

DON'T SLOW DOWN & DON'T GO QUIET

GM // newbies // online

Everyone is in a process of spiritual formation from the time we are born.

Every thought, every action, every message that comes at us is shaping who we are.

All of these things are constantly acting on us in small incremental ways and forming us.

We are all becoming something: either good or bad.

Robert Mulholland Jr. puts it this way ...

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Every thought we hold, every decision we make, every action we take, every emotion we allow to shape our behavior, every response we make to the world around us, every relationship we enter into, every reaction we have toward the things that surround us and impinge upon our lives--all of these things, little by little, are shaping us into some kind of being. We are being shaped into either the wholeness of the image of Christ or a horribly destructive caricature of that image, destructive not only to ourselves but to others, for we inflict our brokenness upon them. This wholeness or destructiveness radically conditions our relationship with God, ourselves and others ... We become either agents of God's healing and liberating grace, or carriers of the sickness of this world.

The Christian journey, therefore, is an intentional and continual commitment to a lifelong process of growth toward wholeness in Christ. - M. Robert Mulholland Jr.

When it comes to spiritual formation there is no neutral ground.

There is no Spiritual Sweden where we get to opt out and not take sides.

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And when we first Get the Gospel -- realizing that Jesus is our Savior and Lord -- we are awakened to this reality.

But our salvation in Christ isn't just a one off moment, "I prayed a prayer, now let me get on with doing my life my way."

Jesus saves us and calls us into a journey to follow him.

His pattern was set from the first disciples he called: **Follow me and I will make you into ...**

That is the journey of following Jesus that we are looking into today: **Growing Up in the Gospel**

2 Corinthians 3:17-18 : NOTE: USE FONT COLORING BELOW

17 Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. 18 And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, **are being transformed into the same image [Jesus] from one degree of glory to another, For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit.**

Growing up in the gospel means ...

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We are being changed to be more like Jesus.

This idea is called by other terms such as spiritual formation or sanctification.

And all that means the same thing: **It is the process of God making us more like himself.**

But what does that mean to become more like Jesus?

Leaning again on Mulholland...

Spiritual formation is a process of being formed in the image of Christ, a journey into becoming persons of compassion, persons who forgive, persons who care deeply for others and the world, persons that offer themselves to God to become agents of divine grace in the lives of others and the world--in brief, persons who love and serve as Jesus did.

- M. Robert Mulholland Jr.

I don't know about you but I read that and want to say ...
"How can I make that happen NOW!" → [H. Yes Lord Please! :)]

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But that's the rub with growing up in the gospel.
It isn't "transform yourself into the image of Christ."
It's you "BEING transformed."
It is something that is done to you.

Which means ... drumroll ... we aren't in control of the process.

We so often get that part wrong.
B/C our bias is toward being in control.

We want to be in control of **what** we are being changed into.
We want to be in control of the **pace** that change happens.
And, we want to be in control of **how** it happens.

But BEING transformed takes it out of our hands.
and puts the power and authority squarely in God's hands.

Like it says at the end of v18. This comes from the Lord who is the Spirit.

The Spirit who is all-wise ... knows everything about us.
He knows more of what's in our hearts than we do.

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Which is why he doesn't change us all at once.

2 Corinthians 3:18 : NOTE: USE FONT COLORING BELOW

18 And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another, For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit.

God is changing us at his speed not ours.

Gospel growth is more like a crock-pot than a microwave.

I love crock-pots ... when they FINALLY finish.

But it takes a long time before you see anything happening.

But then eventually we start to pick-up a faint fragrance in the air that grows stronger.

Then you start to feel confidence that something IS happening.

This is the norm for growing in the gospel.

Its slow and steady change.

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This is hard for us b/c our culture has disciplined us into an ingrained desire for instant gratification.

When we want something we want it fast and easy.

Tinder has made relationships fast and easy.

Credit cards make buying stuff fast and easy.

Fast food makes satisfying our hunger fast and easy.

Facebook/Instagram as made friendship fast and easy.

[SLOW] The things that used to take time and investment have been turned into shallow valueless commodities that are quick and convenient to get.

We have to realize that we can bring this mindset into following Jesus.

We want fast and easy Christianity ...

We want microwave over crock-pot.

“God, fix my problem now.”

“God, make me a better person, and make it snappy.”

[actually more often ... “Change that other person ... and hurry up ... its ruining my day.”]

But God knows that is going to make us less like Jesus not more like Jesus.

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Have you known one pleasant person who always got what they wanted when they wanted? → Exactly.

God's slow and steady work in us does two things:

- (1) We grow in grace and mercy for ourselves and (2) others.

As you grow in the gospel you learn to trust in God's timing and measure for every new degree of glory he brings you and others into.

Now, while God's timing will always be a mystery, the means by which he changes us is not.

And this is the part where we actually have to do something.

2 Corinthians 3:18 : NOTE: USE FONT COLORING BELOW

18 And we all, with unveiled face, **beholding the glory of the Lord**, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another, For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit.

To become more like Jesus we have to seek him with the intent to behold his glory.

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Here it says, “beholding the glory of the Lord.”

There is a call to action for us.

Growing up in the gospel requires the intentional effort of creating space so we can do this.

And if Satan has a primary scheme to slow the God’s kingdom it is to make Christians so busy that they can’t engage in what the old church fathers called “the means of grace.” Or as we call them today: “spiritual disciplines”.

We often relegate Satan’s efforts to being behind our suffering and problems. To a degree yes.

But even God uses those, if we allow him, to shape us deeply.

In fact, when you study some of the pillars of our faith you will find they endured trials long and deep.

But if Satan can tempt a Christian to fill their calendar with all kinds of legitimate distractions that pull them away of beholding God’s glory ... Guess what, he’ll take that all day long.

Satan and society and our own sinful nature pull at us fill our life with the Noise of constant busyness.

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They pressure us to perform to their standards of success in our careers, as parents, as friends.

Or they pull at us with the vanities of entertainment, hobbies, and various pursuits of pleasure.

We are so busy running in different directions, we CAN'T stop and take a moment to turn down the noise and BEHOLD the glory of our God.

That is why we want Christianity to be Fast and Easy ... 'cuz we aint got time for that!

So we chase after convenience and sensationalism. → “Get me to the worship concert where I can experience God.”

“How can I get the most of God in the least amount of time?”

But we've lost the value of pushing pause, and slowing down to Behold.

In fast/easy Christianity our vision of God is like a photo you take out the window of your car at 60 mph. It's all blurred.

But when we stop and behold. We allow time for the eyes of our heart to focus and behold Him.

Let me get a little more practical.

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It says in the passage, “**With unveiled face**, beholding the glory of the Lord.”

It is talking about the privilege Christians live in.

God’s glory isn’t hidden from us like it was in the Old Covenant.

The veil has been torn!

The more literal translation of the phrase “beholding the glory of the Lord” in the verse is: beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord.

We see God’s glory as a reflection in a mirror.

So what are the mirror’s reflecting God’s glory?

It is very clear from the context here that it is the gospel. Seeing Jesus in God’s Word.

I can behold my wife’s beauty in the reflection of a mirror and it doesn’t cheapen or lessen her beauty.

We see the glory of the Lord as we look into the mirror called the Bible.

And it is the Holy Spirit who enables that.

He turns that book into a glory mirror.

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I go through this little ritual before I open my Bible to read.

It helps me remember WHO and WHAT I'm looking for in the pages.

I place my Bible in front of me.

I open it up and close my eyes.

And I begin with a simple prayer.

Holy Spirit, just like you hovered over the empty void at creation and God begin speaking and you took those words and gave them form and shape and made living things appear.

Do that right now.

Let me see the glory of Jesus in these pages.

Take the words on these pages and bring them into my heart and give them form and shape and life.

And I don't do this to jump into Bible study

I start out my day with the intention to behold God's glory.

Now, I'm not suggesting Bible study is bad.

I study the Bible all the time.

The inductive Bible study method is a great tool to have in your arsenal.

And that was the only tool I used for years.

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But something started to happen.

In Ruth Hayley Barton's book, *Sacred Rhythms*, she expresses exactly what I was experiencing.

“Slowly but surely the Scriptures were becoming a place of human striving and intellectual hard work. Somehow, I had fallen into a pattern of using the Scriptures as a tool to accomplish utilitarian purposes rather experiencing them primarily as a place of intimacy with God for my own soul's sake. And somewhere along the way I got tired. Very tired. When I was alone with the Scriptures, they began to feel lifeless and boring ... and obligatory ... The real surprise was not that this happened but the fact that the shift was so subtle. After all, the purposes for which I was using the Scriptures were not bad in and of themselves. It's just that over time, without my awareness, those purposes had trumped the greater purpose for which the Scriptures have been given: to allow my own heart and soul to be penetrated by an intimate word from God. My mind remained engaged, but my heart and soul had drifted far away.” -- Ruth Hayley Barton

I was there for years ... as a pastor.

I thought something was wrong with me.

Then, by God's grace, a man named Ted Sinn [no joke] came into life and taught me another way to read the Bible.

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Instead of reading for information, you read for relationship and intimacy with God.

He introduced me to the age old method of spiritual reading.

Here we refer to it as Community Bible Reading.

Instead of coming over the Bible to study and dissect it, you come under it in surrender to let it dissect you.

In August of 2015 I committed to trying this method for 3 weeks.

6 days in while reading the Song of Solomon it hit me and change the game!

God's word was reading me, it was challenging my faulty thought patterns, it was showing me some of the unhealthy trust structures I'd built and been leaning on instead of God, it exposed my insecurities, and all of this was going on while God was showing how deep his love was for me.

What was happening was this reading for relationship wasn't stopping at my head it was moving into my heart.

Here's the difference:

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When we read Scripture for relationship we pay attention to our own inner dynamics and allow our response to take place in the deeper levels of our beings. We are open to a whole different set of questions—questions that help us to risk greater levels of truth telling with ourselves and with God. In addition to asking, What does it say? What does it mean? How do I apply it to my life?—all questions that promote primarily cognitive activity and allow us to remain firmly in control of the whole experience—we might ask:

- How do I feel about what is being said? Where do I find myself resonating deeply? Where do I find myself resisting, pulling back, wrestling with what Scripture might be saying?**
- Why do I feel this way? What aspect of my life or my inner being is being touched or spoken to through this Scripture?**
- What do my reactions tell me about myself—my attitudes, my relating patterns, my perspectives, my behaviors? Am I willing to look at that in God's presence?**

-- Ruth Haley Barton

Here's the thing ...

Growing up in the Gospel isn't about how much you can know about it and quote it.

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The Pharisees knew the scriptures better than anyone in Jesus' day.

And they still rejected him and put him on a cross.

Growing up in the Gospel is about seeing Jesus as the hero in every story.

It is about seeing ourselves as the failure in every story.

When we read about the prodigal son, we read ourselves in that.

I'm both the son who left and the son who stayed.

I'm both the leper who returned to give thanks and the nine who didn't.

But in all these stories what stirs my heart is the reality that Jesus saved me/healed me. I'm accepted b/c of what he did.

It stirs me to give grace more and more to others.

What I love about spiritual reading or CBR, is that it always lands you in prayer.

When we look at Jesus' life, it is filled with prayer.

Luke 5:15-16

15 But now even more the report about him went abroad, and great crowds gathered to hear him and to

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be healed of their infirmities. 16 But he would withdraw to desolate places and pray.

It didn't matter what was going on...

The demands and expectations of the crowds.

The needs surrounding him.

He'd turn down the Noise, and go to a quiet solitary place to be with His Father in Heaven.

Jesus was a prayer.

And followers of Jesus are meant to be as well.

Prayer disciplines in various ways.

It is an act of surrender and an admission of dependence on God to provide for all our spiritual and natural needs.

But we must not miss that the very act of prayer is an act of faith.

You are praying to a God you can't see.

But even so, Jesus taught us that prayer is an intentional way to turn our hearts to behold God's glory.

We walk by faith not by sight.

Jesus always invited people to tell him their needs.

He still does today.

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But when he taught his disciples to pray, he didn't teach them to start with their needs.

First, he tells them to start praying by asking to behold God's glory:

Our Father in Heaven ... Hallowed be your name.

We don't start with us, we start with beholding Him.

I'm not a natural prayer like some of you who can pray the paint off the walls. [super jealous !]

But I realized that prayer was too important to use that as an excuse, so I sought out help.

In my research I discovered, yet again, an age old prayer practice called the Divine Hours. [weird name ... really helpful]

It is Scripture-fed prayers that lead you to behold God's glory.

These prayers are written down in books.

It has prayers for every day of the year.

And, if you are game, prayers for the morning, noon, and evening.

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The one I really like and have been using for more than 2 years is by Phyllis Tickle ... no joke. [Sinn / Tickle ... have fun with that]

[show slide of book covers]

I have them on my kindle cloud reader so I can bring it up on my phone or iPad.

So, no matter where I'm at, when its prayer time ... I stop and pray.

Which, brings me to a couple of lessons that I've learned along the way as I've followed Jesus in this journey of prayer.

The first, is that the more I practice prayer the more comfortable I become sitting in silence and just waiting on and listening to God.

Yes, I pray to him as well. But there is something about that sitting quietly that starts to turn down the noise in my head and heart.

I don't feel pressure to speak. [which often is a form of control to let go of].

I just sit in silent surrender listening ... yielding control of the time to God.

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The second thing I've learned is that I need reminders to stop and pray.

So I've set alarms on my phone at 8am, 12pm, 4:15pm.

These remind me that its prayer time.

Now sometimes I'm in a meeting or counseling with someone and I can't stop.

But if I'm in the car driving somewhere, I'll take time to turn all the noise down and focus on God. At least pray the Lord's prayer and whatever else God puts on my heart.

The final thing I want to share that I've learned is that by lunch time I've usually forgotten about God's presence and active work in and around me.

Praying, for however long, helps me to stop, turn down the noise and get centered back in His presence, His will, His glory.

I'm excited about what God is doing to stir us toward prayer.

We want to be a praying church, not a church that prays.

More of you are catching this and it is exciting.

And that is the fruit of growing up in the gospel.

We start to desire God's glory above all things.

For ourselves and others.

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See, the more we behold his glory the more we want to share it with others.

And that is what we will tackle next Sunday in our final sermon of this series: **Going Out with the Gospel**

INVITE BAND UP

Jesus is inviting us to respond to His glory in two ways:

1. Giving: we don't give to people or organizations. We give to God in response to who He is, and to advance His kingdom here on earth.
 - a. If you are a guest there is no pressure to give. It's an invitation for those who call OH home.
 - b. Giving buckets at each communion table around the room // also can give on the website or app.
2. The second invitation is communion.
 - a. We stop and remember that Jesus died for our sins. We get to behold His glory b/c he made a way through his sacrifice.
 - b. We come to the table and take with thankful hearts.

NOT A CHRISTIAN:

- Your first step isn't communion, its surrendering to Jesus as Savior and Lord.
- Maybe you've seen his glory today. There is a response required of you: repent and accept Jesus as Lord and Savior.

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- If that's you pray this simple prayer: Jesus I'm a sinner but you are a great Savior. Have mercy on me and save me from my sins.
- If you pray that prayer, we invite you to take your first real communion.
- And this is something that you don't keep hidden.
- Share it with us or someone you came with.

PRAY

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