

Fuller Formation Groups are built around doctoral research on spiritual practices that support and sustain leaders towards flourishing in Christian mission. The following is a very brief summary of the core findings.

FORMED TO FLOURISH:

Well-being, or flourishing, is found in what we are created to do and be. All women and men are created to take our place in relationship to God, to God's people and engagement with God's work in the world.

- **Take our place in relationship to God.** All humans are called to intimate relationship with God the Father, God the son and God the Holy Spirit. We are invited to become, as Darryl Johnson put it, "co-lovers of God with God".
- **Take our place in the community of God's people:** No one has ever been invited to follow Jesus alone, but always in the context of other women and men.
- **Take our place in God's mission in the world:** All Biblical spiritual formation leads to participation with God's work in the world.

CULTIVATING WELL-BEING

A survey was designed to identify exemplars of human flourishing based on Biblical anthropology and spiritual theology. The survey was given to leaders from InterVarsity Christian Fellowship and International Justice Mission, and open interviews with exemplar leaders identified common practices that cultivate well-being. They are:

Regular Spiritual Practices

Practices were almost always centered on engagement in prayer and Scripture. What emerged was that these practices were:

VARIED

Leaders changed or shifted their spiritual practices to support their specific situation or stage of life, and sometimes to maintain interest and capacity to be faithful.

ADAPTED

Many of the classic disciplines were present, but no one individual used them in their classic form, but adapted them to fit their lives, their families and their work.

COMMUNAL

Everyone interviewed described their practices in the context of the people with or among whom they engaged. The community was a key driver, support and encouragement to their engagement with Jesus.

Regular Retreats

All of the flourishing leaders we interviewed participated in a regular pattern of spiritual retreat. The goal was to step away from their responsibilities of work and family and to silence the incessant noise of media, email and consumer culture. Retreat gave space to give attention to God and what He was doing in their lives.

Regular Group

All of the participants had a group of other leaders that provided peer support, authenticity, and safety – not safe from challenge or conviction, but free from shame and guilt. For leaders, it was a place to be fully known, not for the work they do, but for what was really happening in their lives and relationships.

Regular Input: A Guided Life

The leaders we studied invited others to provide them care, leadership and insight to their lives, work and relationship to Jesus. They sought the help of spiritual directors, mentors, coaches, pastors and counselors. They knew that, despite the numbers of people that depended on them for wisdom and leadership, they needed others to speak into their lives.

Hopeful Expectation: An Accompanying Attitude

These leaders engage in spiritual practice with an expectation that God will speak to them, correct them, comfort them, lead them, and empower them for the mission to which they have been called. When they open the Bible, they anticipate that God will be present and have something to say to them and their situations. When they pray, they expect God to speak to them. When they gather in community or go to places of silence and solitude, they believe God has gone ahead of them, sees them and longs to meet with them. This perspective – a life lived with hopeful expectation of the loving initiation of Jesus – is a critical driver of their spiritual practices. Hopeful expectation gave energy to all they do.