



SYSTEMS FOR HEALTH: THE SPIRITUAL FORMATION SYSTEM – Part 2 *by Glenn Smith*

The Spiritual Formation System is the process designed by the leader to bring non-believers into a personal and vital relationship with Jesus Christ, and guides them to live transforming, missional lives.

As church planters we need to see that our role in the spiritual formation of others begins BEFORE they become followers of Jesus. They are seekers, curious, and willing to be in a relationship with us and our church. That's when the spiritual formation process begins – when they are willing to be in an ongoing relationship with us (e.g. once assimilated). The process we design should effectively take them from this starting point to a maturing disciple of Jesus who is reproducing (making disciples of others) and living a life on mission.

Most established churches do not have a well developed system such as this!

I have deep admiration for Willow Creek who recently wrote about their challenges in this regard in the book *Reveal* by Greg Hawkins and Cally Parkinson. Few churches seem to be willing to be honest about this issue. Thank you Willow!

My experience has been that spiritual formation typically takes place for a spiritual seeker when 3 factors come together:

1. The seeker experiences a meaningful (encouraging) relationship with one or more Christ-followers that lead to internal processing and accountability.
2. The seeker pursues an interactive relationship with God through His Word, prayer, spiritual disciplines, etc.
3. The seeker engages their natural talents/abilities in service to others to accomplish God's kingdom purposes

On one hand this is very simple. On the other hand it may be totally new to think that this process can begin with a pre-Christian. We make a grave mistake compartmentalizing evangelism and discipleship. I see it as all one journey. These 3 things do not all happen at once. Many times a person will experience rebirth before experiencing all 3. But don't be afraid to bring seekers along side with you to just "do life" with you as you do it!

A very good resource and story can be found in Bob Roberts' book *Transformation*. Think about the T-Life Model that he has developed at this church.

Now your challenge is to think through all the steps that need to take place between assimilation (connected in relationships) and mature disciple. Keep it simple, but design experiences (not just classes) for people to plug in to that challenges them to the next step.

Finally, measure everything! You can't manage what you don't measure. A good coach will help you design, implement, and measure the effectiveness of your system.