



REVIVE CONFERENCE 2022: CONFIDENT HOPE

REFERENCE SUMMARY AND NOTES

TL;DR

- Regnare Project: all about how to put into practice everything we're learning from Jesus about living the good life of his kingdom. <https://regnareproject.com/about>
- Digital version of reference summary and notes: <https://regnareproject.com/revive2022>

CONFIDENT HOPE FOR THE FUTURE

- Christians have an excellent future hope—and a key part of the church's job is to creatively remind us of this hope
- Change is coming: all will be made new, all wrongs set right, pain and death gone
- His plans for us are good and they can't be derailed by any force in the universe

CONFIDENT HOPE FOR TODAY

- But what about today? Sometimes those promises seem too far off to make much difference today
- Jesus came into a world much like ours preaching his gospel: *"The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel."* **Mark 1:15**
- Those people that encountered Jesus encountered the future promises coming to pass right in front of them, and that was good news!
- The church today struggles with the idea that this future hope is loose in the world *now*
- Jesus is alive and present to us more now than he ever was with anyone while he was on earth.
- The availability of the kingdom now gives us confident hope for today

LIFE TO THE FULL

- Then as now, the kingdom was open to all people
- Receiving and entering this kingdom meant following Jesus and learning to walk with the glorious Heavenly Father just as he did
- **John 10:10**, *"I have come that they may have life, and life to the full."*
- We were saved *from* our sins, but we are saved *for* life to the full!
- It is possible to live the life Jesus is talking about now
- Every step we make toward that life is worth it. **Matt 16:25**, *"For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me will find it."*
- Such a life is far easier than we might think: **Matt 11:29-30** *"Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light."*



TOWARD A LIFE LIKE JESUS

- Not possible to live this life on our strength or willpower or techniques
- This life comes from putting into practice what we learn from Jesus about living that kind of life, one step at a time, empowered by the Holy Spirit.
- This is what it means to be a disciple of Jesus
- And Jesus is still taking students!

WHIRLWIND OVERVIEW OF SPIRITUAL FORMATION, REGNARE PROJECT STYLE

- We're not taking over Jesus' unique mission or role or authority
- Not talking about quitting our jobs: it's about bearing fruit right where we're planted, in the middle of our actual life.
- Spiritual formation is the process of becoming like Jesus and learning to live our lives as he would live them if he were us

SPIRITUAL FORMATION IS INSIDE OUT

- The main problem with humans is the heart; we don't love the things Jesus loves
- Jesus is the foremost expert on the human heart and he knows how to reform its depths
- Spiritual formation is always inside out
- Changing the heart means changing the source of all our thoughts, words, and actions
- Spiritual formation is almost always re-formation and trans-formation (because we've been formed by the world)
- Spiritual formation is cooperation with the Spirit
- **Mark 4:30-32**, parable of the mustard seed: this is how the kingdom and spiritual formation work
- Spiritual formation is just a set of exercises, practices, and rhythms (about as impressive as seeds)
- Meant to bring us into the various flows of grace that God has established for us so that we can grow in him.
- There is no magic to them, just like there is no magic in a mustard seed. The seed just does what it is meant to do when exposed to the right conditions. And so do we.



RAW MATERIALS OF EVERY SPIRITUAL FORMATION PRACTICE

1. **DESIRE:** We are creatures who do what we want (for better or worse). And if we truly desire God and his kingdom, we shall have them. That's what Jesus meant by *"knock and the door will be opened to you, seek and you shall find."* **Matt 7:7** "Seek" is a desiring word. The journey of faith is often one when our desire for the things of God comes and goes. That's okay—sometimes we want to want what God has for us. God can work with that.
2. **TIME:** spiritual formation takes time. This is something our world is short on, and don't think for a minute that the enemy of our souls isn't taking advantage of our busyness. Dedicated, unhurried time set aside for God to use as he will is time that the enemy fears. Time is precious, but even the busiest of us can carve a few minutes for God. Even if you don't have a lot of time, give what you have, just like the widow did with her two small coins (**Mark 12:41-44**)
3. **SACRIFICE:** often it will cost us something to keep in step with the Spirit. These are usually small things but sometimes God asks us for something big. Sometimes sacrifice feels a little like dying. But remember what Jesus does with death—he passes through it with us and for us, offering us resurrection and new life on the far side. Never fear sacrifice, something better always awaits.
4. **SILENCE AND SOLITUDE:** we need solitude and silence, freedom from distractions. There has never been an age so filled with distractions like this one. Everywhere we go, we carry around with us in our pockets a practical infinity of distractions. Seeking God and his kingdom requires us the space to hear God's still, small voice. Often that means going somewhere quiet and going there alone.
5. **COMMUNITY:** the flip side of solitude and silence is our need for community. If we would seek God and his kingdom, we can't permanently retreat to the woods, as attractive as that might seem to some of us. We need one another. Much of our becoming like Jesus is worked out in the messiness of community. So while we need times of silence and solitude, we also need one another.
6. **ATTENTION:** We need sustained attention. Our busyness and hurry causes us to be shallow with the beautiful things that matter, not least God and his kingdom. To help us here, we need regular habits of attention that help us to pay attention and to stay with what we're hearing from God long enough for those things to do their work in us.
7. **PRAYER:** Every spiritual formation practice must be bathed in prayer. Remember that we are keeping in step with the Spirit, that all spiritual formation and seeking after the kingdom is dependent on God's guidance, wisdom, and power. Jesus is the master teacher and in prayer we receive his teaching, we ask for his help, we seek forgiveness, we give thanks to him for the good life as he unfolds it to us.
8. **TRUTH:** spiritual formation comes from a sustained encounter with truth. The whole of Scripture is given for our teaching and training. The Holy Spirit leads us into all truth. Jesus himself, everything he is, does, and says is truth. Encountering truth never leaves us unchanged.
9. **GRACE:** spiritual formation must be steeped in grace. We will never progress as fast as we would like. We will have days when we are dry, bored, doubting, ornery, or outright rebellious and sinful as we walk with God. He has grace enough for all of us and more. Nothing that happens or fails to happen in our journey of spiritual formation can cause him to love us less. We must treat ourselves with the same grace that Jesus does.
10. **TRUST:** spiritual formation requires a growing trust that Jesus is who he says he is, that we are who he says we are, and that we can walk with him the places where he guides and directs. Learning to keep in step with the Spirit is a process of learning trust. When things seem to go sideways, we trust that God has a plan for this latest unexpected turn. Even when it doesn't seem like anything at all is happening, we trust that God is at work in the invisible places.
11. **GRATITUDE:** spiritual formation thrives in an atmosphere of gratitude. As we walk with God day in and day out, we give thanks to him, celebrating the victories we experience. We are grateful for his presence that never leaves us even when things get hard. And even through those periods of dryness when it seems like nothing at all is happening, we give thanks because we know that our Heavenly Father is always at work for our good and for the good of the world.



GOSPEL DEVOTION (SPIRITUAL FORMATION EXERCISE)

1. Find a quiet place and set aside about 15 minutes of distraction-free time.
2. Ask God to meet you during this time, to sink the truth of the gospel of the Kingdom deep into your heart as you bring your attention to bear on his truth.
3. Then place before your mind the gospel Jesus preached: "the kingdom of God is at hand". Expand this truth in your mind, filling out for yourself what it really means: that God is not far off, that his will for you is good, that the one with authority over all things is for you, that he looks on you with love and grace, that he is ready to help when you ask, that nothing can separate you from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus, that his power is sufficient for any difficulty that you face. Say these aloud, write them out, repeat them for a little while until you start to connect these biblical realities to what Jesus means when he says "the kingdom of God is near."
4. Next, bring to mind something that is a concern for you, some difficulty or trial you are facing. If you've never done this before, start with something small rather than the most overwhelming difficulties you are facing. Little victories build great faith.
5. Whatever the difficulty is, weigh it against what you know to be true: that the kingdom of God is near. In your mind, see that concern or that worry or that challenging circumstance and speak to that worry or difficulty. Say:

*I live in the strong and unshakable Kingdom of God
The Kingdom of God is never in trouble
Therefore I am never in trouble.**

6. Bring your fears forward one by one: has God abandoned me? Is this too small for him to care about? He may have been faithful before, but will he be different this time? Is this too big for him to handle? Can I trust him with this? Does he really want the best for me? What if he doesn't do what I want? Is what I want better than what God wants?
7. Let the truth of the gospel of the kingdom do its work on those fears one by one. Don't try to convince yourself of anything or manufacturing a good feeling. If right now, the balance still seems to be on the my-trial-is-bigger side of the scale, that's okay. Remember the light switch? You've done your part: to direct your attention and focus to the glory and beauty of the kingdom and to open your heart so that God can do the hard work of moving truth into your deepest places. You are simply receiving from God what is true.
8. You may not find yourself much changed in your first attempt, but like all soul training exercises, God is the primary actor and he is very likely at work doing things you may not perceive at first. Thank God for his work in you and pay close attention to any ways that come to mind for you to "believe" the truth of the words by acting or choosing accordingly.
9. Jot down anything you might receive from God during this exercise in a journal or in your notes app on your phone. If there are action steps to take, write those down too.
10. One more thing to say: consider inviting a trusted friend or mentor in on this conversation. For this practice especially, we were made for community; to bring our fears out into the light, to hear someone else say the truth of what you are working toward believing can be a powerful experience.

** from James Bryan Smith's podcast Things Above, episode 1*