

EDUCATION

# DEEPER STILL: MOODY PROFESSOR CREATES CERTIFICATE PROGRAM TO ENCOURAGE SPIRITUAL GROWTH

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**“MANY TIMES OUR CHRISTIAN WALK LACKS  
JOY AND THE ABUNDANCE HE CAN GIVE”**

“I’ve found that the average person doesn’t really understand the depth of Christ’s love,” says Nancy Kane, associate professor at Moody Bible Institute. “Many times our Christian walk lacks joy and the abundance He can give.”

Four years ago, Nancy felt God nudging on her heart to create a new type of learning program for adults who were not necessarily interested in an academic degree, but longed to go deeper in their relationship with Christ.

“Despite having so many Christian resources, we often don’t see change,” Nancy says. “There is so much anxiety, so much unhappiness in our world. As Christians, we want to say that we have what the world is looking for, but sometimes we feel like we experience just as much stress as the world. We need to slow down our lives so we can learn the near and dynamic presence of Christ.”

As a Christian counselor, she had seen believers weighed down by burdens that stopped them from being who God called them to be. She saw people struggling to find the joy they were supposed to experience in their relationship with Christ and wondered, *Is there was a way to engage people in the process of growing into maturity that can impact them for a lifetime?*

## ABIDING IN CHRIST

Nancy decided to develop a unique educational program. The Christian Spiritual Formation Certificate, offered through Moody Bible Institute Distance Learning, is a one- or two-year cohort program designed to help men and women abide in Christ. While still teaching full-time in Moody's undergraduate program, she initially directed the program on the side, working close to 80 hours a week. "It's gone in a direction I've never really planned on," Nancy says

Directing the program is now her full-time focus. Nancy teaches on the quarterly retreats and includes special speakers from time to time. Her husband, Ray, leads the small groups on those weekends. They both lead learning groups, or cohorts, and participate in the retreats. The goal of the Christian Spiritual Formation program is simply to grow closer to Christ and learn more about yourself in the process, Nancy says. "It's learning a daily rhythm with God. We should look more like Christ today than we did 90 days ago."

The certificate program comprises four weekend retreats throughout a year with a curriculum that each participant is given after each retreat. Instead of sitting in a traditional classroom, students gather at a beautiful retreat center by a lake where they can receive teaching, participate in a small group, spend time in solitude, and fellowship with other Christians over meals.

The students are placed in cohorts, and the first retreat establishes vulnerability among the participants. This is a time to unpack their story with God. "We stand equally before the cross," Nancy says. "We are all broken. We are all bruised. We all come in with our own issues, but we're deeply loved, and Christ is in our midst."

The retreats provide time alone and in a cohort, listening, discussing, praying, and learning from Scripture. "We have lectures throughout the weekend, and we finish with a Communion service on Saturday night," Nancy says.

## SPENDING TIME IN PRAYER

The overall curriculum is based on the storyline of the Bible. In addition to the retreats, the program includes individual work to be completed at regular intervals throughout the year. "Each week you are given a theme, something about God and your relationship with Him. In that week you reflect on a passage of Scripture, read articles from classic Christian writers, have a link to a video of a sermon on the topic and artwork that ties into the theme to engage your heart. Each day you are asked to spend one hour in prayer. There are no fill-in-the-blanks, no get-the-right-answer questions," Nancy explains. "You are challenged to reflect on how this is changing you and what God is leading you into."

Nancy has found that this simple emphasis on Scripture and prayer is impactful. "The changes I see in people as a result of this program are what really fire me up," Nancy says. "I would never have expected it. I clearly see at the end of the program that their whole disposition looks different. I often think, *Only God can do this.*"

## CREATING SPACE TO LEARN

Jenny, now enrolled in the optional second year of the program, had always been busy in Christian work. She had grown up in a Bible-believing home, volunteered with a campus ministry in college, and served with her church as an adult. Yet she felt a longing to stop *doing* and start *growing*.

“I thought the program would be about reading my Bible, but it’s so much more than that,” Jenny says. “You create space to learn from the Lord.”

“We’ve been getting people like Jenny, who don’t necessarily want a degree but want to go deeper in faith,” Nancy says. “They don’t want a class to attend every week, but retreats are welcomed. And because they’re adult learners, I give them curriculum, and they are not graded. It is not a heavily traditional assignment-based program.”

Jenny adds, “There is so much in this program for you, regardless of your stage of life. I just can’t wait for others to experience that same kind of transformation. It’s drawn me into a deeper relationship with Christ, a deeper love for Him.”

## GROWING TOGETHER

Nancy is excited to see this program grow and develop. She is happy about the diversity of the students, people from age 25 to 72, students from Puerto Rico and the Bahamas to New York and Alaska. “The Lord draws people from across the board . . . from missionaries to pastors to lay people to stay-at-home moms. But they have one thing in common: They are willing to do whatever it takes to grow closer in intimacy with Christ,” she says.

She hopes more people will take advantage of this special opportunity to spend quality time in Scripture and prayer. This is not just about earning a certificate, but about revitalizing your walk with the Lord. “The program will stretch you in a positive way,” Nancy says. “The point is to learn to dwell with God. It’s a different type of learning.”

[Learn more about the Certificate in Spiritual Formation.](#)