

Formed - Follower 2

Life is a miracle!

Transformation and growth over the years are amazing.

Yes our bodies change and grow, but what is amazing is our minds' growth.

Perceptions create reactions, which form memories. Our memories shape our values, which dictate our life choices. This process of change and growth in our lives is called Spiritual Formation.

Spiritual formation = the process by which our spirit is formed into a particular shape or character (The character of Jesus or someone else).

Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.

—Romans 12:2

Conform and Transform.

Root word in Greek metamorphao-metamorphosis
(worm to butterfly)

To change the essential form or nature of something.

This is the word picture that Paul establishes here to show the depth of change in the human soul that happens through life.

This Greek word metmorphao is used in this scripture in the present passive tense.

This means formation is happening to us right now. It's not a season or a period; the human mind is going through some formation, whether we are conscious of it or not.

Pick a value - how did you get to value that value?

Formation is happening right now!

We are all being formed all the time. Paul wrote this here because he wanted us to be aware of who, not what, is forming us. He tried to make spiritual formation a conscious process and not an unintentional one. He wanted followers of Jesus to discern their formation so that they could be transformed and not conformed. This is what Jesus wants from his followers. He wants us to be formed into His disciples.

We are not his disciples when we are called; we are his disciples when we intentionally follow.

The question is not whether I shall be formed but consciously determining who it is that shall form you.

Spiritual formation is not a Christian thing. It is a human thing.

Our spirits are transformed or conformed over a long period.

Through a complex tapestry of genetic inheritance, family patterns, childhood/formation years wounds, education, habits, decisions, relationships, environments, and much more.

You have been formed.

You are being formed.

And we will be formed in the days to come.

The problem is that most of our formation is unintentional.

No one sets out to become greedy, fearful, judgemental, anxious, or bitter. It just happens.

UNINTENTIONAL SPIRITUAL FORMATION

How we become who we become - understanding this brings our formation into our conscious thought. (Romans 12:2)

Six primary forces form us.

- Habits
- Relationships
- Stories we believe
- Environment
- Time
- Experience

Some of these are more about what we do (active), and some are more about what happens to us (passive)

HABITS

What we do regularly, we become.

Reading the news, doom scrolling on social media, going to the gym.

The things we do do something to us. They get into the core of our being and form and shape who we become.

How many of our habits, what we do, are so subconscious that we are oblivious to doing them, let alone the effect they have on us?

But our habits gradually turn our hearts in a particular direction.

RELATIONSHIPS

“Show me a man’s friends, and I will show you his future.”
We become like the people we spend time with. The people we hang out with can have a good or bad influence on our formation.

We often allow friends and family to conform to us rather than transform us. We want to be like the people around us...

Proverbs 13:20

“Whoever walks with the wise becomes wise, but the companion of fools will suffer harm.”

(1 Corinthians 13:33)

THE STORIES WE BELIEVE

God wired the human brain to absorb all the data points along our journey and turn them into a narrative.

These form the stories we live in and live out.

Our life story of being a disciple of Jesus is so powerful that in the book of Revelation, our stories, when governed by the story of Jesus, are made so powerful that they defeat Satan.

Every day, we are exposed to stories. Stories about what the good life looks like, what would make us happy, and what the meaning and purpose of life is.

These stories shape us more than we realize. Some of those stories we determine to be true, choose the kind of people we become.

Pick the stories you believe carefully because they determine who you become.

ENVIRONMENT

Our stories, relationships, and habits all come from our environment.

Large city/small town, Western secular, or traditional religious culture. Because of the digital age, we can always exist in two environments at once.

The influence our environment has on us exists whether we are aware of it or not.

You will become like your environment.

TIME

These forces operate on us slowly over time. They sneak up on us little by little and have a cumulative effect. We wake up one day and realize we have changed.

EXPERIENCES

We are profoundly changed by not only what we do and the experiences we have control over but also by what is done to us.

It is very pronounced during our childhood but happens to us throughout life.

Our experiences profoundly shape who we become and define life's joy.

Unintentional Spiritual Formation.

The question is not whether you are becoming someone but rather who you are becoming.

WE CAN NOT AFFORD TO BE UNINTENTIONAL

And having chosen them, he called them to come to him. And having called them, he gave them right standing with himself. And having given them right standing, he gave them his glory.

—Romans 8:30

Chosen → called → justified → glorified.

When Jesus calls you, when he says, “Follow me,” he calls you from an unintentional life to a path of intentional formation.

Everyone gets somewhere, but not everyone gets somewhere on purpose.

—Craig Groeschel.

Mankind’s spiritual formation was always supposed to have been influenced by the Word of God.

Then the LORD God formed the man of dust from the ground.

—Genesis 2:7

He who forms the hearts of all, who considers everything they do.

—Psalm 33:15

The verb “formed” (Hb. yatsar) conveys the idea of a potter shaping clay into a specific form.

God is not unintentional about your spiritual formation. He does not want us to allow habits, relationships, the stories we believe, our environment, time, or our experiences to form us unintentionally.

THE BLESSING OF BEING AN INTENTIONAL DISCIPLE

Jesus doesn't go ahead of you to show you where you will end up; he goes ahead of you to show you how to get there.

He walks through our circumstances so that we will follow him through them.

The blessing of being a disciple of Jesus **is** that you are a disciple of Jesus!

CONSEQUENCES

It is an axiom of life that we reap what we sow.

Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows.

— Galatians 6:7

There are natural consequences to our actions. The world operates under the law of cause and effect. There is no way around it: every time we form a habit, get into a relationship, believe a story, or choose an environment, we also choose the consequences of that intentional or unintentional decision.

Galatians 6:7 directly speaks about our spiritual formation, not our financial situation.

As we have already established, we are being formed whether we are aware of it. In the context of this verse, we are sowing whether we are aware of it or not.

We can not defy this universal law.

We want to know what we are going to get in the harvest, in the reaping. But our harvest is a life in relationship with Jesus. If we want to reap a life of intentional discipleship (blessing), then we have to sow like intentional disciples.

TIMING

And let us not grow weary of doing good, for in due season we will reap, if we do not give up.

—Galatians 6:9

Don't allow the harvest of your circumstance to change your intentional sowing.

Remember that you may be reaping what you

previously sowed, which may not match what you are currently sowing.

Discipleship is not about what you will get. Our blessing is simply being called by Jesus to be his disciples. To be intentional, we must have an intention (harvest). Our intention is to be apprentices of Jesus! So, if that's what we want to reap, we must sow the disciplines of Jesus.

We will never do that perfectly.

Even intentional disciples sow unintentionally...

Let both grow together until the harvest, and at harvest time I will tell the reapers, "Gather the weeds first and bind them in bundles to be burned, but gather the wheat into my barn."

—Matthew 13:30

You will become better and better at seeing the fruit of influence that is not of Jesus, and you will become wise to weed out the sowing of conformity and sow better next time.

FORMATION AUDIT...

Take stock of how you have been sowing in each area that forms you.

Have you changed your seed recently?

How has your harvest directed your next season of sowing?

What adjustments do you need to make to be more intentional in each areas of formation?