



## SPIRITUAL FORMATION COHORT

God often leads us with our desires. Have you found that you want to grow in your relationship with Jesus but struggle to know how to get there? Or maybe you have a desire to spend time in prayer but feel frustrated because it doesn't seem to be making any practical difference in your life. Or maybe things are going well in your personal spiritual practices but you want to grow in your ability to be integrated into a community of faith.

This cohort is being formed because spiritual growth is hard to do alone. We want to create a community where people can grow together in their faith and spiritual practice. If that's something you feel a desire for, please read on for additional details.

### THE EXPERIENCE:

Deep transformation requires a certain level of intensity in our spiritual practices and in our experience of community. Our hope is to provide this kind of depth for you during the liturgical season spanning Lent to Pentecost Sunday (Early March to Early June). The focus of this time together will be to more deeply integrate two streams of prayer - Ignatian Ways of Praying and Contemplative Prayer (also known as Centering Prayer) - into our spiritual practices.

Our Spiritual Formation series consists of experiences (outlined below) intended to help people deepen and develop their spiritual practice.

**-Saturday Retreat at Purdon Groves:** The Spiritual Formation Cohort kicks off with an all-day retreat at Purdon Groves. Purdon Groves is a farm owned by community members, Houston and Sherry Clark. There, among groves and open pastures, you'll be introduced to foundational spiritual practices and to one another. Lunch will be provided and dinner cooked up by an onsite chef. Attendance at this is crucial; we ask those who cannot attend to delay applying until a later offering.

- Date/Time: March 2nd, 9AM-9PM
- Location: Purdon Groves
  - 9803 SW County Rd 3100, Purdon, TX 76679
  - <https://www.purdongroves.com>

**-Led Group Practices:** Our cohort will gather six times for led experiences of prayer and meditation. There will be minimal instruction during these times with an emphasis on practice and direction.

- Dates:
  - Tuesday, March 19th (7-9 pm)
  - Tuesday, March 26th (7-9 pm)
  - Tuesday, April 16th (7-9 pm)
  - Tuesday, April 30th (7-9 pm)
  - Tuesday, May 7th (7-9 pm)
  - Tuesday, May 21st (7-9 pm)
  
- Location: Life in Deep Ellum
  - LIDE Office Space

**-Spiritual Direction:** Individual spiritual direction will be offered to each participant on a monthly basis during the time you participate in the cohort. The date will be set up by the participant and the director (Rachel Triska). These meetings are generally 30-60 minutes and will be held at Life in Deep Ellum.

**-Silent Retreat at Quartz Mountain Resort:** Jesus often went to the wilderness to pray and so will we. We will close our time together with a semi-silent retreat at Quartz Mountain Lodge. The days of the retreat will be spent in silence, hiking, enjoying nature or resting in the lodge. Our evenings will be spent together in community (but not in silence). Breakfast, lunch and snacks will be provided daily as well as the Seafood Buffet on Friday night at the onsite Sundance Cafe. (Buffets are only offered on weekends. Otherwise, menu prices vary (from salad to steak) so everyone is on their own for dinner Thursday night.)

- Dates:
  - Thursday, May 30th (4pm start time)
  - Friday, May 31st
  - Saturday, June 1st (Noon Checkout)
  
- Location:
  - 22469 Lodge Road, Lone Wolf, OK 73655
  - <http://www.quartzmountainresort.com>
  - Called a "Resort" but may be better described as a lodge

**EXPENSE:** The expense of this retreat is \$275/participant. This covers the real costs of the experiences noted above (minus transportation). The upfront cost to secure your place is \$100 to be paid by Monday, February 25th. The remaining balance (\$175) is due by Friday, May 17th. Financial support may be available on a need basis.

APPLICATION: This Spiritual Formation Cohort is being offered for committed members/attenders at The Gathering. This experience is not well suited for those who are new to Life in Deep Ellum or in a season of questioning whether they want a relationship with Jesus (we plan to offer a Spiritual Exploration Cohort later that will be more helpful to people in that season). Below we have provided a series of questions to help you think through whether this experience might be right for you:

( YES / NO ) Do you have a growing desire to be a part of this cohort?

( YES / NO ) Do you have a desire to grow in your relationship with Jesus? In the context of community? Via spiritual practices (even if it feels daunting now)?

( YES / NO ) Can you participate in all of “The Experience” outlined above?

( YES / NO ) Would you be able to set aside time daily for personal prayer (recommended - 20 minutes/day, 4-5 days/week)?

( YES / NO ) Are you willing to meet with a spiritual director during this time to discuss the content of your prayer?

( YES / NO ) Have you been involved in a Life Group (or other community/volunteer group) at Life in Deep Ellum?

( YES / NO ) Have you been attending The Gathering for nine months or more?

If you answered yes to most of the questions above, you would probably benefit from this experience and we would encourage you to apply. There is an application process for this cohort because we will be limiting the group to 10-15 people. If all goes well, we plan to offer this opportunity again. **Applications for this cohort are due by EOB on Wednesday, February 13th. Applicants will be notified of their acceptance/waiting list status by Friday, February 15th.**

#### PERSONAL NOTE FROM RACHEL TRISKA:

Friends, I am excited to lead this cohort. Over the last five years, God’s had me on a journey that has taken me to go deeper in my spiritual practice. The experiences I’ve had along the way transformed my life, prayers and relationship with God.

What I discovered is there is a way to live out our faith that awakens us to God’s loving presence, centers us in a deep and abiding peace, and allows our prayer to meaningfully affect every area of our lives. This isn’t an experience meant for a lucky few; I believe this is what Jesus wants for us all. I can’t promise everyone who goes through this cohort will get there in our fourteen weeks together (I’ve been at this five years and there’s always a deeper place). What I do I trust is we’ll all make progress as we journey together.

Sometimes, it’s hard to know how to go deeper. My hope is this cohort will provide folks from The Gathering with the experiences and community needed to say yes to whatever Jesus is inviting you into. If you have additional questions, please feel free to shoot me an email ([rachel@lifeindeepellum.com](mailto:rachel@lifeindeepellum.com)). Many Blessings!