

HOW TO USE THIS PLAN

Practicing the Way of Jesus Together for the Life of the World

“To change is one of the great dreams of every heart,” wrote John O’Donohue. The good news of God’s kingdom is the fulfillment of this shared dream for humanity - that by faith in Jesus and the empowering presence of the Holy Spirit we are being transformed into his likeness.

The challenge for apprentices of Jesus is that the process of transformation is slower and more painful than we’d like to admit. Nobody drifts into discipleship - it takes a lifetime of practice, training, and experimentation to unlearn old ways of being and live into our new identity as God’s beloved children. As the Apostle Paul put it, “*we are being transformed from one degree of glory to the next*” (2 Corinthians 3:18).

We’ve written this Spiritual Formation Plan to help you on this journey of transformation. As we researched different frameworks and resources for spiritual formation, we discovered that much of it was either too superficial or too unrealistic for the average person in our Soma community with limited time, energy, and margin. So, this is an attempt to curate a resource that combines flexibility and depth in order to stimulate deeper levels of awareness, curiosity, conversation, and growth. If you’re interested in a more advanced version of this plan, consider working through *Crafting a Rule of Life* by Stephen Macchia or *God in My Everything* by Ken Shigematsu.

Here are some tips for maximizing this resource:

- 1. Reflect on the bigger picture** - this plan will only get traction if it’s tied to your life vision. Block some time (a half or full day would be ideal) before you get started to frame out your desired future, including vision, gifts, desires, and relationships.
- 2. Start simply and slowly** - one of the greatest temptations we face in spiritual growth is trying to do too much too quickly. Just like in the gym, this is a recipe for pulled muscles and frustrated plans! Instead, start small by adding, subtracting, or reorienting a strategic area of your life that has the most potential to give you the biggest lift. Then build on that core momentum as you gain incremental strength and confidence.
- 3. Fail fast & often** - when creating new products, entrepreneurs talk about “failing forward.” Progress, not perfection, is the mantra of both healthy businesses and healthy spirituality. Transformation is an invitation to experiment, risk, and revise in order to figure out “what pleases the Lord” (Ephesians 5:10). Fear not - God is in the mess!
- 4. Make it fun** - we often assume that misery is godly. However, practicing the way of Jesus is about pursuing our deepest delight in God. Although the pathway to delight will entail pain, it also requires plenty of surprises, refreshment, and life-giving renewal to sustain us over the long haul.
- 5. Go public** - formation is a community project. Without community we lack the wisdom, stamina, and resilience to experience sustainable change. Ask God to bring you some partners for this journey, and bring them in on the planning process with you.

PRACTICES OF SPIRITUAL FORMATION

Be With Jesus

Sabbath Way of Life: Slowing down to create space for regular rhythms of resting in God and his grace

Prayer: Conversing with God about what we are doing together

Scripture: Trusting the Spirit-inspired Words of God as our guide, wisdom, and strength for life

Fasting: Abstaining from food, drink, or habit for a period of time

Become Like Jesus

Owning Your Story: Dealing with patterns of suffering and sin from the past that impact our life in the present

Living Into Your Identity & Calling: Discovering our authentic “self-in-Christ” and discerning the unique desires, gifts, and vocations that fit who we’re becoming

Do What Jesus Did

Making Disciples: Training other apprentices by sharing Jesus’ message and mercy in everyday life

Simplicity & Generosity: Living within our basic circumstantial needs so that we can radically bless our neighbors

Justice & Peacemaking: Restoring people, places, and systems from hostility to harmony with God, others, and creation

Eating & Drinking: Sharing our tables and our lives with friends, family, and those far from God

Healing the Sick: Anointing others in Jesus’ name for the restoration of physical, emotional, or spiritual wholeness

The following two pages include a blank Spiritual Formation Guide for you to complete, along with an example version. Use the text at the bottom of the guide to help you complete each box.

Invitation	Resistances	Limitations	Practice(s)	Support
<p>Scriptural Anchor:</p>	<p>External:</p>		<p>1)</p>	<p>Friends:</p>
	<p>Internal:</p>		<p>2)</p>	<p>Guides:</p>
<p>God is always speaking & inviting us to the work of change. The first step is declaring your desire. Ask yourself: <i>What matters most to me right now? What single change could make the greatest impact in my life?</i></p> <p>Once you've decided, list your invitations as positive statements beginning with "I want..." Include a Scripture reference to anchor you in God's promises.</p>	<p>Everyone has learned resistances that protect us from the pain of change. On the top, ask yourself: <i>What things do I do, or not do, that get in the way of my desired change?</i></p> <p>On the bottom list your fears related to changing with "I'm afraid..." List the hidden commitments that flow from your fears with "I'm really committed to..."</p>	<p>Accepting our limitations keeps us grounded in reality. Limitations include season of life, health conditions, work, and relational systems. Ask yourself: <i>What circumstantial limitations do I need to accept as part of my current reality? What pain do I need to make peace with instead of avoiding?</i></p> <p>List your limitations with "I surrender..."</p>	<p>Formation practices help us align our whole person to God's loving invitations for our lives. Ask yourself: <i>Which practices could be most helpful in forming new habits, beliefs, and feelings that break through my resistances and free me to God's invitation?</i></p> <p>List these practices with "I commit..." Be sure to identify specific rhythms (time, place) that you want to create.</p>	<p>Ask yourself: <i>Who has God placed around me that is safe, trustworthy, and available to support me? Who is not currently represented in my life that needs to be here?</i></p> <p>List your support team by name with "I trust..." along with how you feel they could best serve you in this season and how often you plan to meet with them (individually or as a group).</p>

Invitation	Resistances	Limitations	Practice(s)	Support
<p>I want to be more dedicated to reading God's Word.</p> <p>Scriptural Anchor:</p> <p>Your Word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.</p> <p>Psalm 119: 105</p>	<p>External:</p> <p>I currently do not build in enough time to read the Bible in my morning routine.</p> <p>I am often distracted by my phone when I try to focus on reading.</p> <hr/> <p>Internal:</p> <p>I'm afraid of failing. ("I'm really committed to being/appearing perfect")</p>	<p>I surrender the fact that my schedule is inconsistent in this season. I will have to be flexible with my routine while not using the inconsistency as an excuse to skip my quiet times.</p>	<p>1) I commit to twenty minutes of reading Scripture every Tuesday-Thursday morning.</p> <p>2) I commit to not checking my phone until after I have had my quiet time.</p>	<p>Friends:</p> <p>I trust my spouse to check in with me and remind me of the importance of reading scripture.</p> <p>Guides:</p> <p>I trust my Discipleship Group to hold me accountable weekly and to engage in what I'm learning.</p>
<p>God is always speaking & inviting us to the work of change. The first step is declaring your desire. Ask yourself: <i>What matters most to me right now? What single change could make the greatest impact in my life?</i></p> <p>Once you've decided, list your invitations as positive statements beginning with "I want..." Include a Scripture reference to anchor you in God's promises.</p>	<p>Everyone has learned resistances that protect us from the pain of change. On the top, ask yourself: <i>What things do I do, or not do, that get in the way of my desired change?</i></p> <p>On the bottom list your fears related to changing with "I'm afraid..." List the hidden commitments that flow from your fears with "I'm really committed to..."</p>	<p>Accepting our limitations keeps us grounded in reality. Limitations include season of life, health conditions, work, and relational systems. Ask yourself: <i>What circumstantial limitations do I need to accept as part of my current reality? What pain do I need to make peace with instead of avoiding?</i></p> <p>List your limitations with "I surrender..."</p>	<p>Formation practices help us align our whole person to God's loving invitations for our lives. Ask yourself: <i>Which practices could be most helpful in forming new habits, beliefs, and feelings that break through my resistances and free me to God's invitation?</i></p> <p>List these practices with "I commit..." Be sure to identify specific rhythms (time, place) that you want to create.</p>	<p>Ask yourself: <i>Who has God placed around me that is safe, trustworthy, and available to support me? Who is not currently represented in my life that needs to be here?</i></p> <p>List your support team by name with "I trust..." along with how you feel they could best serve you in this season and how often you plan to meet with them (individually or as a group).</p>