

## Why Spiritual Formation?

Worship, outreach, and connections are just a few of the ministry areas at Providence Wesleyan Church; however, there is another one that is vital to the heartbeat of the church and that is spiritual formation. Why, spiritual formation? Some people have never heard of spiritual formation before let alone understand its meaning. According to the late philosopher Dr. Dallas Willard spiritual formation is this: “spiritual formation in the tradition of Jesus Christ is the process of transformation of the inmost dimension of the human, the heart, which is the same as the spirit or will. It is being transformed (really, transformed) in such a way that its natural expression comes to be the deeds of Christ done in the power of Christ.”

*“The goal of spiritual formation is to change the heart and mind to be more like Christ.”*

You are probably saying, “well, what does that mean for me?” Not only from an inward expression of love but outward. The anchoring scripture of spiritual formation (in my opinion) comes from Matthew 28:19-20 (NIV) which says,

**“Therefore, go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you.”**

The work of spiritual formation happens through the work of the Holy Spirit. Allowing the Holy Spirit to make that transformation. Spiritual formation is not an entirely passive ministry but an active one that seeks to have the believer growing in his or her daily walk with the Lord. Growing exponentially not only in the heart but in conduct.

Proverbs 4:20-24 (NIV) says this:

**My son pay attention to what I say; turn your ears to my words. Do not let them out of your sight, keep them within your heart; for they are life to those who find them and health to one’s whole body. Above all else, guard your heart, for everything you do flows from it. Keep your mouth free of perversity; keep corrupt talk far from your lips.**

**How does the believer keep growing spiritually?**

Richard Foster wrote a book entitled, *Celebration of Discipline: The Path to Spiritual Growth* where he wrote about those disciplines that enable the believer to keep growing spiritually. For instance, the inward disciplines such as meditation, prayer, fasting and study; the outward disciplines of simplicity, solitude, submission, service; and finally, the corporate disciplines of confession, worship, guidance, and celebration. These simple things that may be taken for granted, helps with spiritual formation. Forming and shaping the heart to be more like Christ. The inner nature of the Christian determining his outward self.

Jesus says the following in Luke 6:43-45 (NIV):

**No good tree bears bad fruit, nor does a bad tree bear good fruit. Each tree is recognized by its own fruit. People do not pick figs from thornbushes, or grapes from briars. A good man brings good things out of the good stored up in his heart, and an evil man brings evil things out of the evil stored up in his heart. For the mouth speaks what the heart is full of.**

So, for those who are under the preaching and teaching of Pastor Wayne and the other pastors of Providence Wesleyan Church, the flames of that preaching should not only be scorching your hearts for more of the Word of God but also your pursuit of Him--daily. The church needs the ministry of spiritual formation just as you need food and water for survival--it is important to the believer's spiritual health. A spiritually healthy church has members who are growing daily in their walk with Christ, but also participating in the church's mission and vision of making more disciples.