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## Digital Discipling: Assessing the Strategies of Spiritual Formation in Online Course Design for Bible Colleges

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# STUDENT HAS RESTRICTED ACCESS TO FULL TEXT OF THE DISSERTATION. ONLY COVER PAGES AND ABSTRACT ARE AVAILABLE AT THIS TIME

#### **DIGITAL DISCIPLING:**

# ASSESSING THE STRATEGIES OF SPIRITUAL FORMATION IN ONLINE COURSE DESIGN FOR BIBLE COLLEGES

#### A Dissertation

Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies and Research
in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree

**Doctor of Education** 

Michael Jeffrey Freeman

Indiana University of Pennsylvania

August 2014

### Indiana University of Pennsylvania School of Graduate Studies and Research Department of Professional Studies in Education

We hereby approve the dissertation of Michael Jeffrey Freeman

Candidate for the degree of Doctor of Education

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	George Bieger, Ph.D. Professor of Education
ACCEPTED	

Title: Digital Discipling: Assessing the Strategies of Spiritual Formation in Online Course Design for Bible Colleges

Author: Michael Jeffrey Freeman

Dissertation Chair: Dr. Monte Tidwell

Dissertation Committee Members: Dr. Valeri Helterbran

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This mixed methods dissertation was designed to determine the extent to which the design of spiritual formation into the curriculum is intentional, applied and assessed. While qualitative interviews were designed to develop a practical knowledge base of college faculty and staff engaged in online learning with respect to intent and administrative oversight of spiritual formation in online courses, a quantitative analysis of a sample of online courses was conducted to crosscheck the attitudes revealed in the interviews with what is actually occurring in online course design. Specific strategies in the training of online faculty and the design of online courses were explored. This study will serves a dual purpose: a) biblical online education programs will be provided with some valuable practical tools for consideration; b) in addition, this qualitative format will provide a thought-map for following the decision-making processes of one college attempting to implement these strategies.

The participants in this study included 26 administrators, online faculty and staff at a Bible college who were all key stakeholders in developing online curriculum at the Bible college. Additional data were collected through a review of 15 online courses. A textual analysis was performed of the course description and (107) course objectives to look for the intentional inclusion of spiritual

formation in the design of the course. Also the 445 assignments of the courses were analyzed for spiritual formation components. The analysis of the transcript and quantitative data revealed the integration of introspection – man's relationship with himself, vertical integration – man's relationship with God, and horizontal integration – man's relationship with others must be present to fully engage online learners in spiritual formation.