



new covenant

FELLOWSHIP

WHAT IS FAMILY FORMATION?

We reproduce what we are...

"We teach what we believe, but we reproduce what we are. Although God in his grace may often use us in spite of ourselves, we normally cannot impart what we do not possess. Discipleship does not happen by accident; it is a process that is animated by an ongoing intention of the heart.... The more we know Christ, the better we can make him known.... We must know Christ as a person before we can guide others to this level of spiritual intimacy.... Personal revival flows from fresh commitments to radical obedience and expresses itself in the focused presence of the life of Christ in us and through us. Like farmers (2 Timothy 2:6), we reap what we sow; spiritual nurture cannot be separated from our own spiritual formation, since we reproduce after our own kind." – Ken Boa, *Conformed to His Image*, 371.

"Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise. You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates. – Deuteronomy 6:4-9

"Him we proclaim, warning everyone and teaching everyone with all wisdom, that we may present everyone mature in Christ." – Colossians 1:28

SPIRITUAL FORMATION FOR THE FAMILY

Throughout the centuries the church has described the Christian life both for individuals and families as well as broader communities with a variety of terms. Discipleship, following Christ, the sanctification process, spiritual journey, and many more have proved to be both biblically based and meaningful to a diversity of people at different times. For the purpose of this document, another biblically rooted and historical term will be utilized: *spiritual formation* or *formation*.

Formation is the noun form of the verb, “form or transform”. The Greek verb *metamorpháo*, meaning “to change inwardly in fundamental character”, is the root biblical word for our understanding of formation, from where we get our English word *metamorphosis*. To be “formed” means to be shaped or molded with creativity, power, and purpose towards a desired end. From the very beginning of the story of the Bible, the Triune God, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit displayed their glory and love by making, shaping, and forming a beautiful creation with loving intent.

With the entrance of sin and evil into the human race came the vandalism, destruction, and mal-formation of our very selves, leading to death and decay (Gen. 3). To live a life with sin is to live according to practices and patterns that are opposed to God’s will and way.

Each day all of us are being formed. Our children are being formed. The question is what messages and methods are forming us and towards what end?

The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit’s work of salvation is not only to save sinners out of death into eternal life in Jesus Christ, but to *restore, remake, and re-form* “Image Bearers” — women, men, girls, and boys — after the image and likeness of the true Image Bearer of God: Jesus Christ (Heb. 1:3). We are called “new creations in Christ” (2 Cor. 5:17), we are called to “put on our new selves” (Col. 3:10), and we are told that we are being transformed from one degree of glory to the next by the power of the Holy Spirit (2 Cor. 3:18).

How does this happen?

It happens through the slow and steady re-formation of all of who we are and all of what we do, think, say, and, more fundamentally, what we love. Spiritual formation, the Holy Spirit's work of re-forming us in Christ, happens not in a quadrant of our lives but in the whole entirety of it, both in the spectacular and in the mundane.

The gospel alone holds the power to transform lives. The Bible affirms that deep, lasting transformation occurs by beholding Christ through the central practice of worship, by becoming more like Jesus by renewing our hearts and minds through His Word, by belonging to a gracious community, and by embodying our faith sacrificial service to others in our church and beyond. We practice these life rhythm as individuals, in our marriages, as we parents, together in our household and within our broader communities.

It is in these ways that we believe God is working in, among, and through us to redeem, restore, and reform us all by His grace and for His own glory. These are the gospel practices by which we rehearse the countercultural realities of God's Kingdom.

The Central Practice

We are formed by what we worship. For this reason, the central practice of the church is to worship God, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, on the Lord's Day (Sunday). This practice is indispensable to the formation of both the individual and for the family as a unit.

Worship is an anchor that the Christian life is centered around. When we gather as a worshipping community to behold His truth, beauty, and goodness we find the gospel freedom and flourishing in life as the gospel re-forms us continually.

Individual Rhythms

These are formative rhythms we practice as individuals.

- Bible Reading / Memorization
- Prayer
- Rest / Sabbath
- Worship

Marriage Rhythms

These are formative rhythms we practice within our marriage.

- Share the Word
- Share in Prayer
- Share our Lives (Honest & Vulnerable)
- Repentance + Forgiveness
- Intentional Time Together (e.g. dates, hobbies, being, etc.)
- Engage their whole hearts
- Selflessness service + Humility
- Mutual Encouragement + Accountability
- Rest + Refresh

Parenting Rhythms

These are formative rhythms we practice amongst our children.

- Share the Word
- Share in Prayer for and with our children
- Repentance + Forgiveness
- Intentional Time
- Encouragement + Engagement
- Engage their whole hearts
- Grace-based discipline / correction
- Rest + Refresh

Household Rhythms

These are formative rhythms we practice as a family.

- Family Worship
- Family Devotions
- Family Prayer
- Surprisingly Generosity
- Showing Robust Hospitality
- Sharing Life Together
- Practicing the "one another's"
- Missional Living

Communal Practices

These are formative practices we do together as a gospel-centered community.

- Share the Word
- Share in Prayer
- Share our Lives (Honest & Vulnerable)
- Small Groups¹
- Gender + Age Specific Ministries
- Missional Living
- Church Membership
- Improving our Baptism
- The Lord's Supper
- Surprisingly Generosity
- Showing Robust Hospitality
- Sharing Life Together
- Practicing the "one another's"

A holistic approach to formation for consider the Head, Heart, and Hands.

We are made to be known. We are made to love and be loved. Yet so much of our lives are spent curating our best images, putting our best face forward, or withdrawing from community with others. Relationships are not always easy. We fear being truly known and rejected. We know the ache of deep pain. Yet the gospel calls us to move towards others and connect as those who are loved and worthy because of who we are and who we are becoming Christ\.. In a world of barriers, deception, greed, envy, lust, and selfishness, the gospel breaks down walls and invites us to follow Jesus. In doing so we are building a new community for the good of all.

Head: Does the person know what Jesus teaches about growing in relationship with him? Is he or she spending time with Jesus so that they have the strength and direction to be who they are meant to be in Christ? Does he or she know what the Bible teaches about the church and the importance of his or her relationships with other believers? Does he or she know how to live out his or her faith within the context of family? Does he or she understand what the Bible teaches about participating in the mission of God, both locally and globally?

Goals: Understand the gospel, understand the redemptive arch (i.e. creation, fall, redemptive, glorify), understand God's Mission for His Church, Appreciate Essentials of Reformed Theology.

Heart: Are there signs of gospel renewal happening in this person's life? Is the gospel producing transformation or merely behavioral modification? Are there noticeable changes to their character? Are they displaying a growing interest in loving God and loving their neighbor? Are they growing in their love for others in the body of Christ? Have they humbly received and are resting in Christ alone for their salvation or are they relying on their own strength? Who in their life are they currently praying would be brought to faith in Christ?

Goals: Models the Normal Christian Life (cycle of Faith-Obedience-Repentance), exhibits the Fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5), displays Love for God and Love for Others, practices Ordinary Means of Grace, engaged in praying for Lost.

Hands: Are they willing to follow Christ in the direction he is leading them? Are they putting into practice what they are learning and wanting to do, what their head and heart are calling them to do? In other words, are they concerned about the salvation of others in their spheres of influence? Have they developed the relational skills they need in order to have healthy relationships with other believers? Are they being encouraged to use their gifts to minister to believers and non-believers?

Goals: Deeds of Mercy and Service inside and outside the local church. Disciple making. Exhibits an obedient heart for the least and the lost amongst them.