Conducting a Spiritual History (Hodge and Holtrop 2016) p.262

Initial Narrative Framework

1. Describe the religious/spiritual tradition in which you grew up. How did your family express its spiritual beliefs? How important was spirituality/religion to your family? Extended family?

   I grew up in a household and family that practice Christianity. My grandfather was a Pastor and founder of a local Bereans church in his rural community. The practice of Christianity trickled down from my grandfather and my grandmother to their children, and from their children to my generation. My family expression of their spiritual belief was through actively attending church, assuming duties within the church and active participation during church services. This is still common within my family. My family also practice prayer and fasting, as well as evangelism occasionally. I believe that religion and spirituality is very important to my family and extended family in the sense that we recognize the need for God in our life, and the importance of accepting Jesus Christ as the Lord and Savior of our life. We also see the importance of sharing the gospel of Jesus Christ so that others might believe.

2. What sort of personal experiences (practices) stand out to you during your years at home? What made these experiences noteworthy? How have they informed your later life?

   Within my household, we did not have a lot of practices, however, one experience that stood out to me was particularly one night where everyone in my household sat down and engaged in a devotion. We sang worship songs, read the bible, and pray. Unfortunately, this practice has not been done as often since then, due to everyone getting older and figuring out their relationship with God for themselves. This experience however taught me the importance of devotion, the importance of family devotions and also further challenge me to restore and maintain devotions in my current household.

3. How have you changed or matured from those experiences? How would you describe your current spiritual or religious orientation? Is spirituality or religion currently a strength? If so, how?
   Experiences like the one mentioned above have shaped my spiritual life and relationship with God. I have learned to be more committed to my faith and walk with God, I have also matured in ways I go about spending time with God. My current religious orientation is that I solely depend on Christ for sustenance, provision, healing, deliverance and motivation as I go forth in life. I also consider the relationship that I have with God to be very strong, as I continuously, intentionally and actively seek him daily and as I go about

my day. Doing this makes me feel closer to Him. This I believe also empowers me through life.

Interpretive Anthropological Framework

1. Affect: What aspects of your spiritual life give you pleasure? What role does your spirituality/religion play in handling life's sorrows? Enhancing life's joys? Coping with life's pain? How does your faith give you hope for the future? What do you wish to accomplish in the future?

   The aspect of my spiritual life that gives me pleasure is; being in constant conversation with God. I feel accomplished and happy when I make time for God, also when I read his word and avoid the distractions around me to seek God's face. My spiritual life also plays a major role in handling life sorrows, joy, pain, etc. I rely on scriptures and prayer to gain insight and encouragement for when I am dealing with the sorrows of life. One key scripture that brings me assurance is from Jeremiah 29:11, which states that "for I know the plans I have for you," declares the Lord, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future." This scripture reminds me of God's promises for my life. It also highlights the fact that God is never trying to harm me, nor does he lie. This scripture in a nutshell gives me hope for the future. In the future, my wish is that I will share the gospel of Jesus Christ to parts of the earth that does not know His name. I also hope to be truly walking in my God-given purpose and fulfilling the good work that God has started in me. I also see myself using my social work skills to deescalate crisis as I share the gospel.

2. Behavior: Are there particular spiritual/religious rituals or practices that help you deal with life's obstacles? What is your level of involvement in church, small groups, etc.? How are they supportive? Are there spiritually encouraging individuals that you maintain contact with?
   A religious practice that helps me deal with life obstacle is fasting, scriptural meditation and going into my prayer closet to spend time in a quiet place to release my heavy burdens. In my church, I am a part of the Sunday worship team that leads worship during Sunday service. I am also surrounded by supportive Christian women leaders as well who check in on me and also pour into me prayerfully.

3. Cognition: What are your current religious/spiritual beliefs? What are they based upon? What beliefs do you find particularly meaningful? What does your faith say about personal trials? How does this belief help you overcome obstacles? How do your beliefs affect your health practices?

My current religious beliefs are that of the Holy Bible, I believe as Christians, we are called to share the gospel of Jesus Christ and do our part in fulfilling the Word of God which states in Matthew 24:14, KJV: “And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come”. I find this scripture meaningful because I believe that we should be living with an eternal perspective in mind, and all that we do here on earth should be towards the coming of Christ. In life, I have encountered quite a lot of hardship, and is still working my way through lingering effects of those hardships, among other life obstacles which has also intensify my faith in God even more. Knowing what I do now, my faith helped me to see my personal trials as lessons, and a training ground for what is to come. God is preparing me for what is to come. My belief in God helps me to overcome obstacles as a result of my daily trust and believe in His words. Through this belief, I am strengthened to endure life obstacles. My belief also improves my health practice as I see my body as the temple of the Most High, and therefore, I respect and care for it. I can do a better job caring for my body in terms of the food I eat though.

4. Communion: Describe your relationship with God (or the sacred). What has been your experience of God? How does God communicate with you? How have these experiences encouraged you? Have there been times of deep spiritual intimacy? How does your relationship help you face life challenges? How would God describe you?

In my opinion, my relationship with God takes many forms, however, it mostly takes the form of a Father and daughter relationship, where by I see him as my dad and I am a child who desperately need him daily. Sometimes I think because in my earthly life, my real dad was not present, and then my step-father who was present was not kind towards me, I tend to always try to please God. However, I am learning to see God as a loving father who does not need me to prove myself worthy of his love, because his love is never ending and always present. Therefore, when it comes to my relationship with God, I feel uncomfortable when I am not spending time with him. I always want God to know that he is on my mind and in my heart. I believe God communicates with me through his word, he also communicates to me through text, for example, through online post, a book, etc. He also gives me dreams that can either be a warning for the attack that the enemy is planning against me, or things that may try to interfere with my life in the natural or spiritual. God also rarely gives me visions or speaks audible to me. However, through the power of His word, the Holy Spirit influence my thoughts, actions and way of life. These experiences I mentioned encourage me to pray, be vigilant, mindful and stay in tuned with God’s word. I have had deep spiritual intimacy with God during prayer and worship. My relationship with God helps me to walk by faith as I face life challenges. When I reflect on my relationship with God, I believe that I am a woman after his own heart, therefore, I would hope that’s how God would describe me.

5. Conscience: How do you determine right and wrong? What are your key values? How does your spirituality/religion help you deal with guilt (sin)? What role does forgiveness play in your life?

   When it comes to right and wrong, I determine the two based on biblical values. The bible metaphorically tells us that if our right hand causes us to sin then we must cut it off. Scriptures like this help me to determine what is wrong and also how to go about dealing with things that are wrong and sinful. I define things that are right as righteous. If it's righteous in God's sight and according to His word, then its right. My faith has helped me to view sin as disobedience to God. I also know through my relationship with God and his word that I can be forgiven of my sins once I confess my sins to him, repent of them, and ask for His forgiveness. In his word, God promise that my sins will be forgiven and are cast out into the sea of forgetfulness, and that He moves them as far as the east is from the west. Forgiveness is key in my life, for as Christ forgives, so should I forgive as well.

6. Intuition: To what extent do you experience intuitive hunches (flashes of creative insight, premonitions, spiritual insights)? Have these insights been a strength in your life? If so, how?

   I believe God has given me the gift of discernment, where I am able to discern right from wrong, and also to an extent sense the demonic spirit operating behind a person. This insight has definitely been a strength in my life as I am able to be vigilant and prayerful for myself, others and those the Holy Spirit gives me an inkling about.

Adapted from (Hodge, 2003)