

As you've heard, simply put, our vision as a church is to be transformed people, transforming the Peninsula. It starts with us being transformed. We live in challenging times to be a Christ-follower; we also live in a challenging place. If we're going to make a difference, it has to start with us. It has to start with the kind of people we're becoming.

We started with our worship pillar because we believe worship is transformative. It changes us. When we come into God presence, and respond to who he is and what he's done for us, we can't stay the same.

Now we're concentrating on another pillar: spiritual formation. This is also part of this transformation process. What do we mean by spiritual formation? Spiritual formation is the process of intentionally opening our lives to the work of the Spirit to become more like Christ. Spiritual formation is about growing and becoming mature in our faith.

The sad thing is you can be a Christian for a long time and yet remain immature. Honestly, far too many of us who should have grown to maturity have remained spiritual babies. That's why we chose this as one of our vision pillars. You see, the Gospel isn't just making sure we get a pass into heaven when we die; the Gospel is the offer of new life in Christ and his kingdom, and that new life begins now. God's plan is to transform broken people into people who are like Jesus. The question I want to ask today is, "Whose job is it?"

I grew up with just one sibling — my older brother, Mike. Like most kids, we each had chores. Two of my chores were to set the table before dinner and clean up after our dog in the backyard. My brother had two of his own chores. Of course, there were other things around the house to get done, but our attitude was, "That's not my job; that's someone else's job."

For many Christians, there's confusion about the division of labor as it relates to spiritual growth. They ask, "Who's job is it? Is it God's job, or is it mine?"

Or think about this as it pertains to marriage. Marriage counselors will tell you the idea that marriage is a 50-50 partnership is a myth. You can't spend your time thinking, "I'll put 50 percent in, but I expect to get 50 percent back." Keeping score that way is a recipe for death in a marriage.

There are some believers who say our spiritual formation is totally up to God. Their mantra is, "Let go and let God." They quote

verses like Gal. 2:20, where Paul says, "*I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me.*" Using verses like this, they say that any effort we make to grow spiritually is useless and opposed to the idea of God's grace. If Christ lives in me, my spiritual formation is 100 percent up to Him.

On the other hand, there are those who say it's all up to us. These are Navy Seal Christians. They're super serious and disciplined about the Christian life. They get up really early and pray for two hours before they start their day. They memorize the book of James. They love to quote verses in Leviticus 11:44 where God says, "*...be holy, because I am holy.*" If I'm called to be holy, they say, then my spiritual formation is 100 percent up to me.

So, let me ask the question again, "Whose job is it?"

To answer that question, I'd like to look at Philippians 2:12-13. For those of you here in Foster City, Dan referenced these verses in a sermon a couple of weeks ago, but now I want to take a deeper dive.

Therefore, my dear friends, as you have always obeyed—not only in my presence but now much more in my absence—continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you to will and to act in order to fulfill his good purpose. vv. 12-13

What's very clear here is that spiritual formation requires 100 percent of me and 100 percent of God.

Spiritual Formation Requires 100 percent of My Effort

First, let's look at our part. Paul begins with a command, "Work out your salvation with fear and trembling." This command isn't barked out like from a drill sergeant in a boot camp, but it's couched in warmth. He calls them, "my dear friends," and he commends them for their past obedience. But he gives them a very clear command, literally, continue to work out your salvation.

But someone might ask, "Wait one minute. I thought salvation is by grace alone and through faith alone. I thought it's a free gift of God. How can you work for something that's a gift?" Notice he doesn't say to work for your salvation; he doesn't even say to work on your salvation. Instead, he says to work out your salvation. We're to work out what God is working in.

It's important to understand salvation has both a past tense meaning and a present tense meaning. I can say, "I have been saved," and that's a true statement. That's what Paul meant in Ephesians when he said, "*For it is by grace you have been saved*" (Eph. 2:10). Saved from what? Saved from having to pay the penalty of my sin.

But I can also say, "I am being saved." That is also a true statement. Paul wrote in 1 Cor. 1:18, "*For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.*" What are we being saved from? As we're formed spiritually to be more and more like Jesus, we're being saved from the sin's power to shape and govern our lives.

This present tense of salvation is a lifelong process. This is hard for us because we live in an instant gratification culture. I stand at the crosswalk, push the button, and wait for the light to turn green. But I'm often in such a hurry that I keep pushing the button. Somehow, I think the light is going to say to itself, "That guy standing there is in a big hurry. I better stop all these cars and turn the light green so he can cross." I want things now, but spiritual formation doesn't happen that way. It's a process.

That means you'll fall and have to get up. You'll have seasons when it doesn't feel like you're making any progress at all. There will be sinful habits and ways of thinking that stick to you like glue, and you'll have to fight like a dog to get rid of them. And right when you think you have victory, something else will pop up. It can be very discouraging, but we're not to give up.

Perhaps that's why Paul says, "*Work out your salvation with fear and trembling.*" This isn't the fear of a lost sinner before a Holy God, but the fear of a beloved child before the most loving father; not a fear of what he'll do to us, but of the hurt we might do to him.

You might be thinking, "Okay, I get that. But what does that look like? I know I'm supposed to avoid sin, but what can I do to actually be formed to be like Christ?" We need to realize we're all being formed by something. The question is, what's forming you? Consider that little thing in your pocket or purse called a smartphone. We all have one. How often do you look at it? In fact, some of you are looking at it right now. Do you think that forms you? Of course it does.

Let me suggest four ways followers of Jesus have always viewed as central to being formed into the image of Jesus. In the coming weeks, we'll look at each of these.

Worldview: We all have a worldview, and it shapes us.

It's through our worldview we make sense of the world around us. So it is imperative for us to have our worldview shaped by truth, which we believe is found in Scripture. Each of us must intentionally come under the direction of God's Word in an effort to "renew our minds." Listen to what the apostle Peter wrote,

"Like newborn babies, crave pure spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow up in your salvation" (1 Peter 2:1). There's that present tense of salvation again. Spiritual milk is a metaphor for God's Word. We grow up in our salvation through the milk of God's Word.

Practices: What we do on a regular basis we become.

Spiritual practices carve out space in our life for God's Spirit to transform us. It's not about trying harder, but about training. Paul commanded Timothy, "Train yourself to be godly" (1 Tim 4:7b). These practices don't earn us favor with God, but they equip us to run the race. We're talking about practices like prayer, solitude, corporate worship, service, and Sabbath. Like a musician must learn scales before performing a symphony, spiritual practices train us to open our lives up to the work of God's Spirit.

Life with Others: Spiritual formation happens in the context of community.

We don't do it alone. In fact, here in Philippians 2, Paul is talking about relationships within the body of Christ. He wants them to be humble and to love and serve one another just as Jesus loves and serves us. Relationships bring out the best and the worst in all of us. By living with others authentically, we can't hide who we truly are, and we also receive encouragement to believe change is possible.

Life Experiences: Life brings about moments of both great joy and great pain.

These experiences shape us as we invite God to be present with us. The painful times especially help us grow. God works in our trials to shape us. In a few weeks, we'll begin a study of the book of James. It was James who wrote,

"Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance. Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything." James 1:2-4

These are the four ways we "*work out our salvation with fear and trembling.*" It's not easy, but training is never easy. You do it with the end in mind. And, by the way, spiritual formation isn't for just a few super-spiritual saints; it's for all of us. Let me ask you, are you pursuing spiritual formation with full resolve? If not, why? I've heard a lot of excuses, and even made a few myself:

"I'm just too busy? When things settle down, then I'll focus on that."

"My husband needs to be a better spiritual leader."

"I just don't really relate to the people in my church."

We talk about wanting to know what God's will is. Well, Paul says in 1 Thess. 4:3, "*It is God's will that you should be sanctified.*" To be sanctified is to be made holy. What's amazing to me is how we'll pursue other things with full devotion, but not the one

thing we know is God's will for us. Think of the effort we put into getting a college degree, raising children, saving enough to buy a home, or preparing for retirement. But when it comes to spiritual growth, God wants us to give not 50 percent or even 75 percent, but 100 percent.

Spiritual Formation Requires 100 Percent of God

And do you know why? It's because of what Paul says in Phil. 2:13 about God's part. He says, *"For God is at work in you to will and to act in order to fulfill his good purpose."* This is meant to encourage us as we work out our salvation. He's saying, "You give 100 percent because God is 100 percent committed to you being formed to be like Jesus."

Notice how he's working both at the level of your desires and your actions: *"to will and to act to fulfill his good purpose."* And the way he's working is through the Spirit who is given to you as a gift on your spiritual birthday. From that time on, there's a powerful and transformative life within you, working to help you become like Jesus. If he wasn't working in you, you'd have no desire and no ability to act according to his good purpose. Here's the thing, spiritual formation is 100 percent you and 100 percent God, but God's 100 percent is far more than your 100 percent.

Imagine you decide to go sailing, but you know nothing about sailing. So you go to the store and buy a book to learn. You read it and even get advice from a veteran sailor. The day comes when you rent a sailboat. You examine it to make sure everything is there and working. Then, you take your boat out onto the Bay. You're excited but a little apprehensive. I mean you've never done this before. But you do everything you learned to do, launching your boat into the water and hoisting the sail.

You then learn a crucial lesson. You can study sailing. You can get advice from the wisest of sailors. You can cast your boat onto the most beautiful of waters under a bright and inviting sun. You can hoist the sail. But — and this is a big but — you need wind, and only God can make the wind blow!

You and I can come to church. We can study the Bible. We can join a small group. We can devote ourselves to spiritual practices. We can do everything a person can do to be formed into the image of Jesus, but only the Spirit can make the wind blow. No, I'm not passive. Yes, I have a role to play: I hoist the sails, but I'm 100 percent dependent on God's Spirit. There's no room for believing I'm in control because if the wind doesn't blow, I'm dead in the water. But when the wind blows, amazing things happen.

Did you know the word for wind in the Bible is the same as the word for spirit? Jesus once said,

"The wind blows wherever it pleases. You hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going. So it is with everyone born of the Spirit." John 3:8

Jesus says the wind blows wherever it pleases. It's beyond our control. The work of the Spirit in your life is powerful and mysterious. You can't control or manufacture it. It's not about you coming up with a program with predictable results. On the other hand, you're not passive. Your job is to hoist the sails so you can catch the wind of the Spirit when it blows. And here's the good news: God is committed to sending the wind! That's what Paul is saying — God really is at work in you!

Again, spiritual formation is 100 percent you and 100 percent God, but God's 100 percent is far more than your 100 percent. It's like when I tell my grandson it's time for us to pick up the toys and get ready for bed. We're both giving it 100 percent, but at the end of the day, I've picked up way more toys than him. God's 100 percent is far more than is ours! That's why the writer of Hebrews says, *"Now may the God of peace...equip you with everything good for doing his will, and may he work in us what is pleasing to him"* (Heb. 13:20-21). God has equipped us with "everything good for doing his will." He's at work in us so we do what's pleasing to him. Do you know that?

Let me offer you a real-life story from a CPC'er who embodies this. A few years ago, Christina Simmons and her husband Brad felt God calling them to move to the Bay Area from Southern California. It didn't really make sense. It meant leaving extended family and Christina's career behind. To move to a new area with two young daughters, with no family support; to go from two incomes to one, in one of the most expensive places in the country, seemed crazy on paper. But they felt the wind of God's Spirit nudging them to step out in faith and trust his plan. So off they went.

It wasn't easy. Their adjustment to the Peninsula was a huge culture shock. They sorely missed family and friends. Christina was finding a new identity as a full-time mom while Brad adjusted to a new and demanding job. It was difficult for all of them. But God used those life experiences to grow their faith.

Christina then heard about CPC. She heard we had a MOPS (Mothers of Preschoolers) group and looked forward to meeting other moms. She joined a MOPS park playdate and soon found new friends in the same stage of parenting. They encouraged her in her faith, her mothering, and her marriage. She and her family then visited CPC on a Sunday and felt at home. The girls loved CPCKids. In all of this, they found that life with others was an important part of their growth.

A year later, Christina started attending WBS (Women's Bible Study). She sat under the teaching of God's word. His word began to reshape her worldview. She said,

"God revealed himself to me through the study of his word... I spend more time focusing on who he is rather than listing my litany of prayer requests. It's like we say at WBS, 'Gaze at God and glance at our circumstances.' I see God involved in my

day-to-day and see his hand on everything, the good and the difficult. I'm walking with him daily and not just visiting on Sundays."

Out of that, she and her family began to serve in various capacities, which, by the way, is a spiritual practice. She volunteered at MOPS and CPCKids. As God nudged her into taking on more leadership, she felt inadequate, but a friend reminded her that God wanted her to depend on him, not herself. She said,

"It's such a joy and privilege to do life and kingdom work together with such faithful followers of Jesus. Praying together, working alongside one another, we get to glorify God in all we do. It's like Elijah in 1 Kings 18, we lay down the wood, and God brings the fire! God has been so faithful to guide, lead, sustain, and encourage me since joining and serving at CPC. God has moved me from afraid to amazed, afraid to take this big step to move to the Bay Area, to now amazed at all he's done in my life and family here at CPC, and on the Peninsula."

Sounds like 100 percent Christina, and 100 percent God, but she'd be the first to say God's 100 percent is far more than hers. She's 100 percent committed, but also 100 percent dependent.

The Simmons are just one example of folks who believe God has called them to the Peninsula and so they've decided to unpack their bags and stay awhile. They're just one example of how transformed lives can be part of transforming the Peninsula.

Will you make that your greatest ambition today? What in your life would have to change for this to be true of you? It doesn't matter if you're a new Christian or a seasoned veteran. It doesn't matter if you're retired or working 70 hours a week. It doesn't matter if you're married or unmarried. What needs to change? Honestly, I'm aware of some things in my life that need to change. God is working some things in me that I need to start working out. What about you? What needs to change in your life for you to be 100 percent committed to growing but also 100 percent dependent on God?

This manuscript represents the bulk of what was preached at CPC. For further detail, please refer to the audio recording of this sermon.

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