**Spiritual Formation**

**Part I Spiritual Transformation**

Tonight we start at two- or three-part series of midweeks on the subject of Spiritual Formation or Spiritual Transformation.

What does Spiritual Formation mean?

What does Spiritual mean?

Psalms 46:10 The goal here is to know God.

To be spiritual is to know the things of the Spirit—to know God.

To undergo spiritual formation is to grow in our knowledge of and experience of God.

We have been raised to think that the goal of our ministry is to get people saved—to get them baptized.

This is not the ultimate goal.

Many of us think that the goal is not just to get people saved, but to keep them faithful to the end—to get them to heaven.

This is not the goal either (although it is a really good goal).

The goal is to bring people to maturity in Christ. But what does that look like?

The goal is not to start well but to end well.

Are you getting old, or are you becoming mature?

Are you growing? Are you becoming, steadily, more spiritual.

Honestly, this is not the norm among us. We plateau.

Are you being transformed? Let’s get real here!!!!

2 Peter 1:3-4 The goal: To participate in the divine nature. What does that mean?

One way to think about it is as a journey.

The spiritual journey:

Chaos → Conversion → Conformity → Questioning → Conviction → Convergence

This is what Eastern Christians describe as deification.

The Bible calls it sanctification. It is already-but-not-yet.

Our passage for tonight:

2 Cor 3:7-18

2 Cor 3:7-11

The old covenant is “the ministry that brought death.”

Why? Romans 7:13 It made sin utterly sinful.

It made us realize what great trouble we were in.

It brought about ceremonial cleanness. This is a bit like the conformity stage.

But, it was glorious.

Q: What does glorious/glory mean.

English: magnificent, wonderful, worthy of great praise.

Hebrew: Shining forth—emitting great light

And Moses’ ministry was truly glorious!!!! Literally!!!

He had to wear a veil.

When the temple was consecrated the priests came running out because of the glory of the Lord.

But the ministry of Christ—the New Covenant is far more glorious.

v. 9 It brings righteousness.

v. 11 It lasts.

2 Cor 3:12-18

v. 12 Because we have this hope, we are very bold.

What hope? The hope of glorification. (we will say more about that)

Q: Would you say that you are very bold?

v. 14, 16 In Christ the veil is removed!!!! In Christ you can finally see.

Q: Can you remember when God removed the veil?

v. 16 This happens when we receive the Holy Spirit at baptism

Here is the main passage for tonight—the real take-home lesson:

2 Cor 3:16 Having the veil removed is not the goal. The goal is spiritual transformation. The goal is convergence. The goal is glorification!!!

And we all, who with unveiled faces contemplate/reflect the Lord’s glory, are being transformed into his image with ever-increasing glory.

It is both. We contemplate, then we reflect, then we contemplate, then we reflect, then we contemplate, then we reflect.

Q: Is this happening in your life?

What is the key: Contemplating!!!

Justification (veil removed) → Sanctification → Glorification.

That is the goal.

So, how will we do this.

Step 1 for tonight Psalm 46:10 Be still and know that I AM God. I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth.

See you in four weeks.

Discussion:

Chaos → Conversion → Conformity → Questioning → Conviction → Convergence

1. Where are you at in this process?

2. How do you feel about that?

3. Any thoughts on how to proceed toward the right?

**Spiritual Formation**

**Part II Rule of Life and Spiritual Disciplines**

Review:

Psalms 46:10 Be still and know that I Am God. The goal here is to know God.

To be spiritual is to know the things of the Spirit—to know God.

To undergo spiritual formation is to grow in our knowledge of and experience of God.

We have been raised to think that the goal of our ministry is to get people saved—to get them baptized.

This is not the ultimate goal. It is not even necessarily to get them to heaven. It is to get them to Christ-likeness.

The goal is not to start well but to end well.

One way to think about it is as a journey.

The spiritual journey:

Chaos → Conversion → Conformity → Questioning → Conviction → Convergence

We studied 2 Cor 3:7-18

When we came into Christ, the veil was removed.

“And we all, who with unveiled faces contemplate/reflect the Lord’s glory, are being transformed into his image with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.

That is the goal.

How do we reflect with ever-increasing glory? By contemplating the Lord with unveiled faces.

And this is the work of the Holy Spirit.

Job #1 is God-centered living. 2 Cor 4:1 By God’s grace/mercy we are in this ministry. Therefore we do not lose heart. We commend ourselves to everyone’s conscience (not their approval) in the sight of God. God is our audience. We appeal to people, but not for their approval.

Models of Spiritual Transformation:

1. Chaos → Conversion → Conformity → Questioning → Conviction → Convergence

2. James Fowler:

Intuitive faith (3-7, adopt parent’s faith, mix of fantasy and reality)

Literal faith (7-12 take stories literally)

Conventional faith 12-adult trust the “system,” in spiritual box. Most remain here.

Reflective faith 20’s – 30’s Questioning. Realizing there are other perspectives.

Conjunctive faith mid-life Accept mystery and paradox. Comfortable without answers.

Universalizing faith later life True freedom and joy. Not hemmed in by differences.

Hapburg and Geulich:

Recognition of God

Life of discipleship

Journey Inward

Journey Outward

Life of Love

A helpful metaphor for this transformation.

Is your ship moved by oars or by sails.

Human effort, rules, the “system” = oars

Truly trusting God, deeply knowing God, walking by the Holy Spirit = sails

OK, Great!!!! Great concepts!!! How do I get there?

1. Recognize that this is the goal.

2. Give great attention to your “Rhythm of Life.”

Also called a “Rule of Life”

3. Practice Spiritual Disciplines.

Our spiritual forebears (and yes, this includes people we do not normally listen to like Benedict, John of the Cross, Ignatius Loyola (Spiritual Exercises), Theresa of Avila and others) can instruct us in this, as they have specialized in spiritual disciplines.

1. A rule of life. Spiritual Rhythms

A rule is a rhythm, like a monastic rule.

We do not accidentally start living like Jesus.

Jesus had a “rule” of life. Ex. time of solitude, community, healing, teaching, feedback, solitude.

Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house and

went off to a solitary place, where he prayed.

Mt 14:13

Acts 2:42-47 A “rule” of life in the early church. Apostle’s teaching, fellowship, breaking of prayer and prayer

Example: Rule of Benedict. 6th century Primary rhythms:

1. Prayer 2. Work 3. Study “a handbook to make the radical demands of the gospel a practical reality in daily life. Methaphor: A trellis. The structure does not confine the plant, but to give it a place within which to grow.

Benedict’s goal: “Practicing the presence of God.”

A commitment to keeping regular practices.

1. Be more attentive to God’s work (to what God is doing)

2. Make ourselves available for God’s work.

3. Function and lead out of our God-centered identity.

We need to slow down, otherwise we get entangled in what the world tells us.

Spiritual Practices slow us down.

1. **Prayer**  Pray for family/church members, Breath prayer, time in prayer.

2. **Attentiveness** Find a way to slow down and notice what God is doing. Mindfulness.

Go for a walk 3/week, 5 minutes meditating/reflecting. Prayer of examen.

3. **Hospitality**. Have someone in your home. Have a deep conversation with someone, share your faith, coach a team, make 5 phone calls to encourage someone. The Little Way of Therese of Liseaux.

4. **Simplicity**. Less than 1 hr of social media. Drive slower. Limit TV. Cook and eat at home.

Two spiritual practices for this week (or actually three)

1. Breath Prayer

Consider what your greatest need is. Turn this into a prayer for that thing.

The inbreath addresses God.

The exhale is the thing you want.

Lord Jesus Christ Son of David

Have mercy on me a sinner

King of kings and Lord of lords

Help me to lead this church effectively

Jesus Christ, Prince of Peace.

I will rely on you.

2. Prayer of the Examen

Ignatius Loyola (Spiritual Exercises). Jesuits did this 2/day.

Think about your highs and lows. Think about our consolations and desolations.

Get in a quiet place. Ask God to help you to see what he wants you to see. Take a moment to review your day. Ask God to help you to see your consolation (ex what am I thankful for, what gave me life today, when did I bear the fruit of the spirit today)

Then: As God to ask you to see your desolation. What happened today that was negative, not life-giving, experienced confusion, darkness. What am I not thankful for.

Last: Pray, thanking God for both. Also, invite God to help you to change tomorrow.

Nighttime Prayer:

Lord it is night, it is night after a long day. What has been done has been done. What has not been done has not been done. So help us Let it be.

Lord The night is dark. Let our fears of the darkness of the world and of our own lives rest in You.

Lord tonight is quiet. Let the quietness of your peace enfold us, and all dear to us and all who have no peace.

Lord as the night heralds the dawn, Let us look expectantly to a New day, new joys and new possibilities. In your name we pray, Amen.

Discussion Questions:

1. Do you have any immediate reflections on how you might create your own “rule of life?”

2. Do you have any immediate reflections on possible spiritual disciplines you will engage in?

**Spiritual Formation Part III**

**IV. The Little Way**

St. Therese of Lisieux practices radical hospitality.

Born 1873 died 1897.

Becomes a cloistered Carmelite nun at 15.

She contracted tuberculosis.

I am young. I am cloistered. I will never amount to anything. I will never be a great saint. Instead of being discouraged, St. Thérèse trusted in God and believed that it was in her “littleness” that she could become a saint.

I concluded that God would not inspire desires which could not be realized, and that I may aspire to sanctity in spite of my littleness. For me to become great is impossible. I must bear with myself and my many imperfections; but ***I will seek out a means of getting to Heaven by a little way—very short and very straight, a little way that is wholly new***.

She shared her disciplines in *The Story of the Soul*.

After her death, she was appointed a doctor of the Catholic Church. The only three are Hildegaard, Theresa of Avila and Therese.

As she was dying her sister had her write down her “little way.”

She was studying 1 Cor 12:15-19. Which part of the body parts am I?

I would have loved to be the feet. I would have loved to be the hands. I would like to be the mouth, but I can’t be any of these things because I am cloistered.

She realizes that she is the heart. I will be the heart. I will be love.

She intentionally practices the affections of Jesus wherever she is.

This spiritual discipline is a kind of hospitality.

Being the heart of Jesus. It is the intentional practice of the fruits of the Spirit.

She spends time with the awkward, the grumpy, the “weird,” even though she knows that they will never change.

I must seek out and on my free days the company of the sisters least agreeable to me. Then she will be the Good Samaritan. Do not follow the social autopilot.

How to practice the Little Way:

Pick one or two very specific things you can do by which you can be the heart of Jesus to other people. Do it intentionally for a certain period of time.

For me: I chose to spend time around students on campus who are not “sharp.” I spend time praying for them, find ways to help them, give them a ride, etc.

Q: What will be your “Little Way?”

**V. The Prayer of the Beloved**

1. 10 minutes or so say “Jesus You Are the Beloved of God” Be open to wherever your imagination takes you to.

2. 10 minutes “Jesus, I am your Beloved.”

3. 10 minutes “Jesus, we all are the Beloved.”

**VI. Dwelling in the Word:**

The purpose of this exercise is to train ourselves to listen to the scripture, to let it speak deeply to us, and to let the Holy Spirit “guide us into all truth.”

1. Take time to read slowly a particular passage of Scripture

2. Ask yourself: What Happened? What did you learn? What Surprised you?

What is God calling you to do or to become in this passage?

3. Get with a partner and share with that person what God, through the Holy Spirit, has shown to you, and have them share the same with you.

4. Report back to the group what you heard your partner got from that passage.

For us: We are going to do this right now with 2 Cor 3:7-18

In the ideal practice of Dwelling in the Word, the same passage is done by the same group two or more times.

**VII. Lectio Divina Divine Reading**

*1. lectio | read*

Select a short passage from Scripture that you would like to explore and read the passage through many times. Read it aloud, read it silently, read it slowly, pausing between each line or phrase. Benedictines do this four times.

As you continue to read the text, listen for a word or phrase that stands out to you: What draws you in? What resonates with you? What makes you uncomfortable? What leaves you with questions?

*2. meditatio | meditate*

Now it’s time to focus in on the word, phrase or idea that stood out to you. Bring it to mind and meditate on it; repeat it in your mind slowly, noticing what comes up for you. Where does your imagination take you? Maybe visualize something. As feelings emerge, let them sink in without distracting you from your meditation.

*3. oratio | pray*

Pray to God about the word or phrase that stood out to you. Explore what made it capture your attention initially and share any feelings that came up for you during your meditation. Use the words in the text in your prayer. As you share these things in prayer, take note of any new insight you are given in regards to the text and/or what has been awakened in you through your word or phrase.

*4. contemplatio | contemplate*

As your time in prayer comes to a close, spend a few minutes in God’s presence contemplating what has happened within you throughout the time of reading, meditation, and prayer. Bring to mind any new insights you’ve received during this time, whether personal or in relation to the text.

Discussion questions:

1. What preliminary idea do you have for yourself about applying the Little Way? What practice might you try?

2. More broadly, what have you learned from these three lessons about the general idea of spiritual transformation—the process and the goal?