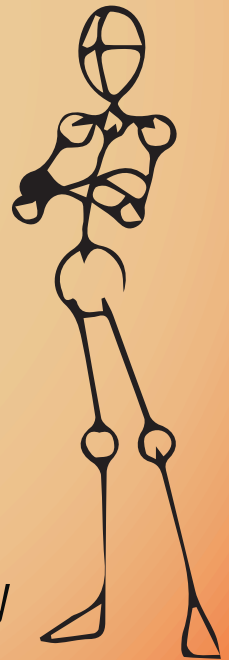
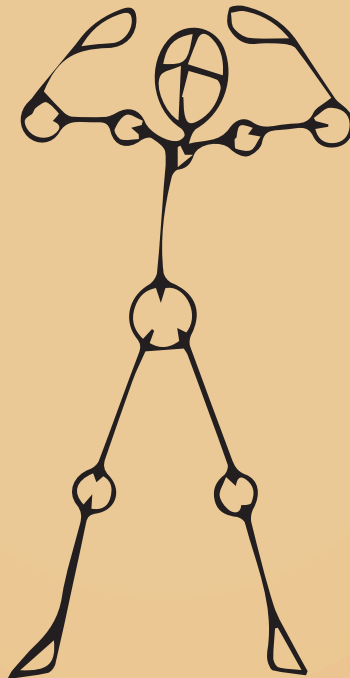
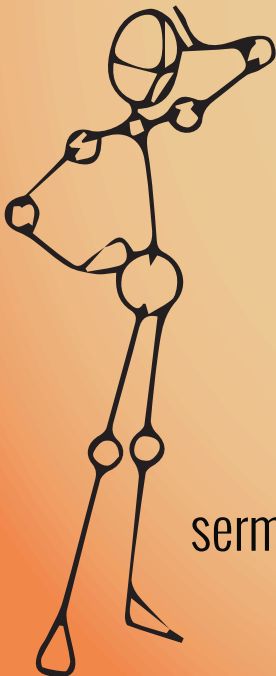


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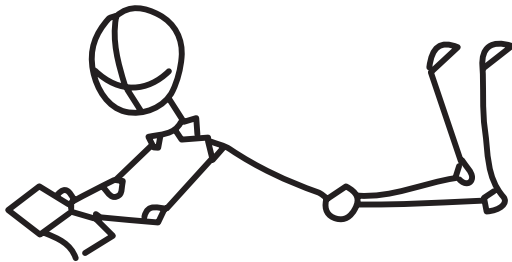
allowing God to change us



sermon series and small group study
question guide
winter 2019

soul shaping

allowing God to change us



sermon series and small group study
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winter 2019

Soul Shaping: Allowing God to Change Us
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introduction

“Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me,
bless his holy name.” –Psalm 103:1

The Bible refers to the soul as our innermost person—the true self from where character is developed, behaviors are guided, and relationships with God are formed. The soul is that invisible, immortal existence within us, often represented by the language of heart, life, or being.

For Christians, the soul is first shaped by the transformational power of confessing Jesus as Lord and Savior. The moment we receive the “new heart and new spirit” Ezekiel speaks of, and become the “new creation” Paul mentions, the shape of our soul is turned toward God in ways that we could never have imagined. The Soul Shaper accesses our innermost self and the Holy Spirit takes up residence, ready to begin the life-long process of setting us apart for kingdom works, with the aim of making us holy (sanctification).

After acknowledging God’s authority in us, we are faced with a choice. We can hinder his shaping work within us by resisting and turning back to worldly pursuits, or we can surrender to God, pursuing an intentional, intimate relationship with him, allowing him to change us and shape our soul.

That’s where the spiritual disciplines found in Keith Drury’s *Soul Shaper* come in. Grounded in Scripture and in the worship of believers since the early centuries, spiritual disciplines are best viewed as those practices that place our soul in the channels of God’s shaping, changing grace. Over the next nine weeks, we will explore ten of the twenty-two practices suggested by Drury. Beginning with a weekly sermon focus on the biblical themes of selected disciplines, this question guide will build on the corresponding chapters in *Soul Shaper*.

introduction

In respect to Drury's book, you'll notice there are four categories of spiritual disciplines:

Abstinence: Abstaining from things that can distance us from God

Action: Taking tangible steps to bring us closer to God

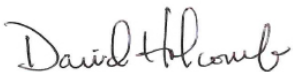
Relationships: Making right our relationships with others

Response: Managing our responses to life circumstances

The study follows a progression from abstinence to response. While we only highlight selected chapters, we encourage you to read them all. Whether or not you have prior experience with spiritual formation, you will find Drury's work especially straightforward and practical, and the suggested exercises both compelling and challenging. Additionally, a section for journaling (one of Drury's suggested disciplines of action) is included in the back of this guide.

Our prayer for this season is that each of us will grow in biblical understanding as we grow in our relationship with God and one another. It is our hope that our souls may be strengthened, inspired, and shaped into greater Christ-likeness, as we plead to God with the psalmist to "search our souls, know our hearts, try our thoughts, and lead us in the way everlasting." Amen.

Because He lives,



David Holcomb

Minister of Discipleship, River Oaks Community Church



4. In John 7, Jesus' brothers imply that his remaining in secret is less noble than "*showing himself to the world.*" Jesus resists the temptation of fame and publicity because it is not yet God's will or timing. What can we learn from Jesus' example? What are the situations in your life where you choose to remain anonymous rather than draw attention to yourself? Is this easy or difficult for you?

5. Often, our seeking recognition and affirmation is an indication of how little trust we place in God when it comes to our identity, our self-esteem, our provisions, and more. While affirmation from others can be healthy, in what ways has your need for worldly recognition diminished an opportunity to lean on and fully trust in God?

6. What resonated with you most regarding the discipline of secrecy: the idea of vainglory, the motivation for our good works, equating trust with the ability to practice secrecy, or something else?

7. How to Begin: I want to attempt the discipline of *secrecy* by committing to the *Soul Shaper* suggestion of ...



4. “*Hospitality is about the guest, not the host.*” What does Drury mean? Is this a personal “ouch” or an encouraging affirmation to your approach to hospitality?

5. If hospitality can be thought of as:
 - Step One. Invite **friends** into our space;
 - Step Two. Invite **strangers** into our space;
 - Step Three. Invite **enemies** into our space;...then how would you describe your state of hospitality? Using the steps above, can you see faces, name names, or tell the stories of those you would invite into your space?

6. What resonated with you most regarding the discipline of hospitality: the emphasis on strangers, the biblical mandate for hospitality, the call to communal hospitality, or something else?

7. How to Begin: I want to attempt the discipline of *hospitality* by committing to the *Soul Shaper* suggestion of ...



4. Following confession to God, the Bible indicates there is an important next step—confession to others. James says it directly (James 5:16); Jesus teaches it (Matthew 5:23-24); Paul instructs it (Galatians 6:1). Have you confessed a sin or transgression to someone else? Have you ever shared something that you could have gotten away with had you not confessed? How did it go?

5. Keith Drury asks the question: “Could it be that we take confession less seriously today because we now take sin less seriously?” Thinking about your own spiritual journey, is this true? Why would we be less inclined to confess today than Christians throughout the first two thousand years of our faith?

6. What resonated with you most regarding the discipline of confession: the benefits of confession, the history of confession (including the Protestant church), what to confess, or something else?

7. How to Begin: I want to attempt the discipline of *confession* by committing to the *Soul Shaper* suggestion of ...



restitution

LUKE 19:1-10, ACTS 19:11-20



- Read “Part 3: Disciplines of Relationships” in *Soul Shaper* (pp. 137-138).
 - Read “Chapter 14: Restitution” in *Soul Shaper* (pp. 139-150).
1. Many of us may recall practicing the discipline of restitution as a child—perhaps the result of a broken window or a stolen candy bar. A few of us might also have experience with restitution as an adult, the result of a misdemeanor offense or a shady business transaction. Have you ever had to “make right” something that was the result of your poor decision or negligent behavior? What life lesson did you learn from that situation?

 2. What is the difference between confession and restitution? Why is it categorized differently relative to spiritual disciplines in the book?

 3. Zacchaeus is an example of restitution that was motivated by a relationship with Jesus. Read Luke 19:1-10 with a view of a sinner—and the sin—restored by a changed heart. How should our changed heart impact our willingness to go back and make things right?

4. In what attributes of Christ-likeness do we grow when we practice restitution?
(Clue: one of the most important ones is also the one most opposite our fallen nature.)

5. Restitution is generally easier when we are repaying someone for stolen or damaged property, but the discipline of restitution also requires us to restore reputations and the pain we have caused others with past actions and words. What are a few of the many reasons this is so important to a follower of Jesus?

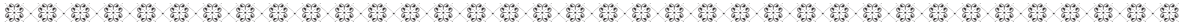
6. What resonated with you most regarding the discipline of restitution: God's use of restitution in our testimony, the emphasis on humility through restitution, the freedom obtained by both parties through restitution, or something else?

7. How to Begin: I want to attempt the discipline of *restitution* by committing to the *Soul Shaper* suggestion of ...



capturing thoughts

PSALM 119, 2 CORINTHIANS 10:1-6, PHILIPPIANS 4:4-9



- Read “Chapter 16: Capturing Thoughts” in *Soul Shaper* (pp. 161-174).
- 1. Describe that feeling in your gut as you discover, right now, that everyone around you can read your mind and know your thoughts? Now, does that feeling in your gut change as you realize that God knows your every thought? Why or why not?

- 2. Paul writes that “*the mind governed by the flesh is death, but the mind governed by the Spirit is life and peace*” (Romans 8:6). What are examples of our mind being governed by the flesh? Read James 1:14-15. What is the correlation, and the progression, of our thoughts, our temptations, and our sins?

- 3. Drury provides a simple and concise definition to one of the more problematic desires of the mind: lust (p. 164). What are a few of the key points to this definition?

4. How do impure and sinful thoughts impact us on a daily basis? How do these thoughts impact those around us? In other words, if they are only thoughts, how can they hurt others? (Consider Proverbs 23:7).

5. Many of the suggestions for beginning the practice of capturing thoughts include diverting, starving, or redirecting those thoughts. Have you had success with overcoming temptations of any sort through mental and spiritual displacement? How did you do it? What is your best advice?

6. What resonated with you most regarding the discipline of capturing thoughts: the excerpts from real letters, the consequences of becoming obsessed with lust, the possibilities of overcoming sinful thoughts, or something else?

7. How to Begin: I want to attempt the discipline of *capturing thoughts* by committing to the *Soul Shaper* suggestion of ...



peacemaking

MATTHEW 5:21-26, JAMES 3:13-18



■ Read “Chapter 21: Peacemaking” in *Soul Shaper* (pp. 225-237).

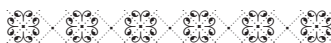
1. Have you ever been in a situation where there was no peace? Can you describe the environment and how it impacted you? How did it affect the opportunity to share and show the love of Christ?
2. Jesus and James call on followers of Christ to be peacemakers. What do you understand that command to imply? In what way would Jesus say, “Well done, my peacemaker,” to you?
3. Why is helping to make or maintain peace a critical discipline in the church? Might the prayer of Jesus in John 17:20-23 have something to do with it? How does peacemaking help to change us?

4. Read Proverbs 12:20 and Romans 12:18. How do these verses encourage you to be intentional when it comes to encouraging peace? How might these principles be applied to a contemporary culture of divisive politics, ethnic prejudice, and social media confrontation?

5. When you find yourself with the opportunity to promote peace, whether as being “caught in the middle” or as an innocent bystander, what are some general rules to keep in mind? What should you never do in an attempt to create peace between two parties, or with yourself and others?

6. What resonated with you most regarding the discipline of peacemaking: the devastating impact of relational friction, the biblical call to be a person of peace, the four scenarios that church members might encounter, or something else?

7. How to Begin: I want to attempt the discipline of *peacemaking* by committing to the *Soul Shaper* suggestion of ...



response

MATTHEW 5:38-48, JAMES 1:2-8



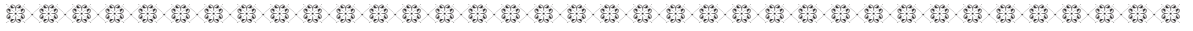
- Read “Part 4: Discipline of Response” in *Soul Shaper* (pp. 239-240).
 - Read “Chapter 22: Response” in *Soul Shaper* (pp. 241-251).
1. Traditional logic says it takes 21 days to form a habit. Have you found that to be true? In what ways? Consider the saying: “Your life is the sum total of your experiences.” What does that mean?

 2. The discipline of response is grounded in the idea that—as we more regularly practice spiritual disciplines—our daily responses are more consistently Christ-like. Have you discovered any change in your daily response over the past nine weeks? If so, in what ways? Words, attitudes, spiritual growth? If not, have you genuinely practiced the disciplines? Soul shaping is a life-long process. Stay with it!

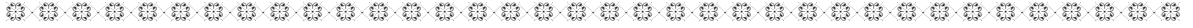
 3. Find the lyrics to Matt Redman’s “Blessed Be Your Name.” What do the words of this song and the words of the Apostle Paul in Philippians 4:11-13 have in common? In your own words, what is the correlation between our circumstances and our response to those circumstances?

JOURNALING

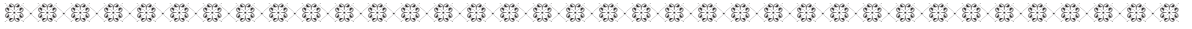
MY SPIRITUAL FORMATION



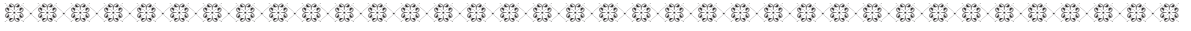
These pages allow you to journal your experiences throughout the *Soul-Shaping* study. Record any practices you attempt, along with any reflections that you would like to capture regarding the disciplines. Utilize the space to capture any Scripture that has been meaningful to you or any thoughts generated by the sermon teaching or through time in personal or small group study.



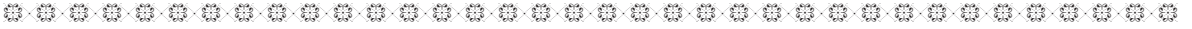
week one



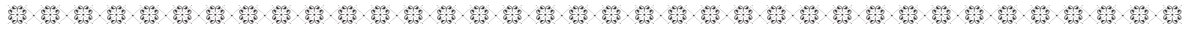
week two



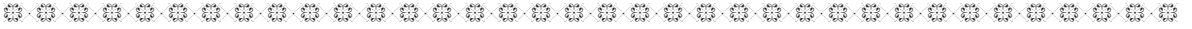
week three



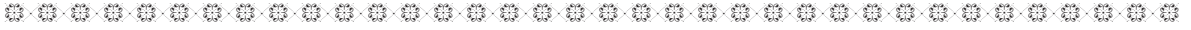
week four



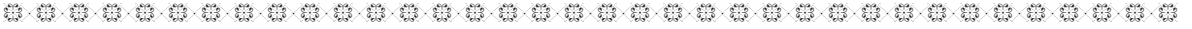
week five



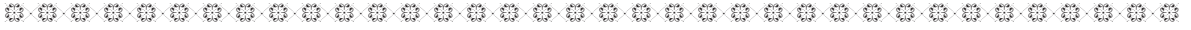
week six



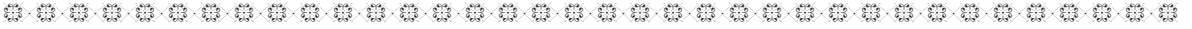
week seven



week eight



week nine



final thoughts

