

A
COVENANT
FOR
CHRISTIAN

COMMUNITY

PointUniversity

January 2017

Dear Point Community,

We often say, as we should, that what distinguishes Point University from other institutions of higher learning is the phrase “Christ-centered” in our mission statement. Most of what happens at Point in terms of academics, student life, athletics and our community presence can be duplicated in dozens of colleges and universities throughout this region.

But when the idea of “Christ-centered” is placed on the table and taken seriously, everything changes. That is why our expectations for employees at every level and students in every program, format and platform include a willingness to engage in this Christian community we identify as Point University. Our reason for existence is “to educate students for Christ-centered service and leadership throughout the world.”

The idea that we want to be “Christ-centered” in our approach to our faith and how we respond to the Jesus story means that we focus on “invitation” more than we do “requirement.” We do “require” that students be open to spiritual formation while enrolled at Point. But after that, we want to “invite” you to be a part of a journey that can be as amazing as you are willing to allow it to be.

God, at least the Bible seems to think so, is a God of *covenant making*, and the nature of a covenant from God’s point of view is that He, in grace and mercy, extends an opportunity for a relationship with Him to people and sets out the parameters. Because He is “all powerful” no doubt He could force every human to accept the terms of the covenant and live by them. But He doesn’t, He invites us to the *covenant* He has made with humans and the universe.

So for Point University, we believe that the Jesus story is the most amazing, grace-filled covenant imaginable, and we want that covenant to be the over-arching way of life for the Point community. To help us manage what that looks like on a day-to-day basis, we have created *A Covenant for a Christian Community* which is designed to provide lots of information that we hope will be helpful to every member of our community.

I want to invite you to read through this *Covenant* with an attitude of openness to the presence of Jesus and His story in your life. We don’t remotely think we are perfect at Point, so don’t think “I’m not good enough to go there.” We are a community where our approach to the Christian life is not “pointing a finger at you” but “inviting you to come and walk alongside of us.”

Thank you for wanting to be a part of this community. Each of us brings a unique quality to this community, and the more we find ways to engage those qualities together as “one body” on our campuses, the more glory we give to God.

Blessings,

Wye Huxford, Vice President for Spiritual Formation and Dean of the Chapel

Spiritual Formation

Goal

To motivate the community known as Point University to travel together as one body on the journey of spiritual formation.

Focus: The Whole Person

To confess that “Jesus is Lord” is a covenant we make with God in which we promise Him to allow that confession to have influence on every aspect of our lives. In that context, spiritual formation at Point University is focused on:

- What we know: renewing our minds (Romans 12:2)
- What we do: not to be served, but to serve (Mark 10:45)
- What we feel: moved with compassion (Matthew 9:36)
- Who we are: new creatures in Christ (2 Corinthians 5:17)

Process

Spiritual formation is more of a journey than a destination; more of a process than an event. Two key New Testament texts speak to this journey in ways that help shape our understanding of the journey.

- 2 Peter 3:18 – “*continue to grow* in the grace and knowledge of our Lord.”
- Hebrews 5:14 – “solid food is for the mature, who *by practice*, have learned to discern right from wrong.”

The word *grow* in 2 Peter 3:18 suggests a process that is ongoing; while *practice* in Hebrews 5:14 reminds us that there is a constant need for attention to be given to the “growing process.”

To that end, we have put in place a variety of steps to follow in the growing process that we believe are helpful to believers at every level of maturity. Since the focus is on *journey* and not *destination*, the most mature Christian on campus and the newest believer have much the same responsibility: *we need to give attention to the journey.*

Step 1: Get involved in campus life as quickly as possible.

There are multiple opportunities from Connect Groups to Adventure Groups, as well as Point's chapel services, special events and Feast.

Step 2: Engage campus life.

Fellowship with other believers is a huge component of the journey to maturity. The four big “verbs of the journey” – *knowing, doing, feeling, and being* – are all enhanced by our relationships with other believers. The Christian life is not a solo journey, but rather a community event in which we share life with one another in a way that contributes to what we know, what we do, what we feel, and even who we are.

Step 3: Invest in community ministry.

Participating in serving others, at whatever level, is one of the ways that God begins to work in our lives. By serving others, we find ourselves living life more and more like Jesus did and seeing the world around us as He did.

Step 4: Worship together.

The more we know God and understand His love for us, the more we will want to be with other believers and worship Him as One Body. Among the unique qualities of life on the campus of Point University is the rich tradition of worship as a diverse body of believers gathered around the person of Jesus. In that context, He has promised to be among us. We encourage every student, staff member, faculty member and administrator to take advantage of these opportunities, both on campus and off campus:

- *Chapel*, times announced each semester;
- *The Gathering*, a student-led worship at 9:00 p.m. on alternating Sundays
- *Holy Communion*, Monday at 8:30 a.m. at West Point Presbyterian Church, and
- *Sunday Worship*, at a wide variety of local congregations in the Greater Valley Area.

Step 5: Join our small groups.

Every believer's faith can be encouraged by other believers (Romans 1:10,11). Getting involved in a small group can become a life-changing moment. Among available opportunities on campus are:

- Spiritual disciplines groups, spiritual formation groups and listening posts groups;
- Adventure Groups for all students; and
- Study groups, for all students in a variety of social and academic settings.

Step 6: Prayer.

While each step on the journey to maturity should be a matter of prayer, we believe that every believer, in following Jesus' own example, should make time for private, personal conversation with God. The Point campus – both indoors and outdoors – has a variety of great places to be alone with God.

Step 7: Bible Reading.

Most students at Point University will enroll in a Bible-related course each semester. You will find these classes to be academically challenging, requiring some effort on your part to do well. But beyond the academic nature of these courses, they are also great opportunities to let Scripture begin to transform you. Even then, you should not allow the fact that you are taking a Bible course to replace your personal commitment to the daily reading of Scripture. The Spiritual Life Office has a number of Bible reading programs available that can help you become a more disciplined reader of Scripture.

Step 8: Simplicity.

We live in a very complex, often confusing world. One of the goals of spiritual formation at Point is to focus on living a simpler life. Simplicity can help reduce the inevitable conflicts that arise in our culture as we strive to be believers; it can reduce the stress that arises when we strive to live too complex a life; and it can reduce our dependency on “things” over God.

Step 9: Solitude.

One of the prime issues at Point University is the value of community. However, the contribution we can make to the development of community is dependent upon many other steps in this journey – not the least of which is the value of solitude. Solitude is the deliberate planning of some “be still and know that I am God” (Psalm 46:10) time in our lives.

Step 10: Vocation.

In the sense that vocation is what we plan to do with our lives in terms of occupation, we want every Point student to start thinking *now* of how we can use vocation to impact the world for Christ. Every academic discipline taught at Point University is focused on educating “Kingdom people to do Kingdom things,” regardless of one's particular occupational interests.

Understanding the Whole Person

What we know...

- all truth comes from God;
- truth from every academic discipline shapes our view of God's world;
- to study and learn more truth is to love God with our minds (Deuteronomy 6); and
- that our own personal transformation is directly dependent upon what we learn about God and His world.

What we do...

- our commitment to the Lordship of Christ is most visibly evident by our willingness to serve God and His people;
- the need to serve others was true even for Jesus, who declared that He came “to serve, not to be served” (Mark 10:45);
- to know God’s truth without doing God’s truth is to be at odds with Scripture itself (James 1:22); and
- in the New Testament, “believing” and “behavior” are inseparably linked.

What we feel...

- when Jesus engaged His world (Matthew 9:35-38), we are told “He was moved with compassion”;
- “feelings” that help us grow to maturity are born out of authentic experience, not “at-a- distance” observation;
- the Jesus model includes involvement, awareness and risk taking; and
- we cannot be “whole people” without broken hearts – broken hearts that are genuine come from following Jesus’ model.

What we are...

- humans are creatures made in God’s image (Genesis 1:26);
- in our own sin, and in the world in which we live, we have made it impossible, on our own, to live up to the potential God made us to have;
- Christ came to redeem us – to recreate us, to make us new creatures (2 Corinthians 5), so we can begin the journey towards achieving that potential; and
- as creatures with intellect, will, emotions and spiritual capacity, we were made to serve one another and to give glory to God.

Point University and Human Sexuality

We live in a culture greatly confused about human sexuality. It would be difficult to list, describe, and reflect upon every sexual issue that has arisen in the world in which Christians strive to live “lives worthy of the calling with which you have been called” (Ephesians 4:1). In that spirit, the University believes that it is important to describe what Scripture views as “sexual morality,” without any attempt to list every possible “sexually immoral” activity conceivable.

No biblical text does this better, at least in one place, than 1 Corinthians 7:1-7. What is abundantly clear in this text is that sexual purity, from the vantage point of the Christian gospel, is quite simply defined as: [a] a healthy, fulfilling sexual relationship between a man and a woman married to one another and committed to that relationship; or [b] celibacy, that is, participating in no overt sexual activity. Paul’s focus on the marital privileges and responsibilities of both males and females reflects the biblical concept of gender as a God-given aspect of creation (Genesis 1:27; 2:22-24; Matthew 19:3-9). Point University upholds the historic idea of Christian thinking that God made humans male and female with intent and purpose and that a part of one’s living a pure life before God is to honor these distinctions.

Point University recognizes that gender and sexual preference are different issues. We believe that the Bible clearly teaches (Genesis 1:27; 2:22-24; Matthew 19:3-9) that God intended humans to be either male or female, and one's gender at birth is reflective of that intentionality on the part of God. (As used in this document, gender refers to the physical traits typically associated with males or females.) Thus in the areas of housing, locker rooms, restroom facilities, athletic competition and other related areas, Point recognizes the birth gender of students and employees, not a chosen gender different than birth gender.

Again, with no effort to list every possible act that would be viewed as sexually immoral by Scripture, we believe that the very plain teaching modeled in 1 Corinthians 7:1-7 provides a consistent and godly approach to sexual purity for Christians who wish to make Jesus Lord of life. Plainly put, if a believer is married, he or she should strive to be an appropriate sexual partner for his or her spouse. If a believer is not in a biblically sanctioned marriage relationship, he or she should be committed to living a celibate lifestyle until such time as he or she is married.

This text recognizes the challenge of appropriately addressing our sexual natures. It even suggests that to live a celibate life in a culture inundated with sexual imagery and great confusion about our sexual identities and behaviors, as was true at Corinth and is true in our own cultural context, requires help from God. Paul believes that in order to do so, we must recognize God's willingness to "gift" us in this area.

At Point University, we are committed to helping every student discover an appropriate way to achieve the kind of sexual morality we believe the Bible clearly teaches. This commitment extends to heterosexual students and to students who believe that their orientation is to same sex relationships. In fact, we believe that the biblical issue in play is not one's orientation, but rather one's commitment to allow biblical principles to form and sustain behavior deeply rooted in faith. One of the ways that God gifts His followers is to place them with people who are willing to help lead others to higher levels of spiritual maturity. Our desire is not to condemn those who have not lived sexually pure lives but to find a way to help them achieve this important quality of the Christian life.

To summarize what Point University believes is reflective of biblical testimony about our sexual identity:

- God made humans male and female – intentionally and with purpose;
- Decisions about accommodations related to gender should be made in the context of one's birth gender;
- Overt sexual activity between males and females should be reserved for marriage and in marriage should be a healthy, fulfilling reality of a godly marriage;
- Those who are not in a biblically sanctioned marriage should practice celibacy, whether heterosexual, homosexual, bi-sexual, or transgender in orientation;
- Because we recognize the challenges of living in our contemporary culture, employees and students at Point University should exercise the necessary personal discipline to avoid pornography of every kind and other media-related realities that promote a view of human sexuality contrary to that of Scripture.

We are living in an increasingly complex world, especially in the area of sexual ethics and their implications. Point University believes it is important that the University clearly describe what we believe the Bible teaches about this subject and that we expect all trustees, employees, and students to make the important connection between what we believe and how we behave.

Point University's Understanding of the Biblical Concept of Marriage

Point University has historically viewed Scripture as the trustworthy Word of God, and as such, the primary resource to be consulted in making decisions about issues of morality and values (Isaiah 55:8-11; 2 Timothy 3:16; Hebrews 4:12). It is in that spirit that this statement about our understanding of marriage is made.

Throughout the pages of the Old and New Testaments, marriage is described repeatedly as a relationship between a man and a woman (Genesis 1:27; 2:22-24; Matthew 19:3-9; 1 Corinthians 7:1-7). Point University recognizes that in the cultural context in which we have been called to serve God and bear witness to Him, there are multiple views of what marriage can be. We recognize that in some circles, including some that would describe themselves as Christian, same-sex relationships are recognized; we also recognize that for government to prohibit same-sex marriages is to deny rights guaranteed to U.S. citizens by law. We recognize that in a free and democratic government, any person has the legal right to such relationships. But we insist that the historic, orthodox biblical position of the University be recognized, respected and adhered to by all employees and all students, as well as trustees to whom the charter of the University is entrusted.

Point University does not presume the right to make eternal judgments about relationships that are not consistent with those described in Scripture. However, the University does sense a need, based upon our conviction that Scripture is the trustworthy Word of God, to teach what we understand the Bible to teach and to insist that the community known as Point University respect, as indicated by our behavior, what the Bible says about marriage and sexual relationships.

Point University faculty and staff members are expected to model this understanding of marriage in their behavior. For faculty members, when addressing questions related to marriage and biblical teaching, the expectation is that this understanding of marriage is respected and presented as the University's understanding of Scriptural teaching on this subject.

Persons accepted as students at Point University are expected to accept the University's understanding of marriage and live consistently with this biblical teaching.

Point University's Understanding of the Sanctity of Life

The absence of any explicit biblical text on the subject of abortion in either the Old or New Testaments makes any biblical discussion of the topic complicated. While numerous texts from

the Old Testament are often cited in the debate about abortion, none of those texts are actually addressing the specific subject of abortion. In beautiful poetic language (Psalm 139:13-16 or Jeremiah 1:5 for example) the Bible does suggest that God is active in the formation of unborn life in the womb and that, at least when He chooses to do so, God knows the individual before birth. Texts like these do reflect a view of life that permeates Scripture. We recognize that they are not scientific statements about when life begins and are best understood as reflections of God's eternal foreknowledge more than statements about the status of a fetus.

More important to developing a biblical understanding of the issue of abortion and the sanctity of life, the Bible describes a world in which God is the creator of all things and the author of all life (John 1:3-5). When speaking to the intelligentsia of his world, Paul describes God to the philosophers in Athens as "the God who made the world and everything in it" (Acts 17:24). The ideas expressed in these two texts demand that followers of Jesus understand that God's creative power is at work any time a life is conceived. A part of our human responsibility as creatures made in the image of God (Genesis 1:26) is that we are to be stewards of God's creation (Genesis 1:28). Such stewardship demands that the real question to be answered is not some arbitrary discussion of when life begins but how will our actions reflect and respect the fact that God is the author of all created things, including what is created at conception for humans, develops into a fetus, and is born as a human being.

It is interesting to note that in the *Anonymous Epistle to Diognetus* (5.6), an early second century Christian writing, one of the distinguishing characteristics of Christians was that they did not expose infants. That is early testimony to the importance of this "culture of life" and reflective of the value that helps shapes Point University's understanding of this "culture of life."

Recognizing this idea of "a culture of life" in which God is the author of every act of creation, Point University believes:

- The idea of a "right" to control our bodies and thus arbitrarily decide to end the life of an unborn fetus stands in contrast to the biblical call for believers "to glorify God in our bodies" (1 Corinthians 6:19,20).
- Christians are called to be "one Body," made up of "many parts" (1 Corinthians 12:20). The concept of "private, impacting me only" decisions is foreign to the biblical understanding of the church as the body of Christ. Making moral decisions, including the issue of abortion, has impact on the body of Christ, and no Christian can assume that our decisions don't impact the entire body of Christ.
- God alone is sovereign over life which means that no human should assume that sovereignty in His place. The issue is not so much what is often described as "the value of life," but rather the issue is that humans have no right to assume sovereignty over life (John 1:3-5; Acts 17:24).
- The idea that abortion is acceptable when a child is unwanted cannot be an acceptable Christian point of view, since the very nature of the gospel itself is that Jesus came to redeem all of creation – including the unwanted (Luke 10:25ff).

- The idea that abortion is acceptable when the child cannot be adequately cared for is an unacceptable viewpoint for believers, since the church is called to create communities where “there are no needy people” (Acts 2:42-4:30).

The Point University Statement of Faith declares that “we believe in the one God, Creator of heaven and earth” and that through our relationship to God through the saving grace of Jesus Christ, we are called “to carry out his saving mission among all nations.” We believe that those ideas must mean that administrators, faculty, staff and students would reject abortion as an acceptable decision except in the most unusual of circumstances, where the health/life of the mother would be at stake, for example.

We recognize that there is no specific text in the New Testament condemning abortion, though abortion was practiced in some cultural contexts in the world in which the New Testament was written. But the same argument could be made about infanticide, but no one will use that as an argument in favor of infanticide, and no one should use a perceived silence in the New Testament to develop a permissive view of abortion.

The New Testament does embody the creation-old idea of God as sovereign over life and places the mission of Jesus in the context of God’s sovereign desire to renew, redeem and restore all of life. It is in that understanding of the gospel that Point has adopted the principles regarding abortion as described in this statement. Our understanding of this issue reflects neither a desire to condemn those who have made contrary decisions about abortion nor a desire to refuse to help those who are in the midst of such a struggle. As Paul describes what should be our attitude in Romans 15:7, we want to be a community where we “welcome one another as Christ as welcomed us.” Our desire is to find the Christ-like balance between truth on the one hand and grace on the other. We reject the idea that truth and grace cannot stand side-by-side, even on sensitive issues like abortion.

Recognizing our Current Level of Spiritual Maturity

None of us who are part of the Point University community are at exactly the same place on this journey toward spiritual maturity. That will always be true, but is never the issue. Part of the process of growing to maturity is recognizing that, in most times and places in life, we are surrounded by both those less mature than we are and those more mature than we are. When we learn to recognize this reality, we immediately see both the opportunity to be helpful to others and the opportunity to be helped by still others. In biblical language, sometimes we are like sheep who need a shepherd; and sometimes we are shepherds who need to care for sheep. (Read Jesus’ story of *The Good Shepherd* in John 10).

In addition to the fact that we all come to this community at various levels of maturity, we also come from very diverse religious and cultural places in life. One of the more amazing qualities of life on this campus is the sense of “one community” we experience on campus, even though our backgrounds are sometimes so different. What serves to make us “one community” is our common faith in Jesus as Lord, and our willingness to allow Scripture to be the standard by which we come to understand more and more who Jesus is and what difference He makes.

The primary issue for each follower of Jesus is not to measure our own spiritual maturity against that of others, but rather to recognize where we are and develop a plan to grow to the next level.

Physical maturity is much more easily measured than spiritual maturity. A quick Google search on the Internet can offer dozens of links to websites that offer tedious details about what happens to our physical bodies as we move from infancy to adulthood. Spiritual maturity isn't quite that simple.

Our desire at Point University is to help each person who is part of this community recognize various signs of spiritual transformation in a way that allows each of us to identify both where we are spiritually and where we can go next on this journey. In that spirit, the following *sign posts* are identified as helpful:

- *Fear of punishment.* This is, perhaps, the most basic level of spiritual maturity. We motivate ourselves to do the right thing because we fear being punished if we don't. It isn't unlike driving the speed limit when being followed by a state patrol car! Spiritually, this is akin to not doing something out of fear of going to hell.
- *Hope of reward.* At this level, our primary motivation is doing right because of reward. Here, I do my assignments on a timely basis because I will make a good grade, not because I learn. If I behave morally, I will go to heaven when I die.
- *Family value systems.* For those who grow up in families that are involved in the church, we often move to a kind of spiritual maturity that reflects the values of our family setting. It is easy to assume a kind of maturity that surrounds us on a daily basis, and equally easy to borrow that maturity in ways that don't serve us well in the long run – especially when, at college, we are no longer daily surrounded by those values.
- *Peer value systems.* In our culture, one of the signs of physical maturity is our desire to separate from our family values in ways that show independence. We begin to assume the values of our peer relationships. Even when those peer relationships are with other Christians, the challenge is to make sure that they reflect a pattern of growth reflected in Scripture.
- *More deliberate response to what we learn in Bible study.* One of the great benefits of being a student at a Christian college, where Bible study is a part of the academic program and all sorts of opportunities for confrontation with Scripture are present, is that we begin to evaluate our spiritual formation against the testimony of Scripture. It is here that we begin the process of moving from “borrowed faith” to our own “personal faith.” We can identify all the steps of the journey thus far in terms of what God has revealed in Scripture.
- *The ultimate goal.* Jesus Himself reminded His disciples that the ultimate goal of a believer's life is to reach the point where life can be evaluated on the basis of two primary spiritual principles: *love God and love your neighbor.* (Luke 10:25-37) Our ultimate goal at Point University is to lead every member of this community to a level of spiritual formation where we are courageous enough to look at every decision in life in terms of whether or not it reflects love for God and love for our neighbors.

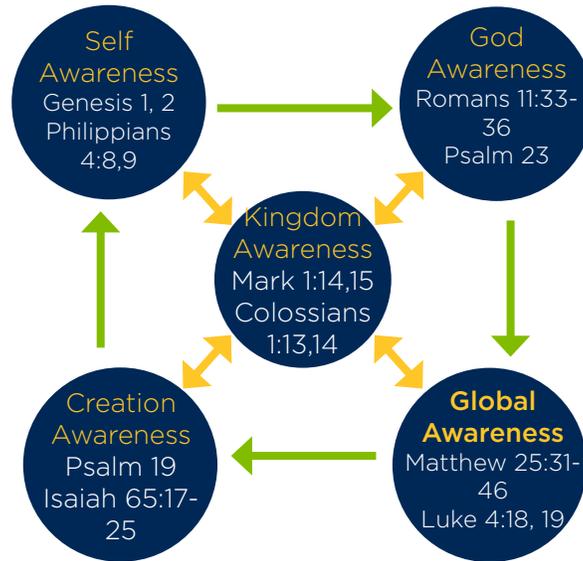
Spiritually Maturing Point Students

Defining what a “spiritually mature” person looks like is complicated. Since our relationship to Christ, and growth in that relationship, is a life-long journey, at Point we prefer to say “spiritually maturing” rather than “spiritually mature.” The implications of that distinction is that all of us – from the most spiritually mature person on campus to the newest believer – are on a journey of growing more and more Christ-like in our behavior.

On the following page, you will see a matrix that helps inform the University when it comes to how we think about spiritual formation. We believe that until a person develops a sense of Self Awareness that includes recognizing that as a human we are created in God’s image and that we have sinned, the idea of spiritual formation makes no sense.

Once our sense of Self Awareness begins to develop, then we can move to areas like God Awareness (He is Creator and Redeemer), Global Awareness (concern about injustice, poor, etc.), Creation Awareness (the goodness of God’s creative work), and Kingdom Awareness (engaging the kingdom of God in meaningful ways).

We encourage you to look at the matrix on the following page and use it as a guide for your own life, as well as a guide for helping others around you, when it comes to how the idea of spiritual formation can work.



Self Awareness	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Image of God • Sinner • Loved for who I can become, not who I am 	Marked by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Humility • Contentment • Patience • Healthy relationships • Appropriately transparent
God Awareness	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Worships God as creator and redeemer of the world • Solitude • Gratitude • Simplicity 	Places importance upon: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bible reading and study • Prayer
Kingdom Awareness	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hopeful • Hospitable • Curious • Generous 	Expresses kingdom awareness by being: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engaged in a viable kingdom outpost • Christ-centered, not sectarian • Spirit-filled
Global Awareness	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Concern for the poor • Concern for injustice • Concern for war • Concern for diseases 	Places value upon being a believer who is: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community minded – locally and beyond • Missional in lifestyle
Creation Awareness	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Concern for waste • Concern for pollution • Concern for natural resources 	These ideas are rooted in: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The goodness of creation • Our call to participate in God's plan of renewal for creation • The testimony about God in the way the world was made

Recognizing our Nature

Spiritual formation is a multi-tasked discipline, and an important part of this journey is to recognize that most of us are prone to think about spiritual formation either primarily intellectually or primarily intuitively. Characteristics of these two ways of thinking include:

- Intellectual thinking about spiritual formation:
 - focuses on using our intellect to evaluate spiritual issues;
 - focuses on God as revealed in Scripture;
 - believes careful analysis of biblical texts will lead to new levels of maturity;
 - asks the Christian faith is systematic, logical and reasonable; and
 - asks the key question: “What can I *know*?”
- Intuitive thinking about spiritual formation:
 - focuses on using our intuition and understanding of spiritual issues;
 - believes God is more a mystery than a revealed-in-Scripture being;
 - believes what we feel a text means is more important than a detailed analysis of its meaning;
 - believes the Christian faith is not so systematic, and is more a matter of “faith” than “reason;” and
 - asks the key question: “What can I *experience*?”

Important ideas to remember about these different approaches to spiritual formation:

- All of us naturally think more strongly intellectually or intuitively – perhaps reflecting both the “nature and nurture” issues we have been exposed to thus far in life.
- It should never be “either/or,” but “both/and” when it comes to choosing how we view spiritual formation.
- If your “experience”-centered life leads you to be an “activist,” you can both *teach* and *learn from* your more contemplative brother or sister in Christ.
- If your “knowing”-centered life leads you to be a scholar, you can both *teach* and *learn from* your more activist brother or sister in Christ.
- If you identify more clearly with one approach or the other, then a clear path toward becoming more spiritually mature is to work on the other.

Two challenging questions, answered honestly, can help us recognize our own natural tendencies and help us identify areas where we need to invest time and effort in so we can grow in more productively.

- When reading Scripture, do I most naturally think of questions like, “What does this mean to me at the moment?” If so, I probably think more intuitively and should invest in more detailed study of Scripture.
- When reading Scripture, do I most naturally think of questions like, “What is the Greek word here?” or “What is the historical setting in which these words were said?” If so, I probably think more intellectually and should invest in more intuitive thinking about Scripture.
- Remember: it simply never is “either/or” but always “both/and.”

Spiritual Gifts

A crucial part of the journey of spiritual formation is to recognize how we are gifted to serve God, and then use those gifts in a God-honoring fashion on a daily basis.

What are spiritual gifts? Any ability or talent I have – either naturally or by training – that I am willing to use in the kingdom of God, to build up the kingdom and not self, to the glory of God and not self.

Am I gifted? The New Testament knows nothing of a “giftless” Christian. While some appear to be more gifted than others, every believer has something to offer the Kingdom of God in ways that build it up. Remember that our value to God is never based on *function* – what we do – but rather, our *value is rooted in whose we are*.

How are gifts best used? In the economy of God’s kingdom, a remarkable principle is constantly at work. That principle is that we are built up by building up others. We become more mature spiritually as we invest in the lives of others. Without a willingness to use our spiritual gifts to build up others, we will never make a lot of progress on our own journey toward spiritual formation.

How do I discover my spiritual gifts? All sorts of gift inventories are available that can be helpful in determining what our natural strengths actually are. (Point 101 focuses on some of these, and some are available in the Center for Calling and Career.) However, our own personal and honest evaluation of who we are and where we are in life can be very helpful to every believer in determining how God has gifted us to serve. Among the important questions to ask in this process are:

- What can I naturally do for God?
- What can I be trained to do for God?
- What do other spiritual people affirm about me?
- What needs to be done where I am in life at the present?
- What are God’s people willing to entrust me to do?
- What can I be fruitful in doing?
- What can I be fulfilled in doing?

Holy Dissatisfaction

A growing relationship with God naturally produces a sense of *holy dissatisfaction*. Not dissatisfaction in the sense of becoming incapacitated by our lack of accomplishment, but dissatisfaction in the sense that our relationship with God is constantly filled with opportunities for continued growth.

Several biblical texts speak to this idea of *holy dissatisfaction*, and our desire at Point University is that these texts and others like them characterize the spiritual journey that each of us is traveling (and all of us together are traveling):

- **1 Thessalonians 4:9-10.** “Now as to the love of the brethren, you have no need for anyone to write to you, for you yourselves are taught by God to love one another; for indeed you do practice it toward all the brethren who are in all Macedonia. *But we urge you, brethren, to excel still more.*” (NASB)
- **2 Timothy 2:15.** “*Be diligent* to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, handling accurately the word of truth.” (NASB)
- **Philippians 3:12.** “Not that I have already obtained it, or have already become perfect, but *I press on* in order that I may lay hold of that for which also I was laid hold of by Christ Jesus.” (NASB)
- **Ephesians 4:1-3.** “I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, entreat you *to walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called*, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, showing forbearance to one another in love, *being diligent* to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.” (NASB)

Applications

The real test of the progress we are making on this journey of spiritual formation is whether or not we are seeing differences in a variety of areas of life. In particular, while part of the community of Point University, we should see differences in areas such as:

- Study,
- Worship,
- Service,
- Devotion,
- Compassion,
- Giving, and
- Vocation.

Living Theology

In 2 Corinthians 5, the apostle Paul reminds us that through the death of Christ, believers have been reconciled to God. But he doesn't stop there, insisting that we accept the responsibility he calls “the ministry of Reconciliation.” In fact, he says we are “God's ambassadors” to the world.

To be an ambassador suggests that we are called to do for the world what God has done for us, to say to the world what God Himself would say to the world.

Living theology means that we recognize that the good news—that in Christ there is life abundant means that we focus on four important areas impacted by what Jesus did for us on the cross:

- We can have a positive relationship with God.
- We can have a healthy understanding of who we are as creatures made in the image of God.
- We can have positive relationships with others made in the image of God.
- We can participate in God's mission to renew and restore the universe.

Everything we do at Point University in the area of spiritual formation is focused on helping each of us to “live out our faith.” These four areas create the arena in which that must happen.

Ultimate Outcomes

1. Every student at Point University will see community ministry as an essential part of what it means to say, “Jesus is Lord.” This will be seen in areas like:
 - a) concern for the poor;
 - b) concern for social justice;
 - c) seeing ourselves first as citizens of God’s kingdom;
 - d) racial reconciliation;
 - e) concern for peacemaking, from residence hall disputes to world war;
 - f) concern for victims of economic disparity;
 - g) concern for educational issues such as literacy, high school dropout rates, and basic moral values; and
 - h) concern for health issues such as unwed pregnancies, abortion rates, AIDS, and other similar issues.
2. Every student at Point University will see the importance of integrating faith and vocation. This means that we strive:
 - a) to practice the idea of the priesthood of all believers;
 - b) to see vocation, regardless of what it is, as mission;
 - c) to learn how to effectively bear witness to our faith in any setting, without being overbearing;
 - d) to learn in every classroom setting the relationship of the subject at hand to our faith; and
 - e) to ensure that no student graduates without having been exposed to the ideal of integration of faith and vocation.
3. Some students at Point University will sense that they are called to ordained ministry. Thus,
 - a) some will find themselves in church settings as preachers, worship leaders, education leaders, spiritual formation facilitators, student and children’s ministers, administrators, etc.;
 - b) some will find themselves in global settings as missionaries, campus ministers, church planters, relief workers, educators, health workers, etc.; and
 - c) some will find themselves in parachurch settings such as colleges, seminaries, camps, convalescent centers, orphanages, relief agencies, urban ministries, campus ministries, etc.

Spiritual Formation Expectations for Students

There really is only one *requirement* at Point when it comes to spiritual formation. That requirement is that you are open to the idea that because Point is a Christ-centered institution of higher education, you need to be open to the idea that the Jesus story can have great impact in your life. Within the process of application and acceptance, you are asked to affirm that openness.

After that, we want to invite you to be a part of what could be the most significant life-changing journey you have yet faced – the journey of participating in the activities of a community of believers who invite you to be a part of what they have discovered in Christ.

There are lots of different activities at Point – but each of them has in common a desire to make the goal of following Jesus more doable for each of us. God made humans to live in community and He sent Jesus to redeem us so the idea of community could be re-created and renewed and sends His Holy Spirit to be a part of our fellowship in community.

Below you will find a variety of activities. Please take time to look at what is available, talk with others on campus about various opportunities, and make a commitment to take advantage of what is available to you at Point.

Most of the more formal activities take place on our West Point campus where the majority of our traditional students are. However all of these activities are open to any of our students – traditional, CGPS, dual-enrollment, and graduate students at any time.

Worship and Service Opportunities at Point

- Sunday Nights
- Student-led Sunday night worship experience, held at 9:00 p.m.
- Meets at an announced location near the Point Living Community
- Includes music, prayer, testimony, etc.

Adventure Groups

Led by faculty and staff; meet on or off campus. A variety of small group opportunities are provided, and these groups meet at various times during the week. All students are encouraged to be a part of such groups. Adventure Groups typically meet at 1:00 p.m. on Wednesdays, where there is a vacant time slot in the academic schedule.

Adventure Groups provide a wide variety of topics, lessons and discussion points for our students and often share meals together, participate in projects, etc. Each traditional student is assigned to a group, but students are welcome to find a group in which they feel comfortable participating.

Other Small Groups. Because small groups are such an important part of the process of spiritual growth, and because small group dynamics are so often a part of fruitful congregations, Point University encourages the creation and growth of small groups whenever appropriate

opportunities arise. If you have ideas for an effective small group on or off campus, please let the Spiritual Life Office know about your thoughts; we will work with you to make it happen.

Chapel

A worship service consisting of music, prayer, and preaching will be held in the Spring Road Christian Church in Lanett on a monthly basis. These services will meet on the third Thursday evening of each month, at 7:00 p.m.

Holy Communion

Held at 8:30 a.m. on Mondays at West Point Presbyterian Church, across the street from the Academic Center, ending at 8:45 a.m. This service is designed to be a community-wide event where students at Point University and members of the Greater Valley community meet and worship together.

Focused Group Events

Occasionally focus group events are held in the Academic Center. These events will meet at various times, enabling all students to take advantage of at least a portion of them. Some will be led by Point faculty members, administrators and staff; others will be led by guests to Point University. Each group will focus on a particular topic and explore it in the context of spiritual formation.

Mentoring

One of the great advantages of attending a small university like Point, and one that is Christ-centered, is the relationships you can develop with faculty, staff, coaches, and administrators. Point has an active program of trying to place students in great mentoring situations. If you would like a mentor, we will be happy to help you find that person.

Summary

The activities noted above are a portion of what is available on our West Point Campus. We encourage every member of our community to become engaged in these activities.

We also want to encourage you to find local churches in the Greater Valley Area where you can become part of an active community of believers in this area. Among the best places to find encouragement, support and friendship is in local bodies of believers. This is a real opportunity for you to be blessed by a local church and for you to bless that church by your presence.

Beyond West Point . . . the Point Community

With various site locations we recognize the challenge of providing the same kind of opportunities for students in those locations that we do in West Point. Of course that is even more complicated when we take into account that our online programs are growing every session.

In addition, it isn't simply a matter of location, but each location has a variety of programs in which students are engaged. From dual-enrollment programs in Savannah, McDonough and Peachtree City, and other off-campus sites to adult students whose lives are already busy with work, family, and school, to graduate students and other online students – it is complicated to provide the most fruitful and fulfilling opportunities for spiritual formation.

For each of these locations and for each of various categories of students, we want to encourage you to look over the list below and discover ways in which spiritual formation can be more actively a part of your experience as a student at Point University.

1. Make sure you are engaged in a local church where the Bible is taken seriously and you can surround yourself with a community of believers who will support your educational experiences.
2. Develop personal spiritual discipline habits in your own life. Discipline yourself when it comes to Bible reading, prayer, worship, service and other activities that can help you grow spiritually.
3. Take advantage of your student community at Point. Through forums, in-class discussions, informal get-togethers and other similar activities, you will likely discover classmates who would love to create a partnership in spiritual growth with you.
4. Take advantage of Point University faculty who teach your classes. We strive very hard to hire people who are not only academically prepared and capable to teach in their discipline, but people who are willing to invest in the lives of their students. We insist that “faith be integrated into every discipline,” and while that doesn't mean every class is a Bible class, it does mean every class is taught from a Christian worldview. Take advantage of that.
5. Take advantage of site directors and other staff at our various locations. Again – we hire people who are capable of managing their sites, but we also want them to be Christ-followers who are willing to invest in the lives of others around them.
6. Point Chapel services are placed on the Point University website in a timely manner. (We hope, in the not-too-distant future to live-stream them.) This could be a great opportunity for you individually or for a group of students to get together and listen to the chapel service.
7. Participate in other Point University events that could bring you into a more engaged relationship with the Point community. Choir concerts, recitals, homecoming, special events on campuses, etc. all could be ways that you could take advantage of opportunities available to you as a Point student.

Finally, don't fail to seek help. If you have needs in this area that the Office of Spiritual Formation could help you with, don't hesitate to ask. We are more than willing to help you in whatever way possible.