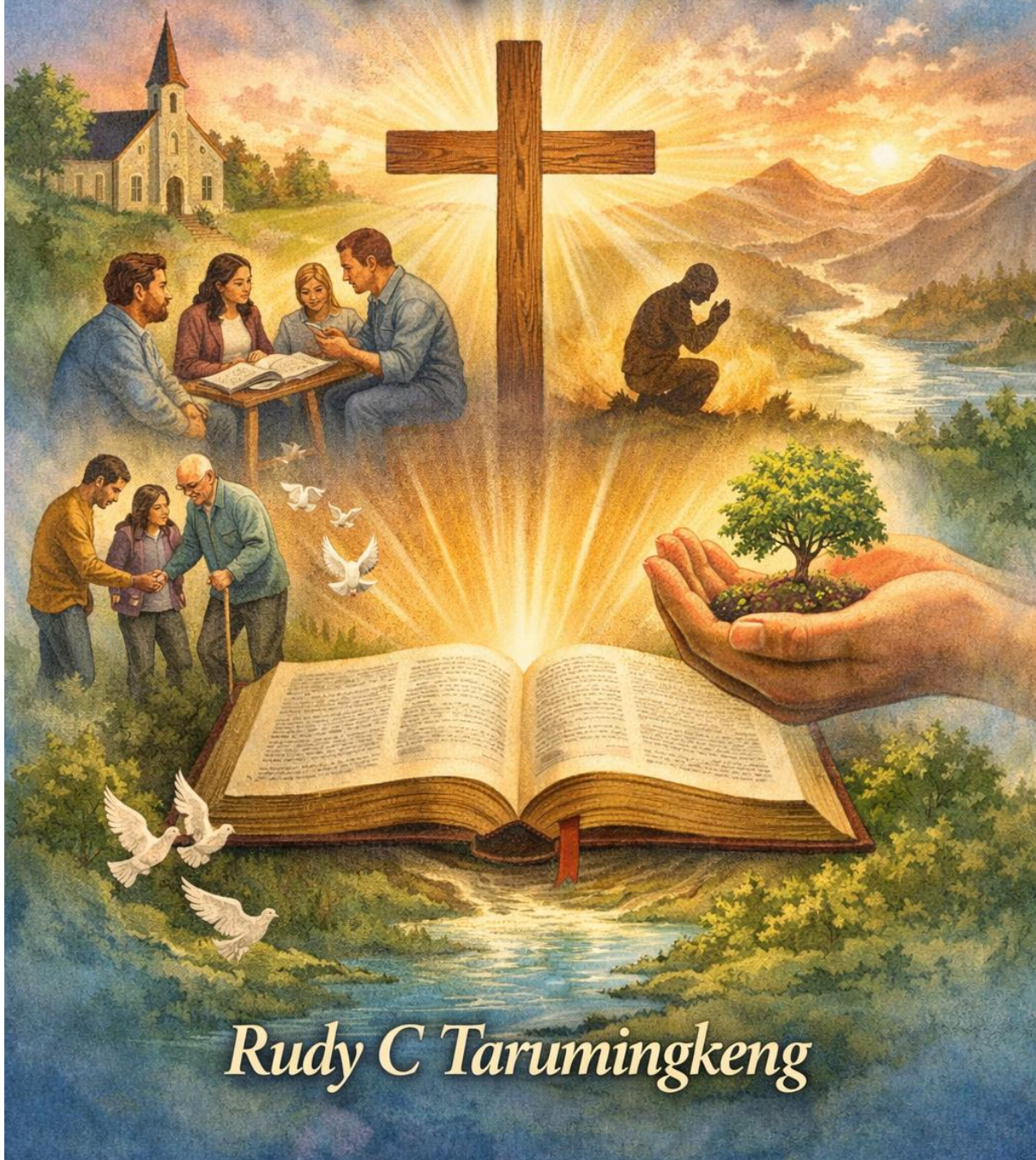


Church Member Formation *for a* *Healthy Spiritual Life*



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CHURCH MEMBER FORMATION FOR A HEALTHY SPIRITUAL LIFE

Introduction

The formation of church members for a healthy spiritual life is one of the most central and enduring responsibilities of the church. A congregation may possess buildings, programs, liturgies, committees, and institutional continuity, yet still remain spiritually fragile if its members are not deeply formed in faith, character, prayer, truth, love, and obedience to God. For this reason, Christian ministry cannot be reduced to the management of events or the maintenance of religious routines. The church is called to nurture people into maturity in Christ. It is not enough for believers merely to attend worship services, identify with a denomination, or participate in visible ministry. They must be shaped inwardly and outwardly by the grace of God so that their spiritual life becomes rooted, healthy, fruitful, and resilient.

A healthy spiritual life does not mean a life free from struggle, doubt, sorrow, temptation, or weakness. Scripture never presents spiritual maturity as the absence of hardship. On the contrary, believers are often refined through trials, discipline, waiting, repentance, and perseverance. The healthy spiritual life is not a perfect life, but a rightly ordered life—a life centered on God, nourished by His Word, sustained through prayer, transformed by the Holy Spirit, and expressed in love, holiness, humility, and service. It is a life in which faith is not merely professed with the lips but embodied in conduct. It is a life that bears fruit over time, as

described in Psalm 1, where the righteous person is compared to a tree planted by streams of water, yielding fruit in season and whose leaf does not wither. The image is instructive: spiritual health involves rootedness, nourishment, endurance, and fruitfulness.

In the present age, the formation of church members has become both more difficult and more urgent. Contemporary life is marked by speed, distraction, secularization, consumerism, moral confusion, emotional fatigue, and digital fragmentation. Many Christians live in environments where attention is constantly divided, values are unstable, and faith is pushed toward the margins of daily life. In such a context, spiritual shallowness can easily become normalized. A person may remain formally religious while inwardly malnourished. Another may know Christian vocabulary but lack inner transformation. Yet another may be active in ministry while spiritually exhausted, driven more by performance than by communion with God. These conditions reveal why church formation must be intentional. Healthy spiritual life does not arise automatically from religious affiliation. It must be cultivated through teaching, example, discipline, worship, fellowship, pastoral care, and the daily work of grace.

Biblically, the church is not merely an assembly of individuals but the body of Christ (1 Corinthians 12:27), a spiritual house (1 Peter 2:5), a flock under the care of the Good Shepherd (John 10:11), and a family of faith (Ephesians 2:19). Each of these images suggests formation. The body must grow in unity and maturity. The house must be built up. The flock must be fed and protected. The family must nurture its members in truth and love. Church member formation, therefore, belongs to the very identity of the church. It is not an optional program but an ecclesial vocation. The church exists not only to gather people but to form them.

Moreover, the New Testament vision of discipleship is comprehensive. Believers are called to be transformed by the renewing of their minds

(Romans 12:2), to grow to maturity in Christ (Ephesians 4:13–15), to abide in Christ and bear fruit (John 15:4–5), to work out their salvation with reverence while God works in them (Philippians 2:12–13), and to present themselves as living sacrifices to God (Romans 12:1). Such language indicates that spiritual formation is not superficial. It involves thought, desire, habit, relationships, moral choices, and vocation. It touches private devotion and public witness alike.

Therefore, this essay explores the formation of church members in healthy spiritual life from a biblical, theological, pastoral, and practical perspective. First, it clarifies what constitutes a healthy spiritual life. Second, it examines the biblical foundations of spiritual formation. Third, it discusses the role of the church as a formative community. Fourth, it analyzes essential dimensions of church member formation, including the Word of God, prayer, worship, fellowship, holiness, service, suffering, and pastoral care. Fifth, it considers major challenges to spiritual health in contemporary life. Finally, it offers practical directions for churches seeking to nurture members into deeper, healthier, and more faithful Christian living. The guiding conviction throughout this essay is that the health of the church depends not merely on organizational success, but on whether its members are being formed into the likeness of Christ. As Paul wrote, the goal of ministry is “to present everyone mature in Christ” (Colossians 1:28).

Understanding the Meaning of a Healthy Spiritual Life

A healthy spiritual life is not simply a life that appears religious. It is possible to practice religious habits without genuine inward renewal. Jesus sharply criticized forms of religiosity that were outwardly impressive but inwardly empty, especially when He described certain religious leaders as those who honored God with their lips while their hearts were far from Him (Matthew 15:8). Healthy spirituality, therefore, cannot be measured merely by public observance. It must be

understood more deeply as a life rightly related to God and increasingly conformed to His will.

At its core, a healthy spiritual life begins with reconciliation to God through Jesus Christ. Human beings do not cultivate spiritual health through moral effort alone. Spiritual life begins in grace. Jesus declared that He came so that people may have life, and have it abundantly (John 10:10). This abundance does not refer merely to material fullness but to the life of communion with God. The apostle Paul teaches that those who were once dead in trespasses and sins have been made alive together with Christ by grace (Ephesians 2:1–5). Thus, spiritual formation is not self-generated improvement. It is the growth of new life received from God.

Second, a healthy spiritual life is marked by abiding communion with Christ. In John 15:4–5, Jesus says, “Abide in Me, and I in you,” teaching that just as branches cannot bear fruit apart from the vine, believers cannot flourish apart from Him. This image is decisive for spiritual theology. Health in the spiritual life is relational before it is behavioral. The believer’s fruitfulness depends on living attachment to Christ. Therefore, church member formation must not encourage mere moralism; it must nurture living fellowship with the Lord.

Third, healthy spirituality is visible in transformation of character. Scripture repeatedly insists that spiritual life bears fruit. Paul speaks of the fruit of the Spirit as love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control (Galatians 5:22–23). These are not peripheral virtues; they are central indicators of spiritual health. Where spiritual life is healthy, the person becomes more deeply marked by Christlike dispositions. This does not happen instantly, nor does it eliminate struggle, but over time the pattern of life changes.

Fourth, healthy spirituality includes doctrinal rootedness. Many modern discussions of spirituality emphasize experience while neglecting truth.

Yet in Scripture, love for God is inseparable from faithfulness to His Word. The righteous person delights in the law of the Lord and meditates on it day and night (Psalm 1:2). Jesus teaches that true disciples continue in His word (John 8:31). Paul urges believers not to be children tossed to and fro by every wind of doctrine, but to grow in maturity (Ephesians 4:14–15). A healthy spiritual life, therefore, is not only warm-hearted; it is also truth-shaped.

Fifth, healthy spirituality is communal. The Christian life is not designed for isolation. The early church devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching, the fellowship, the breaking of bread, and the prayers (Acts 2:42). Believers are instructed to encourage one another daily (Hebrews 3:13), to bear one another's burdens (Galatians 6:2), and not to neglect meeting together (Hebrews 10:24–25). Spiritual health is sustained through life in the body of Christ. Isolation often breeds spiritual distortion, whereas community provides encouragement, correction, accountability, and shared joy.

Sixth, healthy spirituality is missional and practical. Faith without works is dead (James 2:17). Spiritual maturity manifests not only in inner piety but in ethical conduct, justice, compassion, and service. Jesus makes clear that love for Him is demonstrated in obedience (John 14:15), and He identifies greatness with service (Mark 10:43–45). Thus, healthy spiritual life cannot be separated from the way believers act in the world. It affects speech, relationships, money, time, work, forgiveness, and compassion for the poor.

Finally, healthy spirituality includes perseverance. It is not a passing religious enthusiasm but a steady life of discipleship. Paul describes the Christian race as one requiring endurance (2 Timothy 4:7; Hebrews 12:1–2). Spiritual health, then, must be understood not in terms of occasional emotional highs but as durable faithfulness. The believer may pass

through seasons of dryness or sorrow, yet continue clinging to God. In this sense, health involves resilience under grace.

Biblical Foundations for Church Member Formation

Church member formation is deeply rooted in Scripture because God's redemptive work always includes formation. He does not merely rescue people from danger; He forms them into a holy people. In the Old Testament, God delivers Israel from Egypt but then leads them through covenant formation, teaching them how to live as His people. In the New Testament, Jesus calls disciples not merely to believe abstract truths but to follow Him, learn from Him, and be sent by Him.

The Great Commission in Matthew 28:19–20 is foundational for this topic. Jesus commands His disciples to make disciples of all nations, baptizing them and teaching them to obey all that He has commanded. This instruction shows that the church's task is not only evangelistic but formative. It is not enough to bring people to initial faith; they must be taught to obey. Obedience is not externalism but the embodied shape of discipleship. A church that gathers converts without forming disciples neglects an essential part of Christ's commission.

Another crucial passage is Ephesians 4:11–16. Here Paul explains that Christ gave apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers "to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ," until all attain maturity. The goal is that believers will no longer be spiritually immature, easily deceived, but instead grow up in every way into Christ. This text reveals several important truths. First, church leaders exist to equip, not merely to perform ministry for others. Second, the whole body is meant to grow. Third, growth is measured by maturity in Christ. Fourth, doctrinal and relational stability are signs of healthy formation.

Colossians 1:28–29 offers a similar vision. Paul proclaims Christ, "warning everyone and teaching everyone with all wisdom, that we may present

everyone mature in Christ." The language of warning and teaching indicates that formation requires both encouragement and correction. Spiritual health is nurtured not by flattery but by wise ministry that addresses error, sin, confusion, and immaturity.

Romans 12 also provides a powerful framework. Believers are urged to present their bodies as living sacrifices, holy and acceptable to God, and not be conformed to this world but be transformed by the renewing of their minds (Romans 12:1–2). Here formation is holistic. It involves worship, the body, the mind, discernment, and practical life in the community. The chapter goes on to address humility, spiritual gifts, love, hospitality, patience, peace, and overcoming evil with good. Thus, spiritual formation is never detached from ordinary conduct.

John 15, as mentioned earlier, gives the theology of abiding. Jesus insists that fruitfulness depends on remaining in Him. Without Him believers can do nothing. The Father is glorified when disciples bear much fruit. Formation, therefore, is not merely educational or organizational; it is organic and Christ-centered. The church cannot form healthy believers through activity alone. It must continually lead them into abiding union with Christ.

The pastoral letters further emphasize formation through teaching, example, discipline, and perseverance. Timothy is instructed to watch both his life and doctrine closely (1 Timothy 4:16). He is told to train himself for godliness (1 Timothy 4:7–8). Titus is instructed to ensure that different groups within the church—older men, older women, younger women, younger men—are taught in ways appropriate to their lives and responsibilities (Titus 2). This shows that spiritual formation must be intentional, intergenerational, and contextual.

Even the book of Hebrews contributes significantly to this vision. Believers are exhorted to encourage one another, endure hardship, pursue holiness, and fix their eyes on Jesus (Hebrews 3:13; 10:24–25;

12:1–14). Spiritual health is not sustained by passivity but by mutual exhortation and persevering faith.

Taken together, these biblical texts demonstrate that church member formation is a divine mandate. It is Christ-centered, Word-based, community-shaped, morally serious, and oriented toward maturity. The church is not merely a place where spiritual consumers receive religious goods. It is a formative community where believers are trained in the life of the kingdom.

The Church as a Formative Community

The church is not simply a gathering point for individuals who happen to share beliefs. It is a divinely constituted community in which God shapes His people. This means that spiritual formation is not only a private matter between the individual believer and God, though personal devotion remains essential. It is also ecclesial. The church becomes the environment in which the Word is preached, sacraments are shared, prayers are offered, sins are confessed, burdens are carried, gifts are exercised, and maturity is cultivated.

Acts 2:42–47 offers a rich portrait of formative church life. The early believers devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching, fellowship, breaking of bread, and prayer. They shared their possessions, praised God together, and enjoyed favor among the people. This passage reveals that healthy church life includes both vertical and horizontal dimensions. Teaching and prayer draw the church toward God.

Fellowship and generosity bind believers to one another. Spiritual health grows where doctrine, worship, community, and practical love converge.

The church as a formative community must therefore resist two dangers. The first is institutionalism without transformation. A congregation may function efficiently while failing to nourish souls. The second is individualistic spirituality detached from communal accountability. Some

believers may wish to pursue faith privately, avoiding the demands of fellowship. Yet Scripture insists that we belong to one another in Christ (Romans 12:5). Growth in grace ordinarily takes place in the company of others.

This formative role requires churches to see themselves not merely as places of weekly attendance but as schools of discipleship. The church teaches people how to listen, how to pray, how to worship, how to repent, how to forgive, how to serve, how to suffer faithfully, and how to hope. Much of this teaching is not conveyed only through sermons. It is learned through the practices and culture of the congregation. What a church celebrates, tolerates, neglects, and exemplifies will shape its members profoundly.

If a church celebrates only visibility and platform, members will learn performance. If a church tolerates gossip, pride, favoritism, or materialism, members will internalize these contradictions. But if a church models reverence, humility, service, confession, hospitality, truthfulness, and love, members are more likely to be formed accordingly. Thus, the spiritual health of members is inseparable from the moral and liturgical ecology of the congregation.

Formation Through the Word of God

No healthy spiritual life is possible apart from the Word of God. Scripture is not an accessory to spiritual life; it is one of its chief means of nourishment and correction. According to 2 Timothy 3:16–17, all Scripture is breathed out by God and is profitable for teaching, reproof, correction, and training in righteousness, so that the servant of God may be complete, equipped for every good work. This text alone is enough to show that church member formation must be profoundly scriptural.

The Word performs several formative functions. First, it reveals God. Spiritual health depends on knowing God as He has disclosed Himself,

not as human imagination prefers to invent Him. Second, the Word exposes sin. Hebrews 4:12 says that the Word of God is living and active, discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart. Healthy spirituality requires this uncovering work, because hidden sin and self-deception damage the soul. Third, the Word renews the mind. Romans 12:2 teaches that believers are transformed by the renewing of their minds, suggesting that distorted thinking must be healed by truth. Fourth, the Word nourishes faith. "Faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ" (Romans 10:17). Fifth, the Word directs conduct, as Psalm 119 repeatedly affirms.

Church member formation through the Word must occur at several levels. There is corporate preaching, which remains indispensable. There is teaching in classes, Bible studies, catechesis, and discipleship groups. There is personal reading and meditation. There is family reading and discussion. Each of these contributes differently. If members only hear Scripture secondhand in sermons, their spiritual diet will remain limited. Churches must teach members to read Scripture for themselves, not merely as information but as divine address.

Meditation is especially important in an age of distraction. Psalm 1 describes the blessed person as one who meditates on the law of the Lord day and night. Meditation here does not mean emptying the mind, but filling it with God's truth until it shapes desire and perception. Churches should therefore help members develop habits of slow, prayerful engagement with Scripture. This is particularly necessary in a digital culture where attention is fragmented and reading is often shallow.

At the same time, scriptural formation requires sound interpretation. The church must protect members from distorted readings, superficial proof-texting, and manipulative teaching. Therefore, pastors and teachers have a serious responsibility to expound Scripture faithfully. Poor teaching

damages spiritual health because it leaves people malnourished or confused. Good teaching, by contrast, anchors the soul.

Formation Through Prayer and Communion with God

Prayer is the breath of spiritual life. A church member may possess knowledge, activity, and external discipline, but without prayer there can be no deep communion with God. Jesus Himself modeled a life of prayer, frequently withdrawing to pray (Luke 5:16), teaching His disciples to pray (Matthew 6:9–13), and urging them to watch and pray lest they enter temptation (Matthew 26:41). The early church also continued steadfastly in prayer (Acts 2:42).

Prayer forms believers because it reorients the heart toward dependence on God. It teaches humility. It quiets self-sufficiency. It opens the soul to confession, intercession, thanksgiving, lament, and adoration. In Philippians 4:6–7, believers are told not to be anxious but in everything, by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, to present their requests to God. The result is the peace of God guarding heart and mind in Christ. Prayer thus has both theological and therapeutic significance. It does not merely obtain things from God; it teaches the heart to live before Him.

Healthy church formation must teach members not only that they should pray, but how to pray. Many believers remain spiritually weak not because they reject prayer, but because they have never been trained in it. Churches need to teach both private and corporate prayer. Members should be encouraged to pray through Scripture, to pray honestly in weakness, to intercede for others, to practice thanksgiving, and to bring lament before God. The Psalms provide a rich school of prayer precisely because they teach the language of the soul before God.

Prayer must also be communal. The church that prays together grows together. Corporate prayer meetings, intercessory gatherings, pastoral prayer in worship, family prayer, and prayer in small groups all contribute

to spiritual health. Where prayer disappears, spirituality often becomes formal and self-reliant. Where prayer is present, the church learns dependence.

Formation Through Worship and Sacramental Life

Worship is not merely a scheduled activity of the church; it is one of the primary ways believers are formed. In worship, the church is gathered into the presence of God, hears His Word, confesses sin, receives assurance, sings truth, gives thanks, and is sent back into the world. Worship shapes imagination, affection, reverence, and identity. It teaches the church who God is and who the church is before Him.

Romans 12:1 describes the Christian life itself as worship: presenting our bodies as living sacrifices. Yet corporate worship remains uniquely formative. In gathered worship, believers are decentered from themselves and reoriented toward God. This is vital in cultures dominated by self-expression and distraction. Worship teaches the heart to adore, not merely to consume.

Healthy church formation therefore depends significantly on the character of worship. If worship is shallow, entertainment-driven, or disconnected from truth, members may remain emotionally stimulated but spiritually undernourished. But when worship is biblically grounded, reverent, joyful, Christ-centered, and participatory, it becomes a school of spiritual health.

The sacraments or ordinances also play a crucial role. Baptism reminds believers of their union with Christ and incorporation into the body. The Lord's Supper nourishes remembrance, gratitude, humility, and communion. Paul warns in 1 Corinthians 11 that careless participation in the Supper is spiritually dangerous, which implies that rightly received, it is spiritually serious and beneficial. Churches should therefore teach

members to approach sacramental life with faith, self-examination, and joy.

Formation Through Fellowship and Mutual Care

Healthy spiritual life cannot be sustained in isolation. God has designed believers to grow through one another. Fellowship in the New Testament is not casual sociability; it is participation in the shared life of Christ. Hebrews 10:24–25 calls believers to stir up one another to love and good works and not neglect meeting together. Galatians 6:2 commands believers to bear one another's burdens. James 5:16 speaks of confessing sins to one another and praying for one another.

These texts reveal that spiritual health involves honest, loving relationships. Members need encouragement in weakness, correction in error, comfort in sorrow, and companionship in obedience. Churches that lack meaningful fellowship often produce lonely believers who struggle in silence. By contrast, churches that cultivate small groups, pastoral relationships, intergenerational mentorship, hospitality, and mutual care provide vital conditions for healthy spiritual life.

Fellowship also combats pride and illusion. Alone, believers may imagine themselves stronger than they are. In community, they encounter the call to patience, forgiveness, truthfulness, and self-giving love. Thus, fellowship becomes a means of sanctification.

Formation in Holiness and Moral Integrity

Spiritual health is inseparable from holiness. Scripture repeatedly commands believers to pursue holiness because God Himself is holy (1 Peter 1:15–16). Hebrews 12:14 states that without holiness no one will see the Lord. This does not mean salvation is earned by moral purity, but it does mean that grace produces transformation. A spirituality that ignores holiness is unhealthy at its root.

Church member formation must therefore address sin honestly. This includes not only obvious moral failures but also subtler sins such as envy, gossip, greed, bitterness, pride, lust, dishonesty, unforgiveness, and spiritual complacency. Healthy churches do not normalize these things. They teach repentance as a regular grace, not a rare emergency.

At the same time, holiness must be taught within the gospel. Legalism damages spiritual health by replacing grace with fear or self-righteousness. But antinomianism is equally damaging, because it empties grace of transformative power. The New Testament holds grace and holiness together. Believers are saved by grace and trained by grace to renounce ungodliness and live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives (Titus 2:11–12).

Formation Through Service and Mission

A healthy spiritual life is not inward-looking only. It expresses itself in service. Jesus said that whoever would be great must become servant of all (Mark 10:43–45). He washed the disciples' feet and commanded them to do likewise in humble love (John 13:14–15). Spiritual formation that never leads to service becomes stagnant.

Church members should therefore be formed not merely as recipients but as participants in ministry. Spiritual gifts are given for the building up of the body (1 Corinthians 12; Romans 12:3–8). Service teaches humility, dependence, compassion, and responsibility. It also helps members discover that Christian life is not about self-absorption but about loving God and neighbor.

Mission also enlarges spiritual health. When the church participates in evangelism, mercy ministry, hospitality, justice, and witness, members learn to live beyond themselves. They see God's heart for the world. They learn courage, generosity, and dependence on the Spirit. Churches that

keep members perpetually passive often weaken them. Churches that equip members to serve strengthen them.

Formation Through Suffering, Discipline, and Perseverance

One of the most neglected dimensions of healthy spirituality is the role of suffering. Many believers assume that spiritual health should exempt them from pain, confusion, or hardship. Yet Scripture teaches the opposite. Trials often become instruments of deep formation. James 1:2–4 says that the testing of faith produces steadfastness. Romans 5:3–5 teaches that suffering produces endurance, character, and hope. Hebrews 12 interprets divine discipline as evidence of God’s fatherly love.

Churches must therefore prepare members not only for blessing but for endurance. A spiritually healthy believer is not one who avoids all trials, but one who learns to trust God within them. This requires teaching on lament, hope, and perseverance. The Psalms again provide a vital resource, because they teach believers how to cry to God without losing faith.

Pastoral ministry is crucial here. When members suffer illness, bereavement, disappointment, unemployment, relational pain, or persecution, the church must not offer shallow slogans. It must accompany them patiently, reminding them of God’s faithfulness. Healthy spiritual life grows when suffering is interpreted through the promises of God rather than through despair.

The Role of Leadership in Church Member Formation

Church leaders play a decisive role in shaping the spiritual health of members. Ephesians 4 shows that pastors and teachers are given to equip the saints. Peter exhorts elders to shepherd the flock willingly, eagerly, and as examples (1 Peter 5:2–3). Paul tells Timothy to set

believers an example in speech, conduct, love, faith, and purity (1 Timothy 4:12).

This means leaders form members not only through teaching but through example. A congregation will often imitate the moral and spiritual tone of its leaders. If leaders are prayerless, performative, proud, or careless with truth, the church will absorb these habits. But if leaders are humble, biblically grounded, prayerful, honest, and servant-hearted, members are more likely to grow in healthy ways.

Leaders must also resist the temptation to substitute busyness for formation. It is easier to run programs than to shepherd souls. Yet healthy member formation requires patient oversight, pastoral presence, doctrinal clarity, and a willingness to address real spiritual conditions rather than only visible activity.

Family, Home, and the Daily Ecology of Spiritual Health

Church member formation does not occur only within church buildings. Spiritual health is shaped in daily life, especially in the home.

Deuteronomy 6:6–7 instructs God’s people to teach His words diligently to their children and to speak of them throughout ordinary life. This means the home is a primary context of formation.

For adults, too, spiritual habits are built through daily rhythms: prayer, Scripture reading, honest speech, stewardship of time and money, family worship, forgiveness, and hospitality. Churches should therefore help members connect Sunday worship to Monday living. A healthy church will teach people how to bring faith into work, family conflict, parenting, use of technology, leisure, and civic life.

Without this integration, members may live fragmented lives—religious in church, but shaped by other values elsewhere. Healthy spiritual life requires wholeness. Christ must be Lord not only of private devotion but of the entire life.

Contemporary Challenges to Healthy Spiritual Life

The formation of church members today faces several serious challenges. One is distraction. The digital environment fragments attention, weakens concentration, and erodes habits of silence. Many believers find it increasingly difficult to read Scripture deeply or pray attentively. Churches must therefore help members recover practices of focus, solitude, and meditation.

Another challenge is consumerism. Many Christians approach church as consumers seeking comfort, inspiration, or services rather than as disciples called to worship, obedience, and mutual responsibility. This mindset makes formation difficult, because spiritual growth requires commitment and self-denial.

A third challenge is secularization. Believers may affirm faith privately while allowing public and practical life to be governed by worldly assumptions. Church formation must therefore cultivate integrated discipleship, showing how Christ speaks to work, culture, ethics, and identity.

A fourth challenge is moral confusion. Modern life presents shifting norms on sexuality, truth, authority, justice, and the meaning of freedom. Without careful teaching, members may drift into cultural conformity. Romans 12:2 remains urgently relevant: do not be conformed to this world.

A fifth challenge is emotional exhaustion. Anxiety, loneliness, disappointment, and mental fatigue are common. Churches must respond pastorally and wisely, integrating spiritual care with compassion and realism. Members need communities where weakness can be acknowledged without shame.

Practical Pathways for Church Member Formation

If churches desire to nurture healthy spiritual life, several practical pathways are essential. First, preaching and teaching must be biblically deep, Christ-centered, and pastorally applied. Members need theology that reaches daily life.

Second, churches should intentionally train members in spiritual disciplines. Many believers need practical instruction in prayer, Scripture meditation, confession, fasting, generosity, Sabbath, and journaling. Habits matter because they shape the soul.

Third, small-group fellowship should be strengthened. Large gatherings are valuable, but much formation happens in smaller communities where believers can speak honestly, receive care, and practice mutual encouragement.

Fourth, intergenerational ministry is important. Older believers can model endurance and wisdom, while younger believers bring energy and questions. Titus 2 suggests that Christian maturity is transmitted relationally across generations.

Fifth, pastoral care must be relational and not merely administrative. Visiting, counseling, listening, and praying with members are not secondary tasks; they are core means of formation.

Sixth, churches should cultivate a culture of service. Members grow when they are invited into ministry according to their gifts. Service shifts the focus from self to love.

Seventh, family discipleship should be supported. Parents, spouses, and households need help in building a spiritual life at home.

Eighth, churches must create rhythms of repentance and grace. A healthy church is not one where people pretend to be strong, but one where they can confess sin and receive forgiveness through Christ.

Conclusion

The formation of church members in a healthy spiritual life is not a marginal concern but one of the church's highest callings. The church exists not merely to preserve religious identity or sustain institutional continuity, but to nurture believers into mature life in Christ. Healthy spirituality is rooted in grace, sustained by abiding in Christ, formed by Scripture, expressed in prayer and worship, strengthened through fellowship, refined in holiness, extended in service, and tested through perseverance.

Such a life does not emerge automatically. It requires intentional formation within the community of faith. Churches must therefore see themselves as environments of discipleship, where truth is taught, prayer is practiced, worship is reverent, relationships are honest, leaders are exemplary, and members are equipped for faithful living. In an age of distraction, consumerism, secularization, and moral instability, this work becomes even more urgent.

Biblically, the goal remains clear: that believers may "grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ" (Ephesians 4:15). Paul's pastoral ambition was to present everyone mature in Christ (Colossians 1:28), and this remains the proper ambition of the church today. The health of the church cannot be measured only by numbers, buildings, or activity. It must be measured by whether its people are becoming more prayerful, more truthful, more loving, more holy, more steadfast, and more Christlike.

Ultimately, healthy spiritual life is God's work, yet it is a work He ordinarily carries out through means He has appointed: His Word, His Spirit, His church, and the practices of grace. The responsibility of the church is therefore both humble and serious. It must plant, water, teach, guide, correct, and encourage, trusting that God gives the growth (1 Corinthians 3:6–7). When the church is faithful in this calling, believers are strengthened not only for private devotion but for public witness.

They become rooted trees in dry times, lights in dark places, and living members of Christ's body, bearing fruit that endures.

That is the true aim of church member formation: not religious busyness, but healthy souls; not outward performance, but inward renewal; not nominal belonging, but living discipleship; not temporary enthusiasm, but enduring faithfulness before God. In such formation, the church becomes what it is called to be—a people growing together into the fullness of Christ.

Below are the **Glossary** and **References** for the essay "**Church Member Formation for a Healthy Spiritual Life.**"

Glossary

Abiding in Christ

A continuing, living communion with Jesus Christ in which the believer remains spiritually united with Him and bears fruit through dependence on His grace (John 15:4–5).

Body of Christ

A biblical image for the church that emphasizes unity, diversity of gifts, mutual dependence, and Christ as the head of the community (1 Corinthians 12:27).

Church Member Formation

The intentional process by which believers are nurtured in faith, doctrine, character, worship, prayer, obedience, fellowship, and service so that they grow toward maturity in Christ.

Communion with God

A living relationship of fellowship, intimacy, dependence, and spiritual participation in the presence and grace of God.

Confession

The act of acknowledging sin before God, and at times before fellow believers, with repentance and trust in divine forgiveness.

Discipleship

The lifelong process of following Jesus Christ, learning from Him, obeying His teaching, and becoming increasingly conformed to His character.

Doctrine

The body of Christian teaching derived from Scripture that shapes faith, understanding, and practice.

Edification

The building up or strengthening of believers in faith, truth, character, and spiritual maturity.

Fellowship

A shared life among believers in Christ marked by mutual encouragement, prayer, love, accountability, and participation in the life of the church.

Fruit of the Spirit

The spiritual qualities produced by the Holy Spirit in the life of the believer, such as love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control (Galatians 5:22–23).

Grace

The unmerited favor and saving work of God given to sinners through Jesus Christ, which also sustains and transforms the believer's life.

Holiness

A life set apart for God, characterized by moral purity, reverence, obedience, and conformity to His will.

Intergenerational Ministry

A pattern of church life in which different age groups learn from, support, and help form one another in faith.

Lament

A biblically faithful expression of grief, sorrow, complaint, or pain brought honestly before God in trust.

Maturity in Christ

The condition of spiritual growth in which a believer becomes increasingly stable, discerning, loving, obedient, and Christlike.

Meditation on Scripture

A reflective and prayerful engagement with God's Word in order to understand it deeply, receive it inwardly, and live it faithfully.

Pastoral Care

The shepherding ministry of guiding, comforting, correcting, encouraging, and supporting believers in their spiritual journey.

Perseverance

Steadfast endurance in faith through trials, temptations, discouragement, and suffering.

Prayer

The believer's communication and communion with God, including praise, confession, thanksgiving, lament, intercession, and petition.

Repentance

A turning away from sin and a turning toward God in sorrow, faith, and renewed obedience.

Sanctification

The ongoing work of God's Spirit by which believers are progressively made holy in thought, desire, conduct, and character.

Sacrament / Ordinance

A sacred practice instituted by Christ—commonly baptism and the Lord's Supper—through which the church remembers, proclaims, and participates in the grace of God.

Scripture

The inspired Word of God, authoritative for Christian faith, doctrine, correction, and formation.

Spiritual Discipline

Practices such as prayer, Bible reading, fasting, silence, Sabbath, confession, and generosity that help cultivate deeper communion with God.

Spiritual Health

A condition in which a believer lives in growing communion with God, rooted in truth, marked by Christlike character, sustained by grace, and expressed in holy and loving conduct.

Worship

The response of reverence, love, obedience, and praise offered to God in both gathered church life and daily Christian living.

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If you want, I can also prepare **Biblical verse references + conclusion + glossary + references** as one clean appendix for the paper.

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