

A New (or Really, Ancient) Pastoral Imagination

John Mark Comer

Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and strangers, but fellow citizens with God's people and also members of his

household, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone.

In him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord.

And in him you too are being built together
to become a dwelling in which God lives by
his Spirit.

EPHESIANS 2v19-22

So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, to equip his people for works of

service, so that the body of Christ may be
built up until we all reach unity in the faith
and in the knowledge of the Son of God

EPHESIANS 4v11-16

and become mature, attaining to the whole
measure of the fullness of Christ.

EPHESIANS 4v11-16

Then we will no longer be infants, tossed
back and forth by the waves, and blown
here and there by every wind of teaching

EPHESIANS 4:11-16

and by the cunning and craftiness of people
in their deceitful scheming. Instead,
speaking the truth in love, we will grow to

EPHESIANS 4:11-16

become in every respect the mature body
of him who is the head, that is, Christ.
From him the whole body, joined and held

together by every supporting ligament,
grows and builds itself up in love, as each
part does its work.

EPHESIANS 4v11-16



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NO
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NO
CONGREGATIONAL
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AVAILABLE TO ALL

CONGREGATIONAL
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COMMUNION
AVAILABLE TO ALL

REDESIGN OF
CHURCH BUILDINGS

CONGREGATIONAL
SINGING

EXPOSITORY
PREACHING

COMMUNION
AVAILABLE TO ALL

REDESIGN OF
CHURCH BUILDINGS

REJECTION OF
WIDESPREAD PRACTICES

Think about the gravity of that level of change, in one generation.

Could it again be time for reform
and renewal?

Think about the gravity of *that* level
of change, in one generation.

We are living through a crisis of
discipleship in the Western church.

Recognition of God



STAGES
OF FAITH

Recognition of God



STAGES
OF FAITH

Life of Discipleship

Recognition of God



STAGES
OF FAITH

Life of Discipleship

Productive Life

Recognition of God



Life of Discipleship

Productive Life

The Wall

Recognition of God



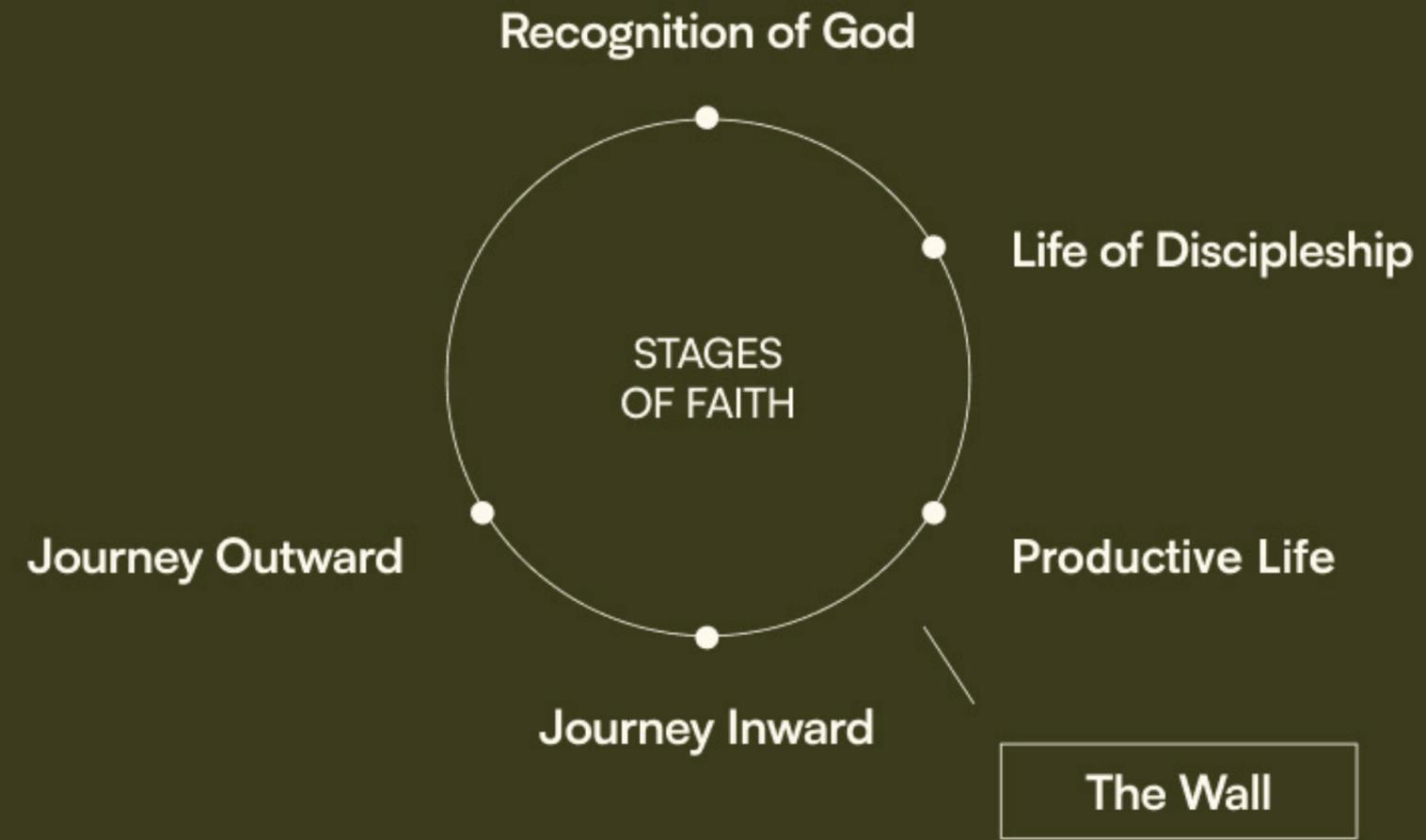
STAGES
OF FAITH

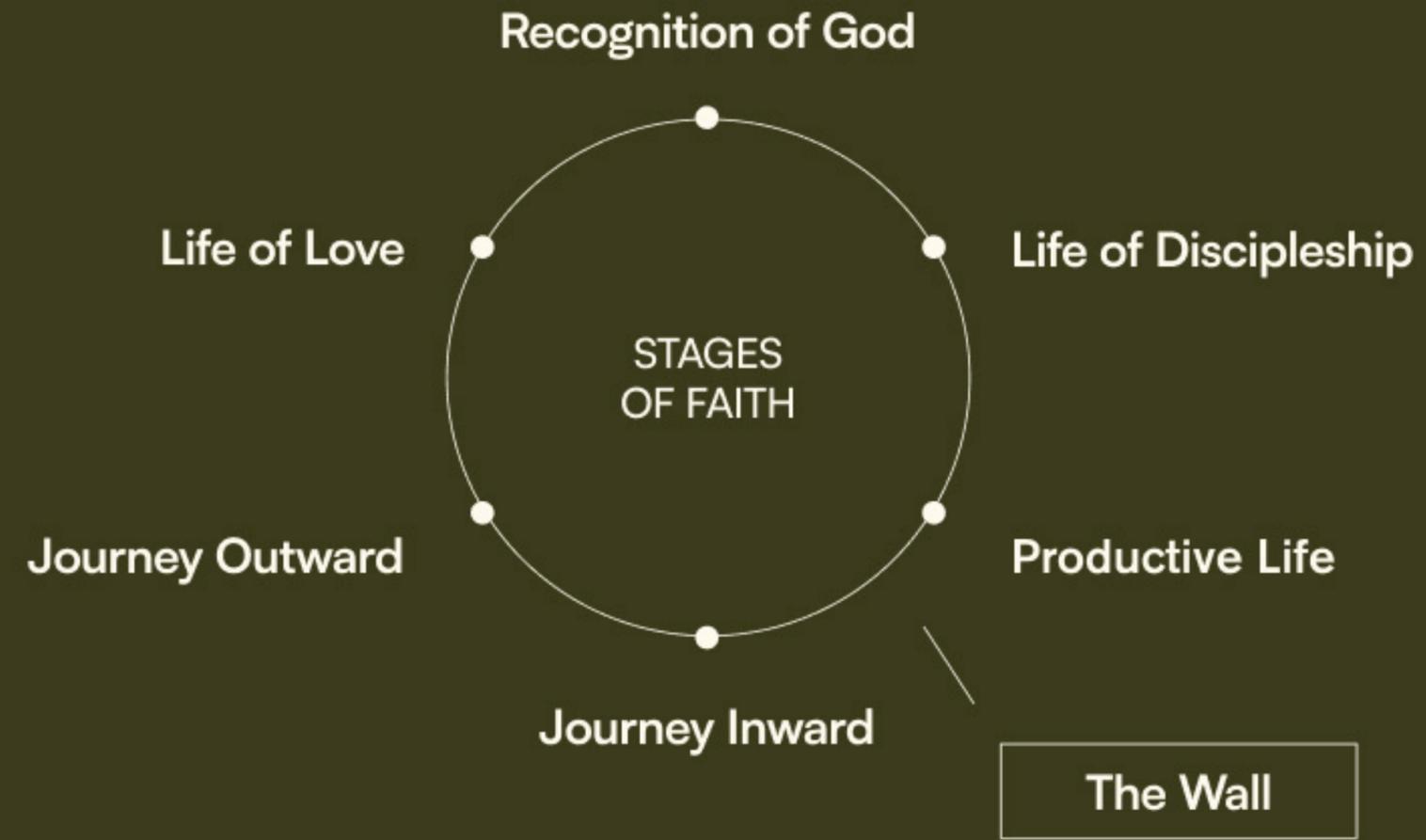
Life of Discipleship

Productive Life

Journey Inward

The Wall





SPIRITUAL FORMATION MOVEMENT

The reintroduction of spiritual formation into the Western, Protestant stream of the church.

SPIRITUAL FORMATION

The process by which a person's 'spirit' (or inner being) is formed into a person of love in Christ.

“The modern church is facing a crisis of spiritual formation, and the spiritual formation movement is facing a crisis of church.”

“The only way people will ever be spiritually formed in a deep way in the church is for the church to change; but the church will never change.”

It seems that the same Spirit that is drawing a generation to the church, is also drawing a generation in the church into the “deeper life.”

... members of [God's] household

EPHESIANS 2v19-22

.. built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone.

In him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord.

Until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.

Then we will no longer be infants . . . we will grow to become in every respect the mature body of him who is the head, that is, Christ.

From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work.

We shape our homes, and then
our homes shape us.

We shape our churches, and then
our churches shape us.

We shape our churches, and then
our churches shape us.

CHURCH FORMATION

The process of reimagining and re-architecting our way of doing church around a vision, intention, and plan for spiritual formation.

01

Spiritual formation (rightly understood)
is the central purpose of the church.

What is Jesus doing right now?

“The aim of God in history is the creation of an all-inclusive community of loving persons with God himself at the very center of this community as its prime Sustainer and most glorious Inhabitant.”

“The Church exists for nothing else but to draw men into Christ, to make them little Christs. If they are not doing that, all the cathedrals, clergy, missions, sermons, even the Bible itself, are simply a waste of time.

God became Man for no other purpose.
It is even doubtful, you know, whether
the whole universe was created for any
other purpose.”

C.S. LEWIS

02

There is no silver bullet, but
there is a reliable pathway
for transformation

We were born into a time and place
in church history, when much of the
knowledge of spiritual formation
has been effectively lost.

“A curriculum for Christlikeness”

03

It has to start with us

“As the leaders go, so goes the church.”

EMOTIONALLY HEALTHY DISCIPLESHIP

“The best give you give the people you
lead is your transforming self.”

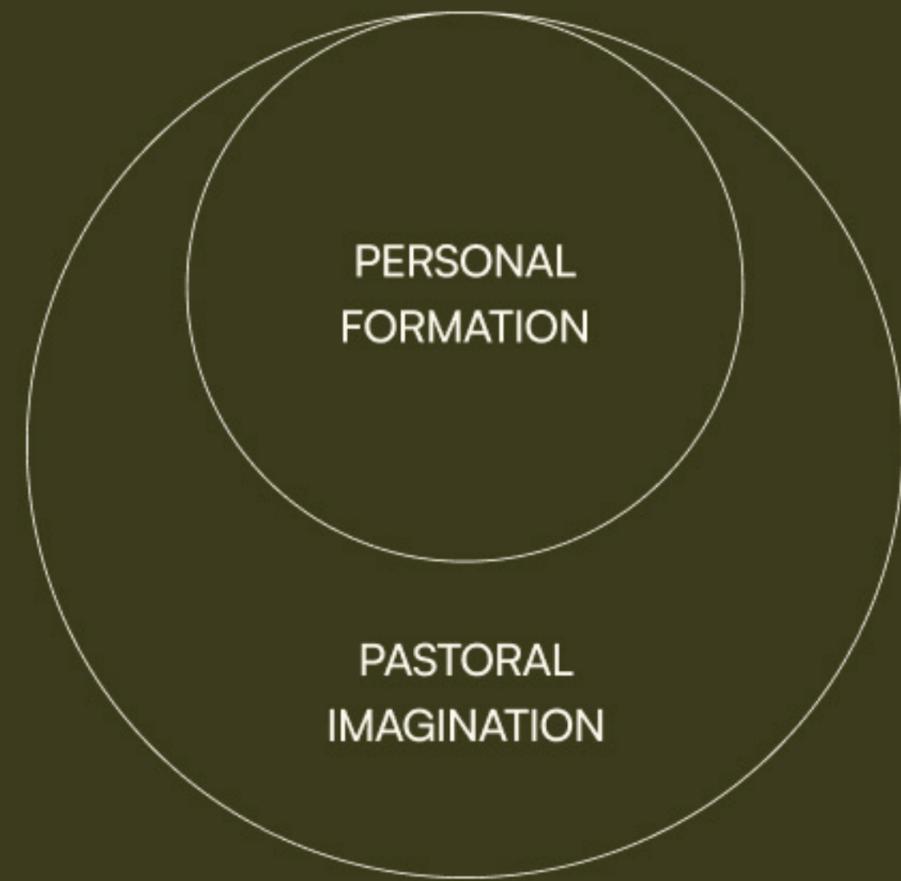
RUTH HALEY BARTON

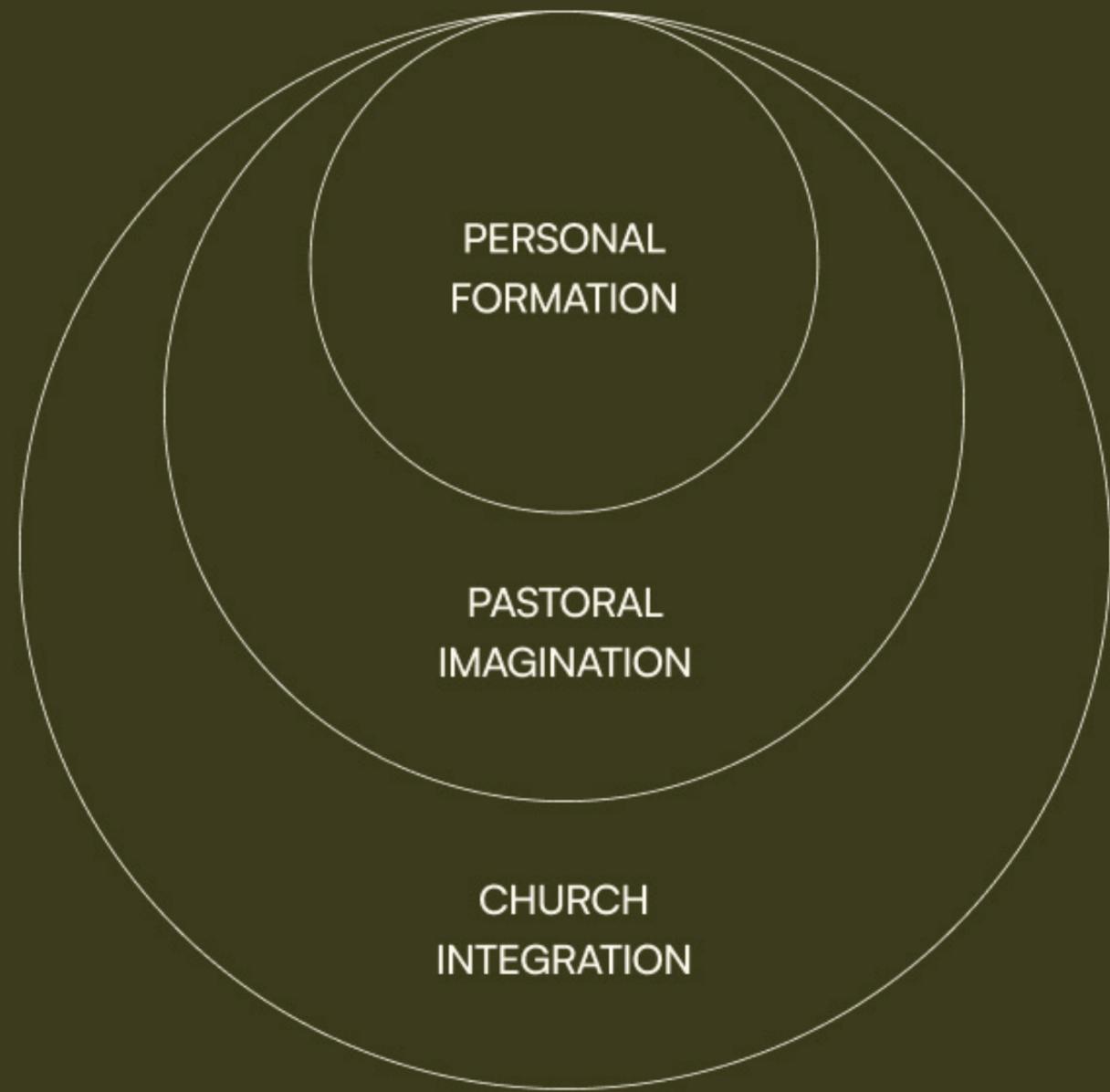
04

This calls for a new pastoral imagination.



PERSONAL
FORMATION





“It is nearly impossible to imagine our churches becoming something that we have never experienced or seen firsthand. It’s not that we don’t

want to change; it's that we
physiologically can't radically break
from what we're already doing. It
turns out that doing slightly different

BRANDON SHIELDS

iterations of the same thing the
same way and expecting different
results isn't always insanity —
it's neurobiology!”

BRANDON SHIELDS

“We all live at the mercy of our ideas,”

DALLAS WILLARD

“We all live at the mercy of our models.”

BRYAN ROUANZOIN

We need new (or really, ancient) ideas, and models, for what the church could be.

TWO FATAL MISTAKES

01

Underestimating the
strength and importance
of existing traditions

01

Underestimating the
strength and importance
of existing traditions

02

Utopian

“Those who love their dream of a
Christian community more than they
love the Christian community itself

DIETRICH BONHOEFFER

become destroyers of that Christian community even though their personal intentions may be ever so honest, earnest and sacrificial.

DIETRICH BONHOEFFER

God hates this wishful dreaming
because it makes the dreamer proud
and pretentious. Those who dream of

DIETRICH BONHOEFFER

this idolized community demand that it be fulfilled by God, by others and by themselves. They enter the community

DIETRICH BONHOEFFER

of Christians with their demands set up by their own law, and judge one another and God accordingly.

DIETRICH BONHOEFFER

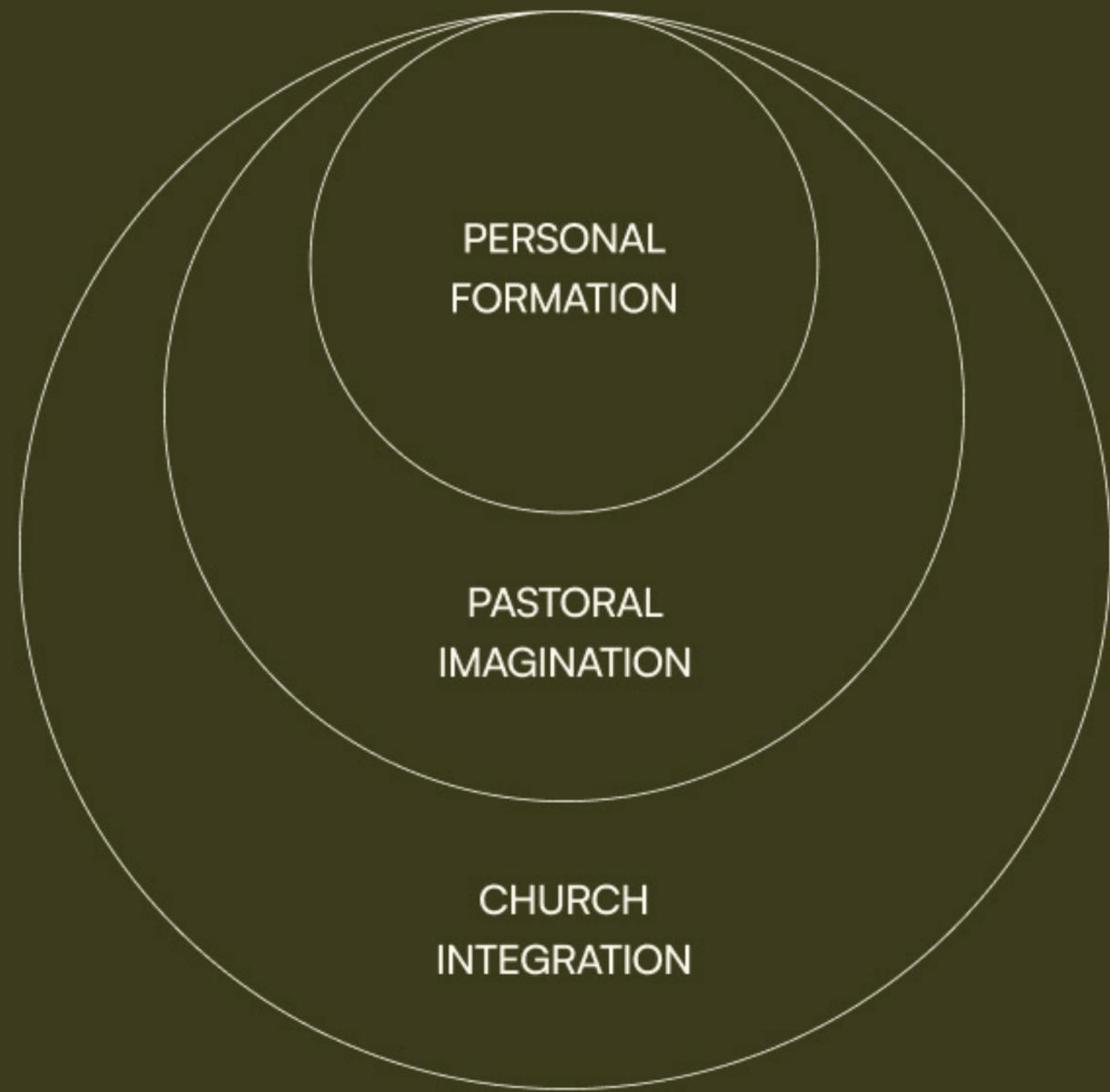
It is not we who build. Christ builds the church.”

DIETRICH BONHOEFFER

We aren't revolutionaries, we're reformers.

“ECCLESIA REFORMATA, SEMPER REFORMANDA”

“The church reformed and
always reforming.”



PERSONAL
FORMATION

PASTORAL
IMAGINATION

CHURCH
INTEGRATION

“Radical incrementalism”

“The patient ferment of the
early church.”

ALAN KRIDER

PATIENCE

PATIENCE

HUMILITY

“I must caution you in advance to prepare yourself for an acute paradigm shift. A return to the community

orientation of early Christianity requires
much more than a slight course
correction in our weekly programming

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or the addition of another line item to the church budget. ... [it] requires us to significantly revise the way that we

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conceive of church. And there will inevitably be a cost to pay as leaders. For as is generally the case during

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seasons of renewal, those of us who have the most invested in ‘church as it is’ will inevitably be called upon to

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sacrifice more than others in order to
liberate our people to experience
“church as it was” during the New
Testament era.”

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PATIENCE

HUMILITY

FAITH

What is the next, right step for me,
and for our community?

Think about the gravity of that level of change, in one generation.