

Twelve Steps in the Way of Christ: A Postmodern Path for Spiritual Formation and Leadership Development

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Abstract

The goal of this paper is to help North American Church leaders stake a claim to postmodern faith by focusing on the celebrity and centrality of Christ and then calling, growing, maturing, and guiding believers into their own God-inspired journeys in the way of Christ. The postmodern Church's decline, leadership crisis, and celebrity culture call forth a renewed emphasis on the Christ story as an ancient faith pilgrimage in order to help people mature and become leaders through the use of a new twelve-step path in the way of Christ. Many churched and unchurched pilgrims find themselves stuck in earlier stages of arrested spiritual development, unable to sustain growth, attain maturity as leaders, and finish their life well—thereby releasing their God-given gifts, passion, and destiny. A more dynamic and visual path of faith pilgrimage is required to capture interest and garner support from postmodern seekers of spirituality.

The Twelve Steps in the Way of Christ draw on ancient pilgrimage and allegoric models, as well as Scripture and the life of Christ, to provide a clear understanding and direction for Christian followers and leaders. Both linear and cyclical, the steps offer distinctive ways to measure spirituality and a useful template for spiritual and leadership development yet allow enough room for one's unique imprint and individual personality, life experience, and journey of faith. Today's church leaders who seek to form faith in tangible, relational, and visual ways that appeal to postmoderns of the next generation will find the Twelve Steps a valuable tool and marker for spiritual assessment. The answer to the North American Church's dilemma lies not in higher forms of worship or more sophisticated programs but in returning to the well-trod paths of becoming a people of pilgrimage and following the steps first made by the Son of God.

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The Spiritual Formation/contemplative focus at the Association for Biblical Higher Education is as troubling as it is at ATS. In the ABHE Programmatic Standards handbook, it states under Curriculum—Essential Elements: "[A]n accredited graduate program is characterized by . . . Already Moody has a Master of Arts in Spiritual Formation and Discipleship. By the way, the report we mentioned—ABHE's Assessment and Accountability Project—is on Moody's website. Ironside: "Broken Vessels for Christ" By Harry A. Ironside Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body. Step Twelve. "Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these steps, we tried to carry this message to alcoholics, and to practice these principles in all our affairs." T. HE joy of living is the theme of A.A.'s Twelfth Step, and. action is its key word. He has been set on a path which tells him he is really going somewhere, that life is not a dead end, not something to be endured or mastered. In a very real sense he has been transformed, because he has laid hold of a source of strength which, in one way or another, he had hitherto denied himself. A.A.'s manner of making ready to receive this gift lies in the practice of the Twelve Steps in our program. So let's consider briefly what we have been trying to do up to this point