

Teachers in Christian schools could use this study as a student and teacher resource for spiritual growth. Teachers could methodically begin in my first thematic chapter and teach students how to begin seeking to know and love Jesus Christ wholeheartedly. They could use the quotes, stories, and illustrations that I used to help create a hunger and vision for more in life. This would encourage students to push away things in this world that do not have any eternal value so that they can embrace a vision of seeking to know Jesus and love what He loves. Students could journal what those roadblocks, distractions, or addictions are and begin writing out their prayers to experience more of God and to hear His voice. They could then see how I positioned myself to learn God’s will, ways, and work, as explained in Chapter V, and how to
fellowship with the Holy Spirit during times of worship, prayer, meditation on God’s Word, fasting, and gathering with other believers. Children, youth, and adults need to know that Jesus Christ is not a myth, legend, or fairytale, but rather that He is real, alive, and burning with jealous desire to have all people accept Him as their Lord and leader. A child’s faith is strong and pure. As children learn to hear Jesus speak to them or see what He is showing them, they grow in confidence, peace, joy, and excitement.

Students could learn what prophetic ministry is from Chapter VI of this study and learn to hear and see in the spirit so that they can encourage, exhort, and comfort others around them with words from God. They could begin to hear what God is saying for their friends, parents, teachers, and community leaders. God has a purpose for every city and He speaks to anyone who is listening, including children. God is already giving dreams to children, revealing their destinies and callings; however, they need to know what the dreams mean because they are often very symbolic. Chapter VII and other resources could help students understand the meaning of their dreams so that they are strengthened in their faith when God speaks to them through dreams. Perhaps these chapters are the blueprints for Christian teachers and principals to use to prepare and implement spiritual development courses in their schools. Those who desire shall seek, those who seek shall find, and those who find shall be forever changed.

Conclusion

The implications of my experiences are for professionals in education to draw ideas, models, and practical tips to educate students. Principals need to reflect on their value systems, get to know Jesus and understand His teachings and values, keep learning in a spirit of humility, and embrace the servant leader theory. “Principals and teachers have a very important function in school effectiveness” (Cerit, 2009, p. 616), and I hope that principals who read this study will
develop as servant leaders and have a significant impact on their school communities. Teachers in public schools need a vision for their students to mature and learn from the regular practice of self-examination and reflective journaling. The freedom found in written expression of thoughts and emotions is unparalleled, and it leads to personal growth because of the associated processes of metacognition and consciousness. The more time, encouragement, and opportunity that teachers give students to write reflectively, the greater vision and clarity students will have for their lives. Teachers in Christian schools have unique opportunities to pursue to know Jesus Christ and utilize the same strategies of journal writing, except they can elevate the expectation that students will experience the presence of God and encounter Jesus Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit. They can try holy experiments, which lead to holy expectations and holy encounters with God. Hope and the expectancy of good is needed among all students, teachers, and principals. My prayer is that this study will accentuate the goodness of God, reveal the love and truth of Jesus Christ, implicate the value and heavenly calling on each person’s life, and encourage educators to embrace servant leadership and reflective journal writing.
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(Original work published 1968 by Paul Little)


Brandon University Research Ethics Committee (BUREC)
For Research Involving Human Participants

ETHICS CERTIFICATE
The following ethics proposal has been approved by the BUREC. The approval is valid for up to five (5) years from the date approved, pending receipt of Annual Progress Reports. As per BUREC Policies and Procedures, section 6.0, "At a minimum, continuing ethics research review shall consist of an Annual Report for multi-year projects and a Final Report at the end of all projects. Failure to fulfill the continuing research ethics review requirements is considered an act of non-compliance and may result in the Suspension of active ethics certification; refusal to review and approval any new research ethics submissions, and/or others as outlined in Section 10.0”.

Any changes made to the protocol should be reported to the BUREC prior to implementation. See BUREC Policies and Procedures for more details.

As per BUREC Policies and Procedures, section 10.0, "Brandon University requires that all faculty members, staff, and students adhere to the BUREC Policies and Procedures. The University considers non-compliance and the inappropriate treatment of human participants to be a serious offence, subject to penalties, including, but not limited to, formal written documentation including permanently in one's personnel file, suspension of ethics certification, withdrawal of privileges to conduct research involving humans, and/or disciplinary action."

Name of Principal Investigator: Mr. Bryan Schroeder, Brandon University
Title of Project: An Educator's Pursuit to Know and Love Jesus Christ Wholeheartedly
Co-investigator(s): n/a
Faculty Supervisor: Dr. Marion Terry, Faculty of Education (Graduate Studies) Brandon University
Research Office File #: 21780 (2015)
Date of Approval: December 15, 2015
Ethics Expiry Date: December 15, 2020

Authorizing Signature:
Mr. Chris Hurst
Interim Chair
Brandon University Research Ethics Committee
APPENDIX B – Consent Form

August 2017

Dear _____________

You are receiving this letter because at some point(s) between May 2010 and December 2013, you prayed for me, prophesied over me, or encouraged me in my faith in Jesus Christ. I was seeking Jesus wholeheartedly to know him more at that time, and those encounters and words were important to me; therefore, I recorded them in my personal journal afterward. I did my best to quote prayers or prophecies word for word as I remembered them.

I am currently writing my M.Ed. thesis through Brandon University. My thesis is an autoethnography because I will tell my story (ie. autobiography) in the context of a distinct “ethnos” (ie. Christian cultural context). My research, or telling of my story, will answer the questions, What prominent themes did I, a young (vice) principal at a Christian school, naturally write most about in my journal? What meaning did I derive from the personal encounters recorded within the prominent themes of my journal? How did the transforming experiences in my personal life influence me as a growing servant leader in the principal role at a Christian school? What kind of encounters did biblical characters, who were seeking God wholeheartedly, have with God that were similar to mine? How are my experiences of being called, changed, and encountered by God supported and paralleled by Christian literature? What implications do my findings have for (future) principals practicing servant leadership?

I am using excerpts from my personal journal (qualitative data) to answer those questions and to inform, impact, and awaken the reader to an extended understanding of servant leadership through the reality of knowing Jesus Christ. My themed chapters are “Seeking to Know and Love Jesus Christ Wholeheartedly,” “Fellowshipping with God,” “Receiving Prophetic Ministry,” and “Dreams from God.” My encounters and story are framed by the servant leader theory, linked to Scriptural accounts, and supported by Christian literature.

I will use pseudonyms for all participants to protect the dignity and best interests of participants who choose to give consent for the use of their words as quotations in the final report. Every participant has the right to see and approve or reject the quotations that the researcher wants to include in the final report. In other words, your consent is required for me to use your words, as I have recorded them and desired to use as part of my data. The consent forms will be stored under lock and key at my house. All consent forms will be destroyed after five years.

Please contact me for further information (bryanschroeder27@gmail.com or ph. 204-724-8220). You are also welcome to contact Dr. Marion Terry, my thesis advisor (terry@brandon.ca or ph. 204-727-9793), or the Brandon University Research Ethics Committee (burec@brandonu.ca or ph. 727-9712).

________________________________________
Bryan Schroeder
M.Ed. thesis student
Faculty of Education
Brandon University
My M.Ed. thesis will awaken the reader to an extended understanding of the reality that exists of encountering Jesus Christ in powerful ways, when one pursues to know and love him wholeheartedly. You are invited to participate in this project because of the conversations and prayers that you engaged in with me between May 2010 and December 2013, which I did my best to record word for word in my personal journal afterward. Some of those recorded quotations from my journal, during that time period, are being used as data in my final report.

I agree with the following:

I am participating voluntarily.
If I choose to participate, I am agreeing to the use of quotations of mine that I declared in conversation with the researcher during the aforementioned time period. I have the right to withdraw my participation at any time up to Bryan Schroeder’s submission of his final report. If I withdraw, all of my quotations will be removed from the final report.

There are no risks in my participation.
Whether I participate or not – or withdraw after initially consenting – will not affect how I am treated in church or the body of Christ. By consenting, I have not waived my rights to legal recourse in the event of research-related harm.

My information will be kept confidential. Pseudonyms will be used rather than my real name. Only Bryan Schroeder and his thesis advisor, Marion Terry, will have access to the original journal. As a participant, my name will not be used in the final report, but rather a pseudonym or pseudonyms, in order to protect my dignity and best interests. No one but Bryan Schroeder will have access to the list of pseudonym(s) that match my name.

I will have access to the information that I have provided. I will have an opportunity to see and approve or reject the quotations that the researcher wants to use in the final report. Bryan Schroeder will send me a digital copy of his final report by email.

Participant’s Name (please print)  ___________________________  Participant’s Signature  ___________________________

______________________________________________________________________________

Email address  ___________________________  Date  ___________________________

If you have any questions about this consent form, please contact Dr. Marion Terry, my thesis advisor (terry@brandonu.ca or ph. 204-727-9793). You are also welcome to contact the Brandon University Research Ethics Committee (burec@brandonu.ca ph. 204-727-9712).