FORMATION:
Becoming Like Jesus Together Through Our Core Values

Key Scripture
"And we all… are being transformed into his image with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit."- **2 Corinthians 3:7-18** → ***New Covenant = an "indwelling" of the Holy Spirit***

Christian formation is the lifelong process of being transformed into the likeness of Jesus.
Following Jesus is about more than believing the right things. It is about becoming a certain kind of person—a person whose life increasingly looks like Christ. Our thoughts, desires, relationships, reactions, priorities, and actions are gradually reshaped by the Holy Spirit.

The goal is not simply **information about Jesus**, but **formation into the likeness of Jesus**.
And God does not normally accomplish that formation in isolation. He forms us through His Spirit, His Word, His presence, and His people.

The values of **Community, Love, Acceptance, Worship, Reconciliation, and Healing** are therefore more than descriptions of the kind of church we want to have. They describe the kind of people we believe Jesus is forming us to become.

COMMUNITY
Formation happens together.
Acts 2:42–47
The God we worship is relational. Father, Son, and Holy Spirit exist eternally in perfect communion. It should not surprise us, then, that when God created the Church, He created a community.
Acts 2 describes believers who devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching, fellowship, breaking bread, prayer, generosity, and mission. They did not simply attend something together. *They shared life together.*

This is essential to Christian formation because there are things God wants to develop in us that cannot be developed alone.

- You cannot learn forgiveness without someone to forgive.
- You cannot learn patience without someone who tests your patience.
- You cannot practice generosity without someone with whom to share.
- You cannot experience encouragement without another person speaking courage into you.
- You cannot fully learn to love without people to love.

Community becomes one of God's workshops for transformation.

We believe truth is digested in community, mission happens in community, and transformation happens in community.

Christian community is therefore much more than finding people we enjoy. It means allowing ourselves to be known, challenged, encouraged, corrected, supported, and sent.

Formation question: *Am I simply attending church, or am I allowing myself to be known and formed within Christian community?*

LOVE

Formation teaches us to become people who love.

Luke 10:27; John 13:35; 2 Peter 1:5–7

Jesus said the greatest commandments are to love God and love our neighbor. He then told His disciples: *"By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another."*

John 13:35

Love is not simply one Christian virtue among many. Love is at the center of Christian maturity.
But biblical love is more than emotion.

Love becomes visible through **integrity, loyalty, honor, forgiveness, compassion, sacrifice, and respect**.

This means Christian formation can often be measured by the way we treat people.

- Are we becoming more patient?
- More compassionate?
- Quicker to forgive?
- Slower to become offended?
- More willing to sacrifice?
- More interested in another person's good?

We can accumulate enormous amounts of biblical knowledge while remaining spiritually immature. Paul warns that knowledge can puff us up, but love builds others up.

The question of formation is therefore not merely, **"How much do I know?"**

It is also: **"Am I becoming more loving?"** The closer we grow to Jesus, the more His love should characterize the way we relate to the people around us.

Formation question: *Is following Jesus making me easier to love—and better at loving others?*

ACCEPTANCE

Formation requires a place where we can be honest.

Romans 15:7; Romans 14:1–4

"Accept one another, then, just as Christ accepted you, in order to bring praise to God."

Romans 15:7

Transformation begins with truth. But people rarely become honest about themselves in environments where they believe honesty will result in rejection.

Acceptance creates room for honesty.
The gospel allows us to say:

- **"This is where I really am."**
    - Not where I pretend to be.
    - Not where I think everyone expects me to be.
    - Where I actually am.

Jesus repeatedly welcomed people before their lives were put together. His acceptance did not mean that transformation was unnecessary. His acceptance created the relationship in which transformation could begin. That distinction is important.

Acceptance does not mean affirmation of everything in our lives. Acceptance means refusing to make perfection the prerequisite for belonging.

The Church should therefore be a place where people can bring their questions, doubts, wounds, failures, struggles, and unfinished stories into the light. We don't expect people to have it all together. We expect Jesus to meet people where they are—and then lovingly lead them somewhere new.

Formation question: *Am I creating the kind of relationships where people can be honest about where they are while still being encouraged toward where Jesus is leading them?*

WORSHIP

Formation happens as we turn our attention toward God.

2 Corinthians 3:18; Ephesians 1:11–14; 1 Corinthians 10:31

Worship is more than singing. Worship is the orientation of our entire lives toward God.
Scripture describes an incredible connection between **beholding God and becoming like Him**. As we behold the glory of the Lord, Paul says, we are being transformed into His image.

What captures our attention eventually shapes our affection. → And what captures our affection eventually shapes our lives. → That makes worship deeply formative.

When we worship, we remember:

- **who God is,**
  who we are,
  what God has done,
  and what ultimately matters.

Worship recenters us.

- Our fears become smaller because God becomes larger in our vision.
- Our pride diminishes because we remember His greatness.
- Our gratitude increases because we remember His grace.
- Our identity becomes secure because we remember whose we are.

Corporate worship gathers the people of God around the presence and story of God. Personal worship carries that orientation into everyday life.
Eventually worship becomes more than something we do during a church service. → It becomes the posture of our lives.

Formation question: *What is receiving most of my attention and affection—and what is it forming me to become?*

RECONCILIATION

Formation teaches us to live the gospel in our relationships.

2 Corinthians 5:18–21; Ephesians 2:14–21

At the center of Christianity is reconciliation. We were separated from God by sin, but God moved toward us. Jesus took our sin upon Himself and made peace possible. Paul says that God reconciled us to Himself through Christ and then entrusted **the ministry of reconciliation** to us.
That means reconciled people become reconciling people.

We cannot receive extravagant grace from Jesus while continually refusing grace to everyone else.

- The gospel confronts our bitterness.
- It confronts resentment.
- It confronts division.
- It confronts our desire to make others pay for what they have done.

Christian formation teaches us another way.

- Because Jesus moved toward us, we learn to move toward others.
- Because Jesus forgave us, we learn forgiveness.
- Because Jesus made peace with us, we become peacemakers.
- Because Jesus broke down dividing walls, the Church becomes a community where barriers that normally divide humanity can be overcome in Christ.

Reconciliation doesn't mean ignoring wrongdoing, eliminating healthy boundaries, or pretending wounds don't exist. It means refusing to allow hatred, bitterness, vengeance, and division to have the final word.

Formation question: *Where might Jesus be asking me to practice the reconciliation, I have already received from Him?*

HEALING

Formation allows Jesus into the wounded places.

Hebrews 13:8; James 5:14–16

Jesus did not minister only to people's spiritual lives. He ministered to whole people.

- He healed bodies.
- He restored dignity.
- He confronted spiritual bondage.
- He comforted the brokenhearted.
- He restored people to community.

God remains our healer. Christian formation therefore involves allowing Jesus access not only to the parts of our lives we are proud of, but also to the places that hurt.

- Some wounds are physical.
- Some are emotional.
- Some are relational.
- Some are spiritual.

Some healing happens suddenly. Other healing unfolds slowly through prayer, community, forgiveness, wise care, and the faithful presence of God's people.

The Church becomes a healing community when wounded people do not have to hide.

- We pray for one another.
- We carry one another's burdens.
- We confess our struggles.
- We encourage those who are discouraged.
- We stand beside those who are suffering.

And we continue trusting that Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever.

Healing also becomes part of our formation because healed people can become **agents of healing**.

- The comfort we receive becomes comfort we can give.
- The grace we experience becomes grace we extend.
- The freedom Christ brings into our lives becomes a testimony of freedom for someone else.

Formation question: *What part of my life have I been protecting that Jesus may be inviting me to bring into His healing presence?*

A COMMUNITY BEING FORMED

These six values are deeply connected.

1. **Community** gives us a place to be formed.
2. **Love** teaches us how to relate.
3. **Acceptance** gives us permission to be honest.
4. **Worship** turns our attention toward the One we are becoming like.
5. **Reconciliation** teaches us to live out the gospel.
6. **Healing** restores what sin and brokenness have damaged.

Together they describe something much bigger than a church culture. They describe *a people being formed into the likeness of Jesus.*

Christian formation is not about becoming impressive Christians. It is about becoming people who increasingly reflect Christ wherever God sends us.

- People who **live in community.**
- People who **love deeply.**
- People who **make room for others.**
- People who **worship with their whole lives.**
- People who **seek reconciliation.**
- People who **carry the healing presence of Jesus into broken places.**

And none of this happens through human effort alone. → The Holy Spirit is the One who forms Christ in us. → Our responsibility is to continually make ourselves available to His transforming work.

So perhaps the question is not simply: **"Am I following Jesus?"** Perhaps we should also ask: **"Who am I becoming as I follow Jesus?"**

Because the invitation of discipleship is not simply: **Come to church.** It is not simply: **Believe the right things.** The invitation of Jesus is: **Follow Me—and become like Me.** → ***The leads us to our Borderland Series***

Scripture References (NLT):

2 Corinthians 3:7-18:

The Glory of the New Covenant

7 The old way, with laws etched in stone, led to death, though it began with such glory that the people of Israel could not bear to look at Moses' face. For his face shone with the glory of God, even though the brightness was already fading away. 8 Shouldn't we expect far greater glory under the new way, now that the Holy Spirit is giving life? 9 If the old way, which brings condemnation, was glorious, how much more glorious is the new way, which makes us right with God! 10 In fact, that first glory was not glorious at all compared with the overwhelming glory of the new way. 11 So if the old way, which has been replaced, was glorious, how much more glorious is the new, which remains forever!

12 Since this new way gives us such confidence, we can be very bold. 13 We are not like Moses, who put a veil over his face so the people of Israel would not see the glory, even though it was destined to fade away. 14 But the people's minds were hardened, and to this day whenever the old covenant is being read, the same veil covers their minds so they cannot understand the truth. And this veil can be removed only by believing in Christ. 15 Yes, even today when they read Moses' writings, their hearts are covered with that veil, and they do not understand.

16 But whenever someone turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away. 17 For the Lord is the Spirit, and wherever the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. 18 So all of us who have had that veil removed can see and reflect the glory of the Lord. And the Lord—who is the Spirit—makes us more and more like him as we are changed into his glorious image.

Acts 2:42–47:

The Believers Form a Community

42 All the believers devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching, and to fellowship, and to sharing in meals (including the Lord's Supper), and to prayer.

43 A deep sense of awe came over them all, and the apostles performed many miraculous signs and wonders. 44 And all the believers met together in one place and shared everything they had. 45 They sold their property and possessions and shared the money with those in need. 46 They worshiped together at the Temple each day, met in homes for the Lord's Supper, and shared their meals with great joy and generosity— 47 all the while praising God and enjoying the goodwill of all the people. And each day the Lord added to their fellowship those who were being saved.

Luke 10:27:

27 The man answered, "'You must love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, all your strength, and all your mind.' And, 'Love your neighbor as yourself.'"

John 13:35:

35 Your love for one another will prove to the world that you are my disciples."

2 Peter 1:5–7:

5 In view of all this, make every effort to respond to God's promises. Supplement your faith with a generous provision of moral excellence, and moral excellence with knowledge, 6 and knowledge with self-control, and self-control with patient endurance, and patient endurance with godliness, 7 and godliness with brotherly affection, and brotherly affection with love for everyone.

Romans 15:7:
7 Therefore, accept each other just as Christ has accepted you so that God will be given glory.

Romans 14:1–4:
The Danger of Criticism
14 Accept other believers who are weak in faith, and don't argue with them about what they think is right or wrong. 2 For instance, one person believes it's all right to eat anything. But another believer with a sensitive conscience will eat only vegetables. 3 Those who feel free to eat anything must not look down on those who don't. And those who don't eat certain foods must not condemn those who do, for God has accepted them. 4 Who are you to condemn someone else's servants? Their own master will judge whether they stand or fall. And with the Lord's help, they will stand and receive his approval.

Ephesians 1:11–14:
11 Furthermore, because we are united with Christ, we have received an inheritance from God, for he chose us in advance, and he makes everything work out according to his plan.

12 God's purpose was that we Jews who were the first to trust in Christ would bring praise and glory to God. 13 And now you Gentiles have also heard the truth, the Good News that God saves you. And when you believed in Christ, he identified you as his own by giving you the Holy Spirit, whom he promised long ago. 14 The Spirit is God's guarantee that he will give us the inheritance he promised and that he has purchased us to be his own people. He did this so we would praise and glorify him.

1 Corinthians 10:31:
31 So whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God.

Hebrews 13:8:
8 Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever.

James 5:14–16:
14 Are any of you sick? You should call for the elders of the church to come and pray over you, anointing you with oil in the name of the Lord. 15 Such a prayer offered in faith will heal the sick, and the Lord will make you well. And if you have committed any sins, you will be forgiven.

16 Confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The earnest prayer of a righteous person has great power and produces wonderful results.

Formation References (verbally during teaching):

Practicing The Way: https://www.practicingtheway.org/