

## Processing and Deep Processing (PERSPECTIVE)

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God takes us through a variety of experiences and situations to help us in this process of transformation (moving from faith to love). These experiences and circumstances are called processing. J. Robert Clinton (*Leadership Emergence Theory*) gives perspective on the importance of understanding processing for the developing Christian leader:

*“A growing sensitivity to God’s direct or indirect intervention in life incidents is indicative of development. Once there has been a significant incident with positive results, then later incidents are easier to recognize and hence more rapid learning occurs.” (p. 95)*

Clinton (p. 77) also describes this process with the following equation:

$$LD = f(p, t, r)$$

A leader develops (LD) as a function (f) of processing (p) over time (t) as the leader learns to respond faithfully (r). By understanding how God develops a leader over time we are in a better place to be able to submit to God’s process and realize his purposes.

For our purposes here let me define three concepts that are important for our understanding of processing: processing, transformation, and process items.

- *Processing* – providential events, people, circumstances, and events that God uses to assist in the development of character, values, skills, understanding, etc. for life and leadership effectiveness.
- *Transformation* – the process of changing one’s attitudes (heart), perception (mind), and behavior to reflect the likeness of Christ.
- *Process Items* – specific processing designed by God to assist us in his transformation process.

Clinton has discovered over fifty process items in his study of leadership development in the Bible (see *Leadership Emergence Theory*, p. 96 for a general list of process items). For our purposes here, I will describe nine process items (see Table 1 – Process Items) that are critical for a foundational understanding for developing the three “means” (I Timothy 1: 5) that lead to becoming a more loving person.

**Table 1 – Process Items**

<u>Pure Heart</u>	<u>Clear Conscience</u>	<u>Sincere Faith</u>
Word Check	Integrity Check	Faith Challenge

Authority Check

Relational Insights

Obedience Check

Sovereign Guidance

Spiritual Authority Discovery

Destiny Revelation

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## DEEP PROCESSING

### Pure Heart

*Word Check* (WC) – establishes the transforming authority of the Bible as a core value in our lives/ leadership

*Authority Check* (AC) – establishes healthy submission to God and “mutual” submission to others

*Sovereign Guidance* (SG) – learning how to hear the “voice of God” and obey him

### Clear Conscience

*Integrity Check* (IC) – establishes consistency between Biblical values and life choices and behavior

*Relational Insights* (RI) – learning how to be at peace with everyone as much as it is possible

*Spiritual Authority Discovery* (SAD) – discovering personally that the authority to be transformed and to transform others comes from submission to the word and the Spirit

### Sincere Faith

*Faith Challenge* (FC) – tests the willingness to take steps of faith and grow in our capacity to trust God

*Obedience Check* (OC) – tests willingness to be obedient to the word and/or his voice in confusing circumstances

*Destiny Revelation* (DR) – tests the capacity to hear from God concerning future direction and willingness to become intentional and focused on fulfilling our destiny

These process items are ongoing opportunities for us to develop in these three critical “means” areas which ultimately produce love. BUT this is not the only way that God works to develop leaders. There is a whole other realm that many leaders (probably all) will face as they learn how to go deeper in God in order to realize his “immeasurably more” (Ephesians 3: 20) destiny that he has for those who will follow him whole heartedly. There are some things that God can only accomplish by taking us deeper.

### **Deep Processing**

J. Robert Clinton, in his *Clinton's Biblical Leadership Commentary*, defines deep processing as “process items which intensively work on deepening the maturity of a leader” (p. 684). Process items involve life circumstances and relationships that result in character development, skill development, and/or

expanded potential. They are providential in nature, designed by God to help develop and leader's capacity.

Clinton had identified over 50 process items in his study of leaders in the Bible. Deep processing involves several of these process items. I have adapted Clinton's findings and come up with the following list of deep processing items:

1. Life transitions
2. Life and leadership crisis
3. Life and leadership conflict
4. Leadership backlash
5. Isolation
6. Spiritual warfare
7. Brokenness

I will describe each of these in some detail in the following chapters, but before we do that, let's briefly define and describe each of these process items associated with deep processing. Several of the following definitions are taken from the Glossary in Clinton's *The Making of a Leader*.

1. *Life transitions* (LT) – Change happens to all of us sooner or later. Life transitions occur during times of major changes such as death of a loved one, becoming “empty nesters”, loss of a job, retirement, etc. Along with these situational life transitions there are developmental life transitions that we must navigate as we age and become more mature.
2. *Life and leadership crisis* (LCr) – “Process items that refer to special intense situations in life, which are used by God to test and teach dependence on Him” (p. 238). “A specialized form of a Crisis process item, referring to a time of crisis characterized by intense pressure in which the meaning and purpose of life are searched out, and the leader has experienced God in a new way as the Source of life, the Sustainer of life, and the Focus of life” (p. 246).
3. *Life and leadership conflict* (LCo) – “Instances in a leader’s life in which God uses conflict, whether personal or ministry related, to develop the leader in dependence upon God, faith, and insights relating to personal life and ministry” (p. 237). “A process item referring to those instances in ministry in which a leader learns either positive or negative lessons about the nature of conflict, possible ways to resolve conflict, possible ways to avoid conflict, ways to creatively use conflict, and how to see conflict in terms of God’s processing of the leader’s inner life” (p. 249).
4. *Leadership backlash* (LB) – “A process item describing the condition when followers react against a course of action taken by a leader; usually due to unforeseen complications arising after the followers have previously approved of the action” (p. 245).
5. *Isolation* (I) – “A maturity factor item in which a leader is separated from normal ministry, while in the natural context in which the ministry has been occurring, usually for an extended time, and thus experiences God in a new and deeper way” (p. 244-245).
6. *Spiritual warfare* (SW) – There is a real devil and he is an adversary of God and his purposes. Leaders may face times when they encounter spiritual realities that may hinder their life and leadership

progress. We are warned several times in the Bible that we do not live in a natural world but a natural/supernatural world where we need to learn how to do spiritual warfare (Ephesians 6: 10-20).

7. *Brokenness* (B) – A process by which God brings us to the end of our self in order for us to learn to live and lead under the control of his spirit. There may be several breakings before brokenness is accomplished. The primary fruit of brokenness is love (I Timothy 1: 5) which is manifest in humility (I Peter 5: 6).

### **Potential Benefits of Deep Processing**

Deep processing can take us to levels of understanding, maturity, and spiritual authority that can not happen any other way. God initiates deep processing because he wants to take us deeper into his resources for our fulfillment. If we endure during deep process, we will experience some of the following:

1. A deeper sense of God's love
2. A greater appropriation of the fruit of the spirit
3. A greater appreciation of God's faithfulness
4. A new way of looking at life and leadership (paradigm change)
5. A greater understanding of God's majesty and holiness
6. A greater level of intimacy and integrity
7. A greater capacity to function in spiritual authority
8. A greater freedom from sin and fleshly patterns
9. A greater realization of the fear of God
10. A greater sensitive to the "voice of God"
11. A greater appreciation of others
12. A greater passion for God and his purposes
13. A greater sense of giftedness and calling
14. A more focused life
15. A greater capacity to finish well in life and leadership

These and many other outcomes are possible if we can learn to submit to God in the midst of deep processing. Remember Job and how God transformed him and blessed him with a double portion of what he had lost during his "severe mercy".