



SPIRITUAL FORMATION: WHAT MATTERS MOST?

FEBRUARY 17, 2021

Welcome & Introductions...

Our Text:

Hear, O Israel: The Lord is our God, the Lord alone. You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might. Keep these words that I am commanding you today in your heart. Recite them to your children and talk about them when you are at home and when you are away, when you lie down and when you rise. Bind them as a sign on your hand, fix them as an emblem on your forehead, and write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.

Deuteronomy 6:4-9

Some Definitions:

Spiritual formation is the process of being conformed to the image of Christ for the sake of others. -J. Robert Mulholland

Spiritual formation is the process of sanctification in which God uses every circumstance in saints' lives for the purpose of conforming them to the image of Christ and making them into loving members of His family (Romans 8:27-29).
-Debbie Swindoll, *Grafted Life Ministries*

Spiritual formation in the tradition of Jesus Christ is the process of transformation of the inmost dimension of the human being, the heart, which is the same as the spirit or will. It is being formed (really, transformed) in such a way that its natural expression comes to be the deeds of Christ done in the power of Christ. -Dallas Willard

God the Holy Spirit conceives and forms the life of Christ in us. Our spirits are formed by Spirit—that is spiritual formation. -Eugene Peterson

Formation, Story, the Psalms, and Covid-weight...

Wrapping it up: *Dangers, perils, and “back to square one”...*

“We do not progress in the Christian life by becoming more competent, more knowledgeable, more virtuous, or more energetic. We do not advance in the Christian life by acquiring expertise. Each day, and many times each day, we return to Square One: God Said. We are constantly being “thrown back on the start and always opening up afresh.” We are always beginners. We begin again. We hear Jesus say, “Unless you turn and become like children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven” (Matt. 18:3). And so we become as little children.... We go back to Square One. We adore and we listen.

“I want to simplify your lives. When others are telling you to read more, I want to tell you to read less; when others are telling you to do more, I want to tell you to do less. The world does not need more of you; it needs more of God. Your friends do not need more of you; they need more of God. And you don’t need more of you; you need more of God.

“The Christian life consists in what God does for us, not what we do for God; the Christian life consists in what God says to us, not what we say about God. We also, of course, do things and say things; but if we do not return to Square One each time we act, each time we speak, beginning from God and God’s Word, we will soon be found to be practicing a spirituality that has little or nothing to do with God. And so it is necessary, if we are going to truly live a Christian life, and not just use the word Christian to disguise our narcissistic and promethean attempts at a spirituality without worshiping God and without being addressed by God, it is necessary to return to Square One and adore God and listen to God. Given our sin-damaged memories that render us vulnerable to every latest edition of journalistic spirituality, daily re-orientation in the truth revealed in Jesus and attested in Scripture is required. And given our ancient predisposition for reducing every scrap of divine revelation that we come across into a piece of moral/spiritual technology that we can use to get on in the world, and eventually to get on without God, a daily return to a condition of not-knowing and non-achievement is required. We have proven, time and again, that we are not to be trusted in these matters. We need to return to Square One for a fresh start as often as every morning, noon, and night.”

Eugene H. Peterson

“Back to Square One: God Said,” in *Subversive Spirituality* (1997)

Keith's Picks:

Wisdom Distilled from the Daily by Joan Chittister (2009)

Abba's Child by Brennan Manning (1994)

To Be Told by Dan Allender (2005)

Jayber Crow by Wendell Berry (2000)

When the Heart Waits by Sue Monk Kidd (1990)

Recommended Reading by Keith Anderson

Reading Your Life's Story: An Invitation to Spiritual Mentoring (2016)

A Spirituality of Listening: Living What We Hear (2016)

Spiritual Mentoring: A Guide Seeking and Giving Direction, coauthor Randy Reese (1999)