

How We Change (Pt. 5)

What is Spiritual Formation?

- Culture tells us the cliché to ‘be true to yourself’...but what does that even mean?
- Richard Foster said that “within all of us is a whole conglomerate of selves”
 - We have desire but we have more than one set of desires.
 - Some are bent in the direction of what is beautiful and true
 - Some are bent in the direction of what is wrong and upside down
- Ephesians 4 (NIV)
 - When talking about calling, Paul refers more to our character than our career. Calling is about your character, not your career.
 - The invitation is to put off an old identity and put on a new identity. Put off an old way of life and put on a new way of life. (v. 22-24)
- One of the key tasks of our apprenticeship with Jesus is to discover our identity and calling.
 - It is one thing to say that your identity is rooted in who you are becoming in Christ, it is another thing to change. How do we change? Like Paul said, how do we get to the full measure of Christ?
- **Spiritual formation is the *PROCESS* over a lifetime by which we are transformed to become more like Jesus and in doing so, more like our true self.**

Unintentional Spiritual Formation

Unintentional spiritual formation is how you are formed with little or no intention on your part which includes the stories we believe, our habits, our relationships, and our environment.

- **We are formed by the stories we believe.**
 - Ex. What we are told stories by our culture about sexuality, gender, wealth, etc
 - Do we believe the stories from our culture or the story in scripture?
- **We are formed by our habits.**
 - Our habits shape our loves and longings. What we do on a regular basis shapes our heart and is what we become.
 - The more you do something the more you want to do something. The less you do something the less you want to do something.
 - Ex. Eating dessert, exercise, drinking coffee, reading scripture
- **We are formed by our relationships.**
 - The text in Ephesians 4 is all in the plural tense, not singular. Community forms us.
 - We become like the people we spend time with on a regular basis.
 - Ex. Our family of origin, culture, circle of friends, those we sit next to in class or at work
- **We are formed by our environment.**
 - The two gods of Ephesus were sexuality and greed. What Paul calls out of the church of Ephesus is sexuality and greed.
 - As followers of Jesus, we celebrate our culture but also critique it.
 - We need to carefully discern as a community what ways our environment has put lies into our head and become shaped.
 - Ex. Phone addiction, recycling, alcohol, sexuality
- All of this happens over time and through our experiences. The stories we believe, our habits, our relationships, and our environment forms us. All we need to do is wake up and realize who we are becoming.
- **Who are you becoming?**

How We Change (Pt. 6)

Intentional Spiritual Formation

Our apprenticeship to Jesus has got to be stronger than the formation of the world around us.

- **Teaching counters the stories we believe.**
 - Jesus is a Teacher. We see Jesus changing society by telling an alternative story of what it means to be human.
 - Romans 12:2 - "Do not be conformed to the pattern of this world but be transformed by the renewing of your mind." Getting right ideas into your head is the starting point but not the ending point. It must move to our body. The way of Jesus is a way of life.
- **Practice counters our habits.**
 - In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus begins and ends the sermon with the idea of practice: "whoever practices and teaches these commands will be great in the kingdom of heaven"
 - Most think we change by *trying* really hard, but we really change by *training* really hard. Apprenticeship to Jesus is practice. Ex. we don't just stop worrying, we practice not worrying.
 - Through discipleship / practice with Jesus you can become the kind of person who is free from _____. Ex. Anxiety, addiction, sex addiction
 - The practices and training of Jesus are known as the spiritual disciplines
 - Ex. Sabbath rest, daily silence / solitude, sharing a weekly meal with community, simplicity (own / buy less)
 - Over a long period of time, these practices will lead us to become someone of _____. Ex. Peace, sobriety, self control
- **Community counters our relationships**
 - Although seemingly odd, there is a difference between relationships and community.
 - We self select relationships based on preference while community is the full range of relationships built around the way of Jesus. Ex. Church, best friend, roommate, pastor
 - Community is an incubator for our spiritual formation, the context in which we grow, succeed, fail, and wrestle in a safe place.
 - Community provides exposure and encouragement.
 - We are exposed to where we actually are at in our growth. Community will bring out the best of you and it will bring out the worst of you.
 - We are encouraged as people see who we are becoming in Christ and they partner with us in that journey toward fullness.
- **The Holy Spirit counters our environment.**
 - The Holy Spirit is the center of all we do and the source of power for our transformation.
 - Our role is to seek teaching, to practice, and to live in community. The rest is God's role.
 - Augustine: "Without him we can't, but without us he won't"
 - Jesus does the heavy lifting. Spiritual formation is a partnership between us and God, but He does more than 50% of the work.
- Are you too busy to follow Jesus? **To follow Jesus is a lifestyle and is our whole lives.** We do not add Jesus on top of our already busy lives. It costs us even more to not be discipled by Jesus than to open time in our lives to be discipled by Jesus.
- Happiness is not the point of life, it is the byproduct of a life well lived. If you want to live a happy life, then follow Jesus, become more like Him, and become more like your true self.
- **How do we change to become more like Jesus?**
 - Through teaching, practice, community, and, more than anything, by the Holy Spirit.
 - This happens over time and through the difficulties of life.