



CHRIST COMMISSION FELLOWSHIP

LOS ANGELES

March 25, 2012

In His Presence: Avoiding Toxic Spirituality

WORSHIP

Suggested Songs: I Will Sing by Lakewood Church/ Everyday with You Lord by Lakewood Church/All for Love by Hillsong/
From the Inside Out by Hillsong

WELCOME

Start up Activity: Spiritual Diagnosis
Imagine yourself visiting a spiritual physician. Identify your spiritual symptoms by asking yourself this question: What are the difficulties that I encounter that hinder me from growing spirituality?

WORDS

“Whom have I in heaven but You? And ^[z]besides You, I desire nothing on earth. . . But as for me, the nearness of God is my good; I have made the Lord ^[ad]GOD my refuge, That I may tell of all Your works.” Psalm 73:25,28

As we learn to abide in the Lord, we begin to understand that there is nothing here on earth that we should desire more than God. Our focus is on our inner life rather than the world around us. In order for us to cultivate our inner life, we must learn Spiritual Formation. But what is Spiritual Formation?

Spiritual Formation is the intention, communal process of nurturing the spiritual person in the likeness of Christ, by the power of a Spirit-filled life, so as to fulfill the will of God concerning us. Rev Edmund Chan

To understand this concept of Spiritual Formation, we have to understand the components of its definition.

1. Spiritual Formation is intentional.
 - It does not happen on its own rather it has to be cultivated from within.
 - It is fundamental to our life because we were created to worship God and to have a relationship with Him.
2. Spiritual Formation is communal.
 - We cannot have spiritual formation on our own. God did not design us to be lone rangers rather we are to be a part of a community.
3. Of nurturing the spiritual person in the likeness of Christ.
 - Relationship with God changes us from the inside and the ultimate outcome is that we become more Christ-like.
 - The most significant misunderstanding of the Gospel is this - we focus only on believing that Jesus Christ is our salvation. But that is only part of the gospel. The Gospel of Jesus Christ is not about transportation, rather it is about **transformation**. At the heart of the Gospel is that we become more like Jesus.

- Christ-likeness is the key to spiritual formation. It is the apex, the center. Everything leads up to it and everything flows from it.
4. By the power of a spirit-filled life.
 - The Holy Spirit is God’s given means for us to be more like Christ. It is only by the power of the Spirit that we fulfill the purpose of spiritual formation. It is when we become **submitted, empowered, and directed** to the Spirit that our life begins to have direction.
 - A spirit-filled life is not how much we have of the Spirit rather it is how much the Spirit has of us. In essence, it is how much the Holy Spirit directs us, empowers us and how much we are submitted to the Spirit that determines the fullness of our spiritual formation.
 5. So as to fulfill the will of God concerning us.
 - Jesus prayed in Gethsemane “Lord not My will but Your will be done.” Jesus knew the Father’s will, but He was saying I will not only pursue Your will, He was also saying that I prefer Your will.
 - It is not enough that we can perceive God’s will for us in our life, we must pursue this. Not only pursue this but more importantly to prefer God’s will, knowing that it is not only acceptable but also it is the best and is always perfect.

In our walk to spiritual formation, we encounter hindrances that can rob us of this. This is what we call **Toxic Spirituality**.

1. Service without Joy.
 - Often times we find ourselves serving diligently but if we are not serving with joy then we are not serving in faith. This is the defining mark of Christian discipleship. To serve with joy. To serve in faith.
 - Unless we learn to abide in God's presence, to find sanctuary in God, we will not have joy. Because joy is a blessing from God, it flows from God.
2. Performance without Rest.
 - Living in a performance trap we tend to live for the applause and recognition that others will give us rather than the approval of God. We tend to continuously push ourselves to be accepted, not realizing that we have been accepted in the Beloved
 - Resting in the Lord is where we bring our weariness, our disillusionment and our feelings of being burnt out and meet the abundance of God. When we meet His abundance, then the outflow of our ministry, of our life is a reflection of our love relationship with God.
3. Work without Worship.
 - We have to remind ourselves to take a step back and marvel at the grandeur of God. God created the world out of nothing "ex nihilo" and His greatest, most glorious creation is us.
 - When we work for the Lord, we have to bear in mind His great love for us. He loves us so much that He came and died for us. That despite of our sinful nature, he continues to draw us to His love.
4. Devotion without Discipleship.

WORKS:

Look back at the spiritual symptoms you had listed at the start of the session. Based on the discussion:

1. Diagnose your Toxic Spirituality. Are you?
 - a. Serving without joy?
 - b. Performing without resting in the Lord?
 - c. Working and not worshipping the Lord?
 - d. Spending time in prayer but unable to make disciples?
 - e. Going about your rituals but unable to connect it to the reality of your life?
2. After prayer and meditation, what are you committing yourself to in order to overcome these hindrances to your spiritual formation? Find a bible verse or watch-word that you can use to remind yourself of your commitment. Place this verse or watch-word in a place where you can see it often like on your phone, in your computer screen or any prominent place in your home.

Spend time in prayer and meditation to seek God and to repent to receive God's empowering grace for sanctification. Ask your Dgroup and your accountability partner to pray with you and to keep you accountable over the area/s you need to repent from and improve on to pursue an intimate relationship with God.

- We have a deep sense of devotion but often times this is not accompanied by discipleship. Discipleship is a spiritual discipline, a process of growing in Christ-likeness.
5. Rituals without Reality.
 - The spiritual life is not to be studied, it is to be lived out.
 - We need to realize that we are not called to discipleship for rituals, but to live out that discipleship life.

Psalm 73 shows us the struggle of the Psalmist as he tried to understand life. He was pondering about the perplexities of life and saying Lord I cannot understand this. Then he stumbles across 3 realizations:

- a. His evaluation of life was with the wrong perspective. He was looking at life from a temporal view not from an eternal view.
- b. His goal in life was the wrong desire.
- c. His plan in life is with the wrong hope. He was dependent on his own strength and understanding.

In verse 17 he says that "God has taken a hold of his right hand". In the Jewish culture, this means that God has sponsored him. God has promised to provide and protect. When the Psalmist realizes these, he says in verse 25 that in the presence of God, rituals becomes a reality. In the presence of God, life's most perplexing problems are answered.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. How do we view our life?
2. What is our goal?
3. What are our foundations?