



Foundations of Christian Spiritual Formation

Lesson 1 *Spiritual Formation and Double Knowledge*

Spiritual Formation Defined

Spiritual Formation for the Christian basically refers to the Spirit-driven process of forming the inner world of the human self in such a way that it becomes like the inner being of Christ himself.

—Dallas Willard, *Renovation of the Heart*

*The Holy Spirit is the agent of change. The driver of the process.

*We cooperate, participate, work alongside the Holy Spirit, but we will never change ourselves.

You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; to be made new in the attitude of your minds; and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.

—Ephesians 4:22–24

*By the power of the Holy Spirit, you are changed from the inside out and actually become different.

Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—this is your spiritual act of worship. Do not be conformed any longer to the pattern of this world but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing, and perfect will.

—Romans 12:1–2

Common Misconceptions

*Spiritual Formation is not a new, passing fad. The term is new to us in the Evangelical tradition, but its roots are in ancient Christianity.

*Spiritual Formation is not a tool used to gain righteousness. It attempts to inform and understand the process in which the Holy Spirit shapes our core, our heart, into the spirit and attitude of Christ.

The Ultimate End of Spiritual Formation

*The means of intentionally growing towards the the ultimate ends of Spiritual formation can be viewed through the two lenses of knowledge of God and knowledge of self.

Nearly all the wisdom we possess, that is to say true and sound wisdom, consists of two parts: the knowledge of God and of ourselves.

—John Calvin

I desire to know God and the soul. Nothing more? Nothing whatever.

—St. Augustine

*The ultimate end of pursuing the knowledge of God is love of God.

—God should never be studied as an object, but always as the subject of our love.

Subservient End—pursued only for the sake of another

Subordinate End—pursued for its own sake and also for the sake of another

Ultimate End—pursued for its own sake and never for the sake of another

*The ultimate end of pursuing the knowledge of self is true identity in Christ.

—Self examination, self reflection, shows us if we really grasp this new identity or if we still struggle with misconceptions of God and our true identities.

The spiritual journey is characterized by the ever-increasing knowledge of our mixed motivations, the dark sides of our personalities, and the emotional traumas of early childhood. Nothing is more helpful to reduce pride than the actual experience of self-knowledge. If we are discouraged by it, we have misunderstood its meaning.

—Thomas Keating, *Invitation to Love: The Way of Christian Contemplation*

Reflections

♣ Where are you in this process of spiritual formation?

♣ Ask God to reveal your deep beliefs of Him in this process:

—Is love of God your ultimate goal or is happiness, a successful life, self-righteousness?

—At your core level do you believe you are loved and forgiven by God and that He is forming you into a new creation?

—Do you often examine your motives and actions before God or would you rather not peer below the surface?

♣ Pray David's prayer in Psalm 139:23–24

*Search me, O God, and know my heart;
test me and know my anxious thoughts.
See if there is any offensive way in me,
and lead me in the way everlasting.*