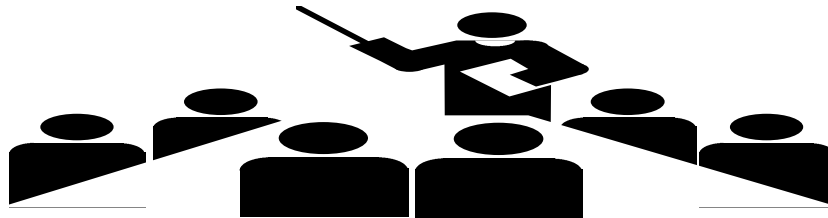


DISCIPLESHIP SEMINAR



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Topic:
“Spiritual Formation”

Outline

- I. The Means of Grace
- II. Accountability Groups
- III. Learning Groups
- IV. Serving Groups

DISCIPLESHIP SEMINAR

Dr. Darryl B. Starnes, Sr., Presenter

“Spiritual Formation” Guarding and Shaping the Heart: The Wellspring of Life

Scriptures: Proverbs 4:23; Galatians 4:19

Proposition: The means by which we diligently guard our hearts are the same as the means by which our hearts and lives are shaped into the image of Christ.

I. The Means of Grace, the habits and practices that become the channels through which we experience God’s grace, are essential to the process of spiritual formation.¹ [Phil. 2:13; 2 Pet. 3:18]

- A. Corporate and personal worship
- B. Searching and studying the Scriptures
- C. Christian conferencing: conversation with other Christians about where we see God working in our lives and what God is calling us to do
- D. Fasting and prayer
- E. Service to others, particularly the least among us
- F. Participation in the sacraments of baptism and Holy Communion

Questions for group discussion or personal reflection:

1. What events have shaped us positively as a Christian?
2. What events have shaped us negatively? Are we willing to open to God in prayer for healing in those areas?
3. In what ways can our lives be made even more open to God’s shaping power?

II. Accountability Groups: the Class Meeting [Eph. 4:15]

- A. The sole focus is Christian formation.
- B. Christian conferencing is a fundamental part.
- C. The goal is to open participants to experience God’s grace by making them accountable for learning and practicing holy habits.
 1. People meet to support and encourage one another in the journey of faith.
 2. They encourage one another to keep the patterns of prayer.
 3. They encourage one another to search and study the Scriptures.
 4. They share with one another problems of life or areas of struggle.
 5. They share with one another stories of God’s grace in their lives.
 6. They hold one another accountable for how they lived out their faith in the world in witness and service.
 7. They hold one another accountable for practicing the means of grace.
- D. Faithful attendance and participation is a priority.
- E. Caring for one another in times of illness or trouble is a priority.
- F. A group leader who models the above is crucial.

Questions for group discussion or personal reflection:

1. What means of grace are we currently practicing?
2. What means of grace are practiced in the small groups that we are a part of?

¹ Barb Nardi Kurtz, *The Heart’s Journey: Christian Spiritual Formation in the Life of a Small Group* (Nashville: Discipleship Resources, 2001), pp. 5-50.

3. As pastors and ministers, who hold us accountable for learning and practicing holy habits?

III. Learning Groups: Sunday School Class, Bible Study Class, etc [Matt. 28:11]

A. The purpose of Christian Education

1. To help people know and experience God through Jesus Christ
2. To help people listen to God and enhance their relationship with Him.
3. To help people claim and live God's promises
4. To help people grow and serve as Christian disciples

B. Formational learning by helping persons make personal application of lessons taught

C. Formational learning by helping persons appropriate Bible stories and make them a part of their lives

D. Formational learning by making prayer a vital part of the learning setting.

E. The importance of the teacher's own developing faith.

Questions for group discussion or personal reflection:

1. How can we add creative activities to the setting where we teach in ways that will open learners to God forming activity?
2. Who are the people in the congregation that can help us teach God's people?
3. Where can we find the resources that we need?
4. How can we take the development of our own faith more seriously?

III. Serving Groups: Church Ministries and Outreach Ministries [Col. 3:17]

1. Everyone must be aware that what we are doing is ministry or service to others in Christ's name.
2. Serving others out of love for Christ can make us aware of God's grace in our lives and those we serve.
3. Reflecting together on the context of Scripture keeps us focused on our context as servants of Christ.
4. Prayer, for one another and for those we serve, is essential in our communal life as serving groups.
5. Celebration of what the group has accomplished is another important element.
6. Leadership prepared to set an example in all these areas of reflection, searching the Scriptures, prayer, and celebration is key to a formational experience.

Questions for group discussion or personal reflection:

1. How can we make everyone aware of the reason for undertaking our ministry: service in Christ's name?
2. How can we utilize the Scriptures as a means of keeping us focused on our context as Christ servants?
3. How can we make sure that prayer is an essential part of our communal life as serving groups?
4. How can we find appropriate way to celebrate the accomplishments of serving groups?
5. How can we make sure that our leaders are examples of core values that foster spiritual formation?