

## WORK WITH PURPOSE INITIATIVE | PASTORS GATHERING

### Spiritual Formation in Everyday Life

*Spiritual formation happens within the context of people's normal, everyday experiences. So how do the blessings and challenges of daily living bring forth formation? How does the formation developed through retreating – quiet times, prayer and meditation, or weekends away – differ from the formation developed through engaging in the world? This discussion revealed how might we encourage those we lead to press into the formation that happens through engagement in the workplace and the broader community.*

### Exploring the Idea of Spiritual Formation

What does this term mean? What is the outcome? How does the idea relate to biblical teaching? To Jesus' instructions? To one's theology of God?

Shults, F. LeRon; Sandage, Steven J., *Transforming Spirituality: Integrating Theology and Psychology* (Baker Academic/2006).

- Formation vs transformation (p. 18): Formation changes first order change, behavioral and limited "to conserving one's current coping repertoire... a determined attempt to do more of the same." Transformation involves more complex changes in both behavioral coping **and** the ways in which one relates to the systems altogether. "Second order change involves pursuing new goals or new pathways towards one's goals."
- Requires a biblically based pneumatology, what Shults calls a "theology that reforms us (p. 41). He explicates a reformation Pneumatology in which a fuller understanding of doctrine regarding the Holy Spirit moves us toward a transformation of being that is defined by intensity.
- Breaks down the false bifurcation between doctrine and spirituality (p. 50) by recognizing a fully trinitarian theology that brings the Spirit into full equality with the Father and the Son.
- Reforming Pneumatology  
*....we can avoid these extremes by thinking of divine grace as the intensively infinite presence of the trinitarian God, whose eternally shared life is the all-embracing origin, condition, and goal of natural human longing. All things are from, through, and to God (Rom. 11: 36) and in this sense "in" the dynamic presence of God. The intensification of natural creaturely life manifested in the complex relationality of human persons, however, is graciously constituted by the invitation to live intentionally in intimate relational union with the trinitarian God. ... Rather than tie the Christian articulation of the concept of "human spirit" to the idea of an*

*individual rational substance, we may attempt to refigure our understanding of spirituality in relation to our dynamic experience of embodied social life. (p. 60)*

- Transforming involves: Becoming wise; becoming just; and becoming free.
  - Wise: knowing and being known (p. 86) which leads to an intensification of faith and the transformation of prayer.

*Jesus' intimacy with the Father was mediated by his reception of, and faithful dependence upon, the Spirit of wisdom. Notice that Jesus does not lose his particularity through this dependence; on the contrary, it is precisely through this reliance that he finds his identity in relation to the Father, who identifies him as the Son of God through the resurrection (Rom. 1: 4). Jesus' way of life represents the appropriate human response to the faithful divine Spirit, who invites the human spirit into a new experience of trusting intentionality, a way of finding oneself bound to the Father. The same "Spirit of truth" will also abide with and in the disciples (John 14: 15– 17), which will be manifested in their own intimate fellowship. The interplay of knowing and being-known is explicit: "Righteous Father, the world does not know you, but I know you; and these know that you have sent me. I made your name known to them, and I will make it known, so that the love with which you have loved me may be in them, and I in them" (John 17: 25– 26).*

- Just: loving and being loved. Acting in the Spirit is the intensification of loving agency in the Spirit... (p. 107)

*...the dynamics of transforming spirituality as an intensification of loving agency in the Spirit, which takes shape in Christian community as a diaconal sharing in the suffering of Jesus Christ. The intensely relational longing to love and be loved that characterizes the intentional agency of human persons is already and always upheld (along with all creaturely life) by the divine Spirit. In the New Testament the manifestation of divine love is explicitly tied to the presence of the Spirit in human life. In Romans 5: 5 Paul says that "God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us." The Spirit that God gives is a Spirit of "power and love" (2 Tim. 1: 7; cf. Col. 1: 8).*

- Free: fulfilling the desire to belong-to and be longed-for by being truly free in Christ as whole persons, free to be long to God, longed for by Him and free to be fully human, being transformed into the likeness of Christ with intensifying glory.

*Sharing in the glory of Jesus Christ means participating in his way of being in the world in relation to the Father through the Spirit. This is intrinsic to the spirituality of Christian life— this way of being is our freedom in Christ, which liberates us to become a hopeful presence to our neighbors. We must be careful not to separate our being spiritual— or spiritual being— from the real relations that constitute our lives as we come-to-be "in" the Spirit of glory. We are tempted to think of persons as being spiritual (or not), and*

*then to ask whether they are acting in ways that use their metaphysical weight to provide space and time for those who are struggling to find community. (p. 142)*

- We become free to experience intensification of hope and the transformation of our hospitality quoting Nouwen that one of the main movements of spiritual life is from hostility to hospitality, "the creation of a few and friendly space where we can reach out to strangers and invite them to become our friends." (p. 147).
- *Believers are called to present their whole way of being in the world as a "living" offering to God, which is their "reasonable worship" (Rom. 12: 1). This means that our "liturgy" should embrace the totality of our lives in relation to God and one another. The ongoing intensification of being-formed in the Spirit is the doxology of Christian life. Christian spirituality is a liturgical being in the Spirit that shapes one's whole life in community. As we are liberated into participation in the freedom of divine life, we may truly belong to one another. (p. 149)*

**What comes to mind when we hear the term "spiritual formation"?**

Advanced	Discipline	Pursuit
Aging	Disciplines	Relationship
A-Team	Goal orientation	Retreat
Awakening	Growth	Revival
Bible	Holy Spirit	Sanctification
Bible study	Intentionality	Spiritual people
Christlikeness	More than Sunday	Stretching
Contemplation	morning	Theology
Cult	Prayer	Truth
Discipleship	Process	Work

**How do we define spiritual formation?**

An intentional goal-oriented discipleship, inside and outside of Sunday morning, that allows the Holy Spirit to grow us in Christlikeness.

A personal, individualized journey to Christlikeness that should happen in the context of relationships.

**How do we move toward transformation rather than formation?**

We need to understand church history.

- The church forefathers who came before us and also experienced our same struggles
- The early church practices that address the issues we face today

We need to better grasp the concept of relationship.

- Recognizing brokenness and accepting its place the church
- Accountability – recognizing the “one anothers”
- Advocacy for the wellbeing of each other
- What is my relationship with the Triune God, not just Jesus?
  - The Holy Spirit will NOT invade unless drastic action is needed
- Connection with suffering
  - How do we cope with suffering?
  - This is a major part of life
  - How do we help people reflect on what God is doing in transformation through suffering?

We need to understand how the generations relate to each other.

- Need good examples of real people to aspire to
  - People who are living out the truth
- Who are the “rock stars” for the younger generation?
- Recognize that generational cohorts tend to have stereotypical views of formation
  - Seeking knowledge
  - Seeking someone to follow
  - Can tend toward idolatry
- Spiritual formation is a process of stripping away
  - Humble wisdom

We need to recognize that true spiritual formation is characterized by generosity and hospitality.

- Emptying ourselves of being encumbered or attached to our possessions
- Acquisition is no longer so important to us

We need to acknowledge that worship is the process of transformation.

- As we transform into Christlikeness, this gives glory to God (worship)
- Letting someone have their way is the most honoring thing we can do for another person
- Yielding to God is the ultimate act of worship and honoring him
- Pathway to worship is a willingness to listen to and obey God

We need conviction about what is the right thing to do.

- What are the biblical boundaries? How does scripture determine these out for us?
- Are we sensitive to God’s leading and what he is telling us is right?
- Convictions are different ways of working out our values
- Holy Spirit drives and navigates within the boundaries laid out by scripture

We need to embrace the role of the Holy Spirit.

- The Spirit will convict us of what we aren’t doing right
- Reading scripture will be convicting – prompts from the Spirit
- Holy Spirit does not just give us good feelings and reassurance

- Conviction vs. shame
  - One is from the Holy Spirit, the other is from the evil one

### **How do we get those we lead to experience transformation?**

- These can't be simply exercises in a church setting
  - Must be active in the real world of our congregants
- Avoid common mistakes
  - We turn it into a formulaic system and assume formation will happen
  - More than just doing spiritual disciplines
- Help others learn to reflect on their life and process it
- Jesus got out of the way for the Holy Spirit to come
  - This says a lot about the Holy Spirit's power and role
- Leaders must pray for their flock

### **Can we reach a better definition of spiritual formation?**

It's much more than a simple definition. God wants us to wrestle with these things. As a culture, we want a list of the "10 things" to do for spiritual formation, but it is much more mysterious.

A personal, individualized journey to Christlikeness ***guided by the Spirit of God*** that should happen in the context of relationships.

John 16:13 – When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth, for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak, and he will declare to you the things that are to come.