

Spiritual Formation

Spiritual formation begins prior to baptism. The forming of our spiritual life begins when we encounter God's love either through the Holy Spirit or through people. God's love impacts us to some degree and then we have a choice to make as to whether we will respond to this love. It can happen at any age, young, old, or in between.

When I was 18 months I contracted polio in 1948. I was put in isolation as were all polio patients at the time. I was in and out of the hospital for a while and the end result was that I wore braces on both legs and my right arm. When I was 6 years of age I was blessed with a family friend who offered to sponsor me to the Shriner's Hospital for Crippled Children in San Francisco. From the age of seven to the age of 14 I was in and out of Shriner's Hospital for muscle transplant surgeries. I had six operations all together and as a final result of all the surgeries I didn't have to wear braces anymore.

When I was in the hospital for the first few years parents were not allowed to visit in person on the floor of the ward. So, every Sunday we would visit our parents through a second story window for 90 minutes as they stood in a courtyard below yelling up to us. At the age of nine or ten I felt the need for fellowship amongst the patients on the ward and I felt the urge to form a fellowship group on the ward for Sunday mornings. I contacted the head nurse to ask permission to use a room. She provided the room. I wrote to my mother and asked her to have my Pastor bring me my Bible. My Pastor came to the hospital and the staff allowed me to visit with my Pastor. He delivered my Bible and wished me well. We found a record player and an old Tennessee Ernie Ford Gospel music album. So on a Sunday morning as many of the boys on the ward as possible gathered in the room and we had a worship service that consisted of the 23rd Psalm, the Lord's Prayer and a reading from the gospels about Jesus. When we finished reading and praying we put on the Tennessee Ernie Ford record and danced around as best we could. Some hopped up and down on one leg, some bounced up and down on their beds or in their wheel chairs. We celebrated our community, God was with us and we were uplifted.

I was formed spiritually by this experience and even though, in my late teens I drifted away from the church I came back in my twenties with a renewed commitment and a desire to know God more deeply.

God invites us each day into His presence. When we come and respond to His presence we are transformed, we are changed, we are formed spiritually into His disciples.

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