

Spiritual Formation — Reclaiming the Garden

Gini Downing

June 20, 2021

Spiritual Formation — Reclaiming the Garden

Taught by [Gini Downing](#)

Series: Mission + Vision + Values

6.20.21

Spiritual Formation: as we encounter Jesus, our lives reflect his life and teachings.

Spiritual formation is a conscious returning to God, placing ourselves consciously in his already-there presence, surrendering our lives to God, and allowing God to imprint on our lives. It is the process of being conformed, or molded to the image of Christ for the sake of others.

The point of spiritual formation is to intentionally place our hearts and our lives with God, learning of God and God's ways, learning to listen to God's whispers, learning to see our lives in the context of God and the love that God has lavished upon us.

Abruptly Jesus broke into prayer: "Thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth. You've concealed your ways from sophisticates and know-it-alls, but spelled them out clearly to ordinary people. Yes, Father, that's the way you like to work."

Jesus resumed talking to the people, but now tenderly. "The Father has given me all these things to do and say, things that come out of the intimacies and knowledge I have from my Father. No one knows me the way the Father does, nor the Father in the way that I, as the Son do. But I'm not keeping it to myself; I'm ready to go over it in detail with anyone willing to listen.

"Are you tired? Worn out? Burned out on religion? Come to me. Get

away with me and you'll recover your life. I'll show you how to take a real rest. Walk with me and work with me—watch how I do it. Learn the unforced rhythms of grace. I won't lay anything heavy or ill-fitting on you. Keep company with me and you'll learn to live freely and lightly.”
Matt 11:25-30

We model our lives after that which we worship. In nature, this is called imprinting. Animals imprint upon their parents and others of their species. It's instinctual, built into their DNA.

Be on your guard and diligently watch yourselves, so that you do not forget the things your eyes have seen, and so that they do not slip from your heart as long as you live. Teach them to your children and grandchildren. Deut. 4:9

In spiritual formation, we intentionally put ourselves BACK in the place of imprinting on God.

Spiritual formation is seeking to live inside-out. Proverbs 4:23:

Above all else, guard your heart, for everything you do flows from it.
(NIV)

Guard your heart above all else, for it determines the course of your life. (NLT)

Keep your heart with all vigilance, for from it flow the springs of life.
(ESV)

Spiritual formation is a process, but it is also a journey.

“Repent for the kingdom of the heavens is at hand” is a call for us to reconsider how we have been approaching our life, in light of the fact that we now, in the presence of Jesus, have the option of living within the surrounding movements of God's eternal purposes, of taking our life into his life. ~ Dallas Willard

Each of you is now a new person. You are becoming more and more like your Creator, and you will understand him better. It doesn't matter if you are a Greek or a Jew, or if you are circumcised or not. You may even be a barbarian or a Scythian, or you may be a slave or a free

person. [*Basically, fill in your "otherness," any marginalized label that may have been applied to you or others.*]

But Christ is all that matters, and he lives in all of us." Col 3:10-11

Spiritual formation is a process empowered by the Holy Spirit.

The result of this process of formation is that your life will be progressively conformed to the likeness of Christ.

Spiritual Formation is a process that occurs over a lifetime.

Why is spiritual formation so important?

It makes God happy – it's God's desire for everyone who claims the label of following Christ to actually FOLLOW Christ.

God knew what he was doing from the very beginning. He decided from the outset to shape the lives of those who love him along the same lines as the life of his Son. Jesus stands first in the line of humanity he restored. We see the original and intended shape of our lives there in him. Romans 8:29

Spiritual formation is critical in our outreach to others.

So what can we do in terms of our own spiritual formation?

Spiritual disciplines are habits and behaviors that put us in the ways of Christ. Spiritual disciplines are not things to be done, but ways of engaging with God.

Adela Calhoun: Spiritual Disciplines Handbook – Practices that Transform Us

Some ideas not in her book: ANYTHING divina – ask God to guide you; then focus on something (see some examples below), see what draws your attention, sit with it for a while to fully absorb it, and ask God to massage it into your soul.

Visio Divina [focus on art or sculpture]

Terra Divina [focus on nature, natural things]

Audio Divina [focus on sound, music]

Cinema Divina [focus on movies, theater, television]