

Formation

Part 01

Overview

Spiritual formation isn't a Christian thing or even a religious thing; it's a *human* thing. To be human is to grow, to mature, to adapt over time. Formation is simply the process by which our "spirit," or inner person, is formed into a particular shape or character. Over a lifetime, we are spiritually formed by a complex alchemy of genetic inheritance, family patterns, childhood wounds, education, habits, decisions, relationships, environments, and more.

The problem is, most of our spiritual formation is unintentional. *It just happens*. And often, we are "conform[ed] to the pattern of this world," *more* than "transformed by the renewing of [our] mind."*

Practice reflection

Before we begin Session 02, break up into small groups and share your reflections on last session's practice of prayer.

- 01 What was most challenging about practicing a rhythm of prayer?
- 02 What is something you enjoyed about it?
- 03 What are you hoping for as you continue this rhythm of prayer?

* Romans 12v2

Teaching

Scripture

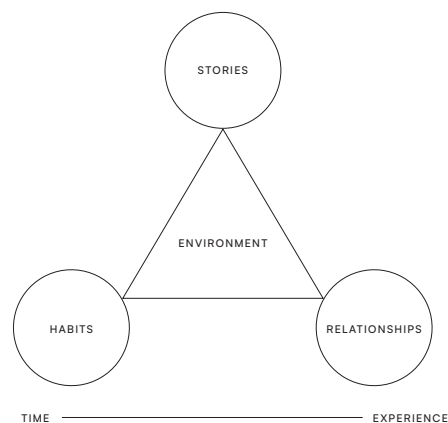
Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind.

—Romans 12v2

Session summary

- Spiritual formation isn't a Christian thing; it's a *human* thing.
- We are formed by a complex web of forces, but especially by:
 - Habits
 - Relationships
 - The stories we believe
 - Environment
 - Time
 - Experience
- Most of our formation is unintentional.
- Some of the most important questions to reflect on are:
 - Who am I becoming?
 - Am I being intentional about who I am becoming?
- One of the best ways to do this is through a Formation Audit.

Unintentional Spiritual Formation



[illegible]

Discussion questions

Pause the video and take some time to process together as a community.

Here are some questions for discussion:

- 01 What habits do you keep in your daily and weekly life? How might they be shaping you?
- 02 Who are the most important people in your life? What do those relationships look like?
- 03 As you reflect on your own journey, what stories have shaped the way you view the world? Where did these stories originate?
- 04 Did God reveal anything new to you in this session that you want to say more about?

After the video

Closing prayer

End your time together by praying this liturgy:

Good Creator, who made our inmost parts,
you see more of us than we do,
you know us better than we ever will,
and yet you call us “beloved”;
give us courage to see ourselves in the light,
to be honest with who we are, and what we’re not,
that in our being fully seen by you,
we may be transformed ever more greatly,
by your love, into your holy image.
Amen.

OPTIONAL

If you’d like to continue your conversation, here are some additional questions for reflection:

- 01 When you consider the list of forces that can unintentionally form us, does anything surprise you or stand out to you?**
- 02 When do you plan to set aside time for your Formation Audit? Is there anything coming up for you as you think about doing the audit?**

Practice

Formation Audit

Practice helps the information we take in become a part of who we are and transform our lives.

Our exercise for this session is to take an inventory of all the forces that are currently forming you.

- 01 This is one of the longest exercises in this Course, and we recommend you carve out a quiet time and place to spend ample time in thoughtful reflection and prayer.
- 02 Invite the Spirit of Jesus to come and illuminate your mind, silence the voice of the evil one, and to “give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know him better,” and that “the eyes of your heart may be enlightened.”*
- 03 Remember to answer *honestly* and *non-judgmentally*. You will likely feel your heart drift toward shame and denial, both of which will sabotage the effectiveness of this exercise.
- 04 Above all, do this exercise *with God*. Slowly and prayerfully, and with your heart at peace.

* Ephesians 1v17-18

Habits — What habits make up your everyday life? Write out your habits.

Morning routine:

Activities of a typical workday:

Evening routine:

Activities of a typical weekend:

Reflection: How do you think your habits are shaping you as a person? (See the two lists on page 37 for a list of possible effects)

Relationships — What relationships make up most of your life?

Family:

Friends:

Work:

Community:

Other:

Reflection: How are these people shaping you as a person? The key questions to ask are: What kind of person do I become when I'm around this person? What do they draw out in me or suppress in me?

Stories you believe — What are the “stories” you have come to believe?

What stories do you believe about God? (What is he like/not like? How does he feel toward you?)

What stories do you believe about yourself? (How does God see you? How do others see you? What kind of person are you? What do you see for your future?)

What stories do you believe about happiness? (What do you think will make you most happy and peaceful? Is it God? Money? Marriage? Success? Vacation?)

What stories do you believe about the meaning of life? (What do you think matters most? Perhaps your career? Family? Health? Something else?)

Reflection: What are the core stories of my life? Are they forming me as a person?

Environment — What are the cultural distinctives of my environment?

City: What is my city like? What is it known for?

Nation: What is my nation like? What are its highest cultural values?

Generation: What are my generation's values?

Digital algorithm: What are the algorithms feeding me news, information, and social connection like?

Ethnic and/or socio-economic group: What are the values and cultural norms and expectations of my cultural heritage and socio-economic class?

Reflection: How am I being formed or deformed by the cultural forces that are “normal” in my city/nation/generation/social media feed, but possibly far from the vision of Jesus?

Experience — What life experiences have most shaped me into who I am today?

Family of origin: What is my family like? What are its highest values? Deepest dysfunctions?

Greatest legacy?

Traumatic events: Have I experienced a traumatic event? What story has my body wordlessly learned from that trauma?

Key experiences: What are the key moments on the timeline of my life that have altered the trajectory of my story?

Spiritual autobiography: What are the key moments of my spiritual journey thus far?

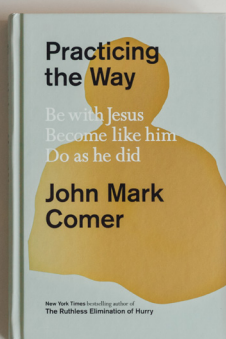
Reflection: How have my experiences formed and deformed me over the years? Where do I still need healing? What do I need to never forget and hold on to? What am I still missing?

Possible effects of following “the pattern of this world”:

- Stress
- Outrage
- Disconnection
- Debt
- Hurry
- Pride
- Lying
- Laziness
- Anxiety
- Distraction
- Dirty speech
- Alcoholism
- Fear
- Numbness
- Sarcasm
- Addiction
- Insecurity
- Overwhelm
- Put downs
- Substance abuse
- Hypervigilance
- Exhaustion
- Dishonor of authority
- Impulsiveness
- Jealousy
- Discouragement
- Contempt
- Lust
- Anger
- Loneliness
- Careerism
- Pornography
- Irritation
- Isolation
- Overwork
- Racism
- Impatience
- Shame
- Materialism
- Bigotry
- Resentment
- Division
- Discontent

Possible markers of following the Way of God’s Kingdom:

- Love
- Unhurried living
- Equity
- Restfulness
- Joy
- Simplicity of life
- Diversity
- Diligence
- Peace
- Calm
- Trust
- A sense of meaning and purpose
- Patience
- Generosity
- Acceptance
- A clear sense of direction
- Kindness
- Contentment
- Authenticity
- Creativity
- Gentleness
- Freedom
- Honesty
- Growth
- Faithfulness
- Warmth and affection
- Integrity
- Self-control
- Relational connection
- Harmony
- Faith
- Community
- Vulnerability
- Hope
- Sense of belonging
- Compassion



This session’s reading

For this session, we’re reading “Goal #1: Be with Jesus,” in *Practicing the Way* by John Mark Comer, pp. 32-63.

Resources to go deeper

If you're interested in learning more about spiritual formation, here are some more resources to consider.

Recommended reading

- *Invitation to a Journey* by M. Robert Mullholland
- *You Are What You Love* by James K.A. Smith
- *Beautiful Resistance* by our guest, Jon Tyson

Recommended listening

- The Way teaching series from Jon Tyson and Church of the City New York:
link.practicingtheway.org/course-s2
- Episode 02 of the Practicing the Way podcast: link.practicingtheway.org/course-s2b



Guest bio

Our guest this session was Jon Tyson, author, teacher, and pastor of Church of the City New York in Manhattan. To learn more, visit www.jontyson.co or church.nyc.

Practice reflection

Reflection is a key component in our spiritual formation. Like practice, it allows what we learn to become a part of who we are.

Before your next time together, take five to ten minutes to journal out your answers to the following three questions.

- 01 What did you find helpful about taking the Formation Audit?
- 02 When you consider the ways you are being unintentionally formed, what felt most challenging?
- 03 Did anything surprise you?