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Journey Deeper	??	One-Sided Spirituality	10.20.2019
Website Writeup:			
How is church community unique, how are you unique in it? What does it do for you, and what do you do for it? These are the questions we wrestle with in this sermon.			

COLOR CHANGES IN TEXT INDICATE SLIDE CHANGES

This series follows along certain chapters of M. Robert Mulholland Jr.'s book, *Invitation to a Journey; A Roadmap for Spiritual Formation*. Much of these sermons will be reminiscent of, or sometimes direct quotes of his writings. I urge you to read along as we study this together.

For this series we're memorizing two short passages. Anyone brave enough to recite them? If you get them right, you'll get a prize...

Romans 12:1-2...

Therefore, I urge you, brothers & sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy & pleasing to God - this is your true & proper worship. ² Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test & approve what God's will is - his good, pleasing and perfect will.

Ephesians 2:8-10...

⁸ For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith - and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God - ⁹ not by works, so that no one can boast. ¹⁰ For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.

Over the coming few weeks, use the cards provided, committing these to memory. If you've not been with us, we're discussing Spiritual Formation. These two sets of memory verses have been integral. **We've said, we're here for God's Glory through God's Mission. We practice the *presence* of God, leading to *spiritual formation*, simultaneously being called to *His mission*, and that being in both Word & Deed (BEING in Christ - DOING the things of Christ).**

We've said, Spiritual formation's the process of being formed into the likeness of Christ for the sake of others - as a matter of fact, the local church is to strive towards reaching every ethnic group on earth for Christ - Mt 24:14 & 28:18-20 - His last command, our first concern.

We said to come to Christ is to come into the Body of Christ - the local church. In it we're spurred onto growth & change in relationship with others. How challenging & beneficial that is. We glorify Jesus, as we stay at the table, spurring one another on to love & good deeds.

There are two short passages on which we can focus today. In them, we see Paul & Timothy practicing body or church life in a discipleship relationship. The first is found in 1 Ti 1:18–19... ¹⁸ Timothy, my son, I am giving you this command in keeping with the prophecies once made about you, so that by recalling them you may fight the battle well, ¹⁹ holding on to faith & a good conscience, which some have rejected & so have suffered shipwreck with regard to the faith.

Timothy's fighting a battle. He's been leading other Christians. There've been false teachers, along with the normal influx of culture into the lives of the people he leads. Spiritual formation's a constant struggle to guard the truth of the Gospel message, both in our own hearts, and also before those with whom we serve alongside, disciple, or lead. Make no mistake - the Christian life is a spiritual battle at the very least.

Paul, in the position of discipling Timothy, urges him to be both **good soldier**, in guarding the integrity of the Gospel message, as well as **good sailor**, in navigating the treacherous waters of life & culture in order to come through unscathed. Spiritual formation doesn't just happen - it's not like the Matrix plug-in download. We don't come to Jesus & then coast, as if He's just fire insurance. Effort must be put into our spiritual development - remember, God's not against effort, He's only against earning.

You don't earn favor with God by what you do, or how well you practice the spiritual life. No one gets brownie points from God for, praying louder & longer, giving more money, feeding the homeless, or for memorizing more scripture (although you may get a coffee card from Jason!). Our value & worth in the eyes of God isn't earned by these things, it's imputed/ascribed to us by Jesus conquering sin & death through his sacrifice & empty grave. And in that positional assurance with Him, we're invited into the process of spiritual formation.

As a matter of fact, everyone's being spiritually formed all the time - towards *what* is the question. If we're not intentional in pursuing Jesus deeply, we'll be formed in some way & most likely not in the way of Jesus. If we simply marinate in culture, adopting every wayward teaching flowing downstream, we'll soon find ourselves lost in a blizzard unable to see the warm light of home where Christ actually resides. We'll not see the rocks below the surface of the waves & shipwreck our faith upon them.

So, Paul urges Timothy to **faith** - not blind faith, but faith in the very real story of the resurrected Christ & all that comes with it. As 1 John 1:1 reminds us, *That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked at & our hands have touched - this we proclaim concerning the Word of life.* In other words, this Jesus thing is real, we were there, we witnessed Him personally. This isn't blind faith, this is faith with evidence, faith with foundation!

Paul also urges Timothy to **good conscience**. To know, we've been true to the message & Jesus throughout the struggle of faith - having integrity. We listen to the Scriptures & other Christians who're experienced in sailing these waters when they say, "Don't go

there, you'll be hung up on a sandbar. Go around this way." We build trust in the Word of God, the Body of Christ & the Holy Spirit. We live & preach the true Jesus, not fabricated stories - this is where 'sticking to the script' is a good thing, since this is about issues of the heart, salvation, freedom & eternal life for people. **Good conscience is integrity of message & life in Jesus.**

The second passage is also Paul leading Timothy in 2 Ti 3:1–5, where he warns... *But mark this: There will be terrible times in the last days. ² People will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boastful, proud, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, ³ without love, unforgiving, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not lovers of the good, ⁴ treacherous, rash, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God - ⁵ having a form of godliness but denying its power. Have nothing to do with such people.*

Heavy warning, apropos today. If any one of us took the time to meditate on this list, we'd find we do now & have in the past known any number of people who embody one or more of these things - maybe we fit in there in somewhere ourselves. The last days are now. This is a word picture of the degeneration of humankind without Christ, of those who're being spiritually formed in the negative sense.

The list begins with self-love & ends with false piety (...*having a form of godliness but denying its power.*) It suggests people disguise their selfishness by external religious observances - Jesus called them whitewashed tombs. The dichotomous & duplicitous religious life. Having Christian lingo down, attending church, but never formed in Christ - powerless. Enjoying the outward expressions of Christian faith, while assuming the practice of these visible manifestations of religion sufficient. But there's no change, since they still participate in the common vices & values of surrounding culture. As a result their lives deny the power of the faith they profess. The rest of the list are byproducts of self-love resulting in moral laxity, lack of concern for others, and neglect of Jesus & His mission. Even good works become impure, given people adopt social causes only to look morally superior to others, or to further an agenda.

So, we want neither these things, a shipwrecked faith, nor a powerless form of godliness. We want to grow up as we grow old into a deeply formed spirituality with Jesus in the context of local church owning & living out His mission for His glory!

That takes three things: effort, tools & self-awareness. There's not much I can do in the way of effort - you have to make it. I would say if you lack the desire to make it, then ask the Holy Spirit to uncover your desire & fill you with it. We've identified a few tools along the way, some of which will help to develop self-awareness. And Six:Eight's developed a team of 10 Spiritual Mentors. Some of which have been sharing tools at the end of these sermons. They're available to help you go further in your walk. They could meet with you to discern where the Holy Spirit's leading. Or, give you some new spiritually formative practices & ideas. Or, suggest books & authors which may help you go further in your walk. Or, guide you in laying out a rule of life - a personal plan of your own spiritual formation. Or, they can simply listen to you, and pray with & for you.

Outside input's important, since **left to our own devices, we develop a one-sided spirituality** which only reflects our preferred pattern of being & doing.

A friend of mine was on *Wife Swap*, that TV show where two families switch mothers for 2 weeks. Typically they combine two very different families. Two moms literally switch houses & families. Moms live with their host family doing all the things real mom would do for that first week, while observing. Then she develops a plan for changes in their family life which she deems necessary for the 2nd week. For instance, if their mother did all housework & cooking, and dad never played with the kids, she may come up with a plan to share chores with everyone, and schedule time for the father to take the kids out for something fun.

Typically, changes aren't welcome & viewed as a threat. But they have to do them. Then when 2 weeks are up, the mothers reunite with their own families. But a change has occurred. They're different. The mothers bring new ways & thoughts home, and dads & kids glean something from the visiting mother. Inevitably some changes, or a variation, are adopted into a new family life. Brilliant show.

Individuals & families fall into routines, modus operandi either good or bad & we rarely have fresh input. Families have personalities. The show forces a foreign element into a families life & the changes were always positive. Uptight rigid families learn to relax & play. Lazy families learn much needed discipline. From cleanliness, to time management, to exercise & diet, these families changed for the positive - all because they had someone different living in their home for 2 weeks & they were under contract to submit to whatever that mom came up with.

We're the same in our spiritual life. **Firstly, may have tools which only fit our preferences.** We learn certain ways of pursuing our spiritual life which, although may be good, may also be limited in view & practice. We tend to gravitate to only that which we like, and many times we miss injecting other things into our spiritual experience which could greatly benefit us. We need the input of others to speak into our lives & lead us into new ways of experiencing Jesus.

Sometimes we don't even see the need for change until someone identifies it. You may think your the cleanest person in the world until someone walks into your house & says, "How in the world do you live like this!?" And they help you clean up, and suddenly you can find things & see with new eyes. It's the same in our spiritual lives, sometimes we need a Christian brother or sister to say, "Man, do you ever sweep out your soul?" We may have some good spiritual habits, but they tend to only take us in one direction, leaving some parts of our soul untended.

Secondly, we may have tools which don't fit our preferences. We may have been discipled, or led by someone very different than us early in our Christian walk who tended to give us only tools they were comfortable with, and which may not work well for us. We've only known how to use these few tools, and very much may need to find something in addition to them, or something which fits our personality type better.

For example, my wife's an introvert fed by sunshine & the outdoors. Her Temple of Worship isn't in here listening to her husband on a Sunday. Rather, it's outdoors hiking, or gardening on a sunny day. That's where she's most worshipful. Now if Kim were not nurtured early on to value that as a real & valid act of worship, and was told that worship is only in song on Sundays, and through diligent theological study, she'd not be a very worshipful person at all.

Not all our tool bags are the same. If you're a carpenter, your tool bag is going to be different than a plumbers, or an electricians. But sometimes a carpenter needs a plumber, or an electrician to teach him how to handle one of those issues. And in the end he may expand his own tool bag as a result, becoming more versatile. So, Kim should rejoice outdoors, but she's also put into community to learn to value solid theological thinking from another brother, or be drawn into serving others in discipleship from a faithful extroverted sister, and how these things will aide her walk with Christ too.

Since, if she only worships experientially in nature she'd be devoid of solid theological truth she needs in order to have a balanced experience of Jesus. She needs those of us who enjoy those things, to teach her how to grow in that vein as well. Nature will probably always be her primary form of worship, but it will be enhanced by a healthy understanding of God's Word to her.

A tool which will enhance our awareness of self & others is the *Meyers-Briggs Type Indicator* I mentioned last week, and the 16 different personality types it reveals. It's a familiar test to many, and if so, let this serve as a reminder, and if not, you may hear something new & useful! The different personality types are expressed in four categories each represented with a letter.

The first reveals your **Favorite World**: Do you prefer to focus on the outer world, or on your own inner world? **Extraversion (E) or Introversion (I)**. If you're an introvert, you'll be drawn to the contemplative private modes of spiritual formation - the personal prayer closet will be your favorite place to be. You might need to be drawn out & be reminded that others need to have input in your spiritual development. Or that confession & prayer with others is actually part of the healthy spiritual life.

If you're an Extrovert, you might get antsy & bored trying to have a personal prayer time. *Lectio Divina* may seem like mild torture to you, but get you in a room with 10 other people for a Bible Study & ask you to lead it, and you come alive! You may need to be reminded that there's value in the contemplative quiet moments. You may need others to lead you into quiet moments & give you simple tools to help while there.

The second has to do with **Information**: Do you prefer to focus on the basic information you take in, or do you prefer to interpret & add meaning? **Sensing (S) or Intuition (N)**. Are you concrete & factual, or imaginative & poetic. Do you think in the micro (specific & literal) or macro (big picture possibilities)? These two people could

either kill each other, or learn a lot from one another. The sensing person could pull the intuitive person out of the clouds & ground them more in reality. The intuitive person could expand the sensing persons worldview to accommodate greater things of faith & possibility - they could lend assurance that, although not everything can be answered right away, there's something greater happening nonetheless.

The third category is about **Decisions**: When making decisions, do you prefer to first look at logic & consistency, or first look at the people & special circumstances? This is called **Thinking (T) or Feeling (F)**. The thinking person goes on facts, is levelheaded, logical & driven by reason - they may seem cold sometimes. The Feeling person is warm, empathetic, basing decisions on value & how a decision will affect others - they want harmony. The thinking person may help a feeling person by reminding them that feelings are not facts, that sometimes it's better to stand on a fact no matter how someone feels about it given its affects are far-reaching. That's what Paul's saying to Timothy in chapter one, guard the faith, stay on point with Jesus no matter what others feel about it. The feeling person may help the thinking person to navigate relationships better, to grow in their intuitive nature of being able to read when feelings should be considered & even though you may be right, it's not the time to say it.

The last category is about **Structure**: In dealing with the outside world, do you prefer to get things decided, or do you prefer to stay open to new information & options? **Judging (J) or Perceiving (P)**. People who fall under the Judging category are planners & are all about rules & deadlines. Perceiving folks are flexible, improvise & leave options open, preferring spontaneity. And if handled rightly, they can really help to round each other out in obvious ways.

In short, this tool & others like it, are great ways to get to know yourself, identify strengths & needed areas of growth. They help us to understand others & how we interact with them. Rob Shaeffer has been into the Enneagram lately, ask him about his experience with that test which also helps with awareness.

We want neither a shipwrecked faith, nor a powerless form of godliness. We don't want a one-sided spirituality. We want to grow in self-awareness to operate in community well, growing deeper with Jesus together. God's placed us here in community with others in the local Body of Christ to grow together. We have more than enough tools to do so. It just takes effort to utilize them for the reason of becoming more like Jesus for the sake of others - to know Him & make Him known.

Use your cards provided with the verses we've chosen for this series (Rm 12:1-2 & Eph 2:8-10). If you didn't get one on the way in, there are more on the table by the door. Dave's going to share another spiritual formation tool with us today...

Questions for Study

1. Icebreaker: what's something you look forward to every week?
2. Read Romans 12: 1-2 and Ephesians 2:8-10 together as a group.
 1. Has anyone noticed change in their life as a result of memorizing these verses? Share with the group.
3. Read 2 Timothy 3:1-5
 1. So... Not a warm and fuzzy passage here, but so important to keep in our minds and hearts. It's easy to talk about where we see these in the world around us, but what really matters for the gospel of Christ to go forth is where we see these in ourselves. Is there any sin described here that really stands out to you as something for you to work on?
 2. Juxtapose this passage with the fruits of the Spirit in Galatians 5:22-23. Are there fruits of the spirit you see in each other that we can thank God for? Bless these things now.
 1. Does anyone feel an invitation from the Holy Spirit to practice forming a particular fruit of the spirit in their lives?
 3. Now or later on in group, pray with each other and offer these areas—and our whole selves as living sacrifices, just like in Romans 12. Ask for God to transform us as we submit to Him.
4. In this week's sermon, Jason said we need three things in our formation process: effort, tools and self-awareness. Which of these pieces are your strengths and which have some room to grow? (ex. Someone may feel like they have great self-awareness and little effort, or much effort, but need tools.)
 1. What are your "go to" tools in your spiritual toolbox?
 2. What is a tool you have added to your box on account of someone else?
 3. Is there anything you want to dig deeper in in your personal spiritual formation? Any tools you want to add to your proverbial box? Consider things the spiritual formation mentors have talked about on Sunday's if you feel stuck for an answer here.