

Gospel Witness: Gospel Formation

Jerry Cisar — January 15, 2023

Text: Matthew 28:18-20

Introduction

Dallas Willard: “You will find few scholars or leaders in Christian circles who *deny* that we are supposed to make disciples or apprentices to Jesus *and teach them to do all things that Jesus said....* Jesus’ instructions on this matter are, after all, starkly clear. We just don’t do what he said. We don’t seriously attempt it. And apparently we don’t know how to do it.” (*The Divine Conspiracy*)

- i. Singing together
 - ii. Lifting our voices in prayer together
 - iii. Call and Response
 - iv. Preaching
 - a) 2 Cor. 1:20
 - b) Rev. 1:5-7
 - v. The Lord’s Supper
 - vi. Benediction
- C. Community Groups

LIVE THE STORY

The following questions are designed for use in our Community Groups as an aid to growth in the Gospel and Community.

- Explain how “formation” is both an end-goal and a process?
- Why is Gospel formation important to the mission of the Church?
- Can you give examples of both personal and corporate formative practices? Have they been helpful? If so, how so? If not, why not?
- How does the comparison between training for godliness and bodily exercise help us understand ways to pursue formation (1 Tim. 4:7-8)?
- Have you ever considered that congregational practices could be formative in your Christian maturity? If not, does this idea cause you to think differently about our gathered practices of worship?
- How does the Lord’s supper help us to bodily learn the Gospel?
- What are some ways in which our practices in community group can be formative? Have you seen this at work in your own life before?
- Is “fermentation” a good picture of how formation works? Explain.

I. The Need for Formation

A. What does it mean to be authentic?

B. We need Gospel formation to become authentic human beings.

II. Defining Formation (Col. 1:17-29)

A. There are two ways I will speak about formation:

- i. The end goal we are striving for: being formed into the image of Christ; “Christ in you,” and “fully mature in Christ.”
- ii. Formative practices that can help us toward that end.

B. Formation is an essential of disciple-making.

- i. Jesus assumed that obedience would not naturally happen. it must be *learned*.

- ii. Formation requires patience.

C. Formation involves the body.

- i. *The Patient Ferment of the Early Church*: “Why did the church during its first 3 centuries grow so rapidly against all odds?”

“The sources rarely indicate that the early Christians grew in number because they won arguments; instead they grew because their habitual behavior (rooted in patience) was distinctive and intriguing.” (A. Kreider).

“Bourdieu contends that the knowledge that truly forms us is more profoundly a part of us than our intellectual knowledge. It is ‘corporeal [bodily] knowledge,’ a ‘system of dispositions’ that we carry in our bodies.” (Alan Kreider)

- ii. The early church incorporated practices that would train them bodily so that the church began to believe bodily, in practice, the truths of the faith.

III. How Formation Works (John 1:35-39a)

A. Formation trains our desires as much as our thinking.

- i. Until we’ve changed our desires, the way we live our lives won’t change.

- ii. Godliness, Christlikeness, requires training (1 Tim. 4:7-8).

B. Change at the subconscious level requires repetition.

- i. Changing our godward orientation requires learning these new habits by bodily practices that reorient our whole person.

- ii. There are things in life we must do repetitively until it creates a desire in us to do them.

- iii. It is vital that we develop congregational formative practices if we are going to change at the deepest levels.

Conclusion: What does this look like?

- A. Simple practices which can help form us at the bodily level.
 - i. Gathering for worship

 - ii. Call to worship

