



An Introduction to Spiritual formation & Direction

The Journey Towards Spiritual Maturity

What is Spiritual Formation: Post WWII Evangelicalism

- *Great focus on evangelism and “saving souls” – Billy Graham Crusade - 1947. Campus Crusade – 1951*
- *Emphasis on preaching the Word of God and evangelism*

“...because of the particular dynamics of that period, we came to think that, in the language of some Protestants, “the Word of God is the only sacrament.” And what that meant practically was that the sole means of spiritual growth was being taught and “preached at”--that we’re saved and transformed by hearing the truths of the scriptures; we’re redeemed by the truths which the conservative and evangelical segments of the church rightly stood for. Dallas Willard

What is Spiritual Formation: Post WWII Evangelicalism

We're saved by believing them, we're sanctified by believing them, and all issues of spiritual growth are dealt with simply by taking the word in through reading it, through hearing it, through exhortation and ministry from the scriptures.

Dallas Willard

- Discipleship to Jesus, and Spiritual Formation in General, became optional.

Defining Spiritual Formation

- ▶ “Spiritual Formation” is not actually a scriptural term. Like the Trinity, it is a term that describes a process revealed in scripture. One of the best passages that describes it is Romans 8:26-29:

26 . . . the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express. 27 And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints in accordance with God's (i.e., the Father's) will. 28 And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose. 29 For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed (συμμόρφους) to the likeness of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. (NIV)



Defining Spiritual Formation

“Thus, one can properly start with the proposition that spiritual formation, rightly understood, is first of all, above all, and throughout, the life shaping (i.e., "forming") work of the divine Holy Spirit, carried out according to the will of God the Father, for the purpose of conforming us to the image of Jesus Christ his Son”

Richard Averbeck

¹⁸ And we all, who with unveiled faces contemplate the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his image with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.

2 Corinthians 3:17-18

Discipleship, Sanctification and Spiritual Formation

Discipleship	Sanctification	Spiritual Formation
Follower of a particular teacher	Theological term derived from latin "sanctus" – holy or sacred	Emphasis on the work of the HS with our human spirit
Following the teachings and examples of Jesus. The disciple is a "disciplined follower"	Identity: we are "sacred/holy" because of sanctifying blood of Christ. "Sanctified holy ones"	HS is the one who enables us to function as "sanctified disciples"
Rooted in Matt 28:19-20 – Make disciples of all nations . . .	Descriptive of being "set-apart" by God and a process – We are being sanctified – 1 Thess. 5:23,24	Rooted in receiving the Holy Spirit - Acts 1:5,8 – 2:38
Focus: Learning and following	Focus: On separateness and holiness	Focus: Empowerment of the HS to learn, follow & be sanctified



Scripture Describing the Spiritual Formation Process

Maturity:

- *He is the one we proclaim, admonishing and teaching everyone with all wisdom, so that we may present everyone fully mature in Christ. - Col 1:28*
- *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. Eph. 4:13*

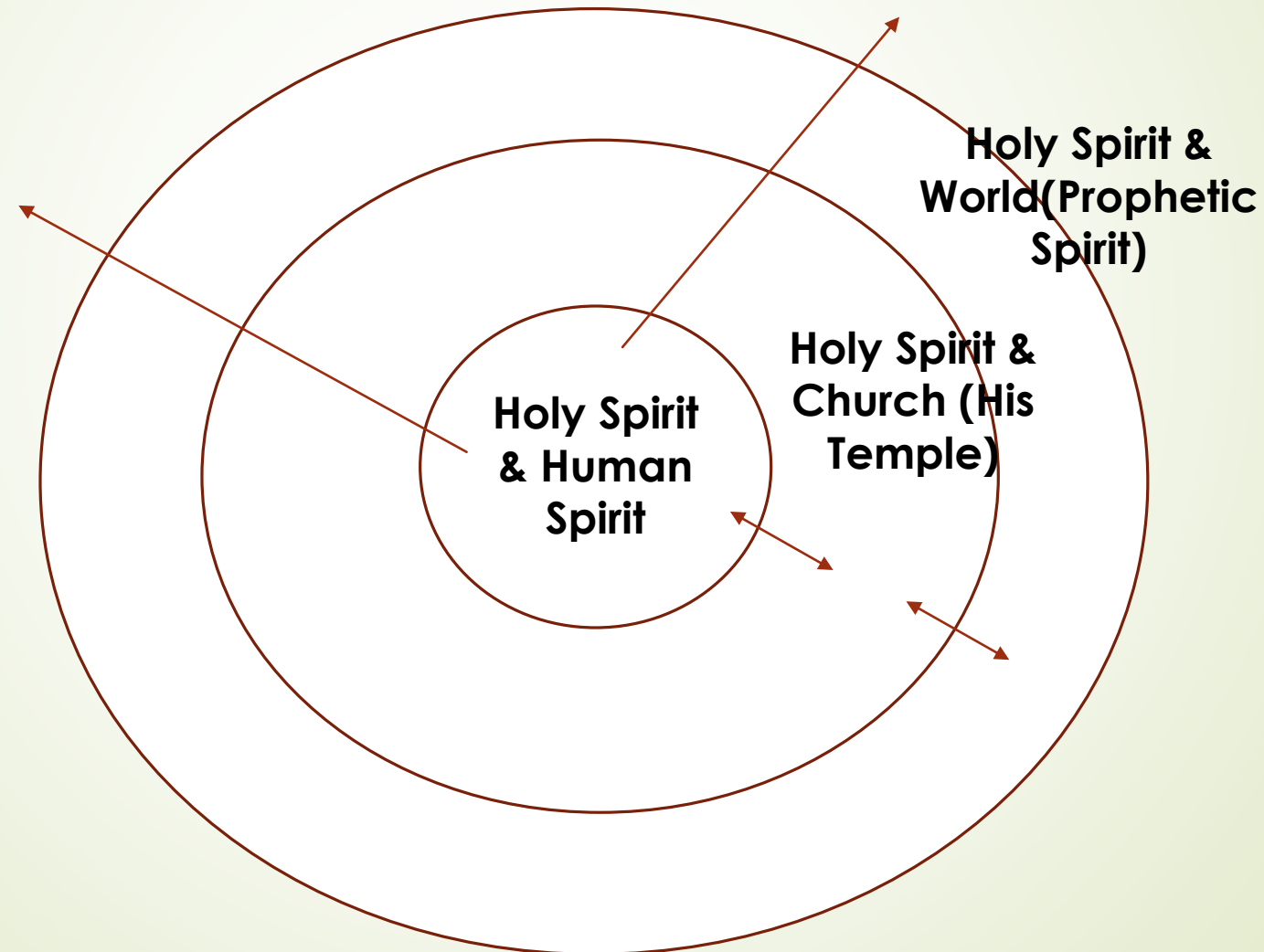
Training:

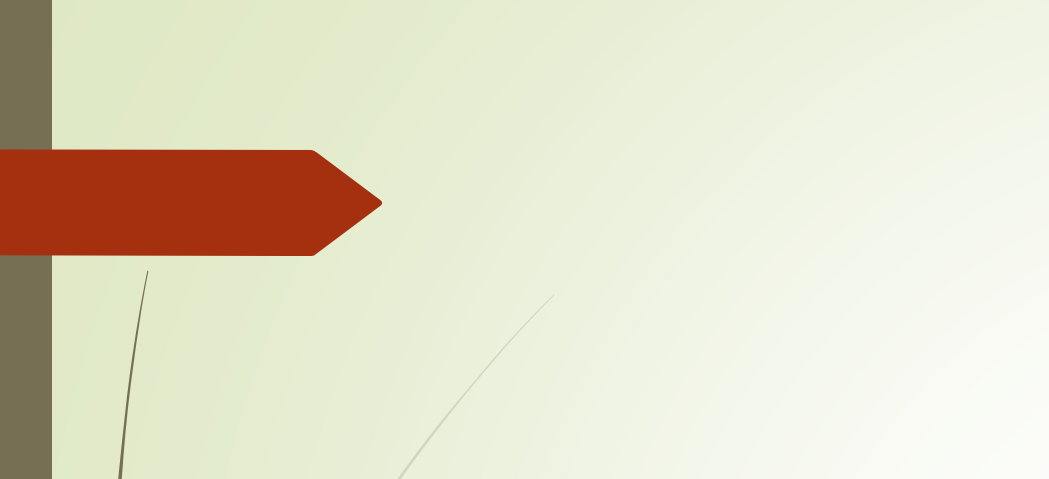
- *But solid food is for the mature, who by constant use have trained themselves to distinguish good from evil. Hebrews 5:14*

Trials:

- *Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds, ³ because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance. Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything. – James 1:2-4*

3 Dimensions of the Forming work of the Holy Spirit





Ephesians 5:18 - Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit



Jeremiah 18:
6 He said, “Can I not do with you, Israel, as this potter does?” declares the LORD. “Like clay in the hand of the potter, so are you in my hand, Israel.”



We are in a grip of a great temptation

- ▶ We start our life in the Spirit and yet somewhere along the way we lose our way - We work hard at the spiritual life but there is still frustration, guilt, shame, and failure.
- ▶ As Bill Gaultiere once said – Getting into Jesus' easy yoke is easy, its staying there that is the hard part. (Matt 11: 28-30)
- ▶ Why do we struggle when we know so much. We can struggle with abiding in Christ (John 15:1-7)
- ▶ 3 temptations:
 - ▶ Towards immorality and vice,
 - ▶ to give up, settle or despair, or
 - ▶ to try harder and perfect onself in one's own power with no joy.

Spiritual vs. Moral Formation

Temptation for most Christians

Spiritual Formation

- Inner Transformation
- Focuses on the role of the Spirit in the process of transformation into the image of Christ
- Recognizes our position in Christ
- Believes God loves me even in my sin (unconditional Love)
- Doesn't try to change behavior in my own power
- Opens the heart to the work of the Holy Spirit in transforming me into the image of Christ
- The first response when I fall into sin is "I need to depend more on Christ and the power of God"
- I take my frustrations regularly to God in prayer when I sin.

Moral Formation

- External behavior change
- Focuses on my own moral fortitude in becoming a moral person
- Maintains position by being good
- Believes God withholds His love when I sin (conditional love)
- Focuses on the self to make change
- When I sin I say "I will fix myself"
- The first response when I fall into sin is to hide until I can correct the issue.
- I repress the feelings of frustration and guilt when I sin.

Questions to Consider

- ▶ If the Spirit of God is the transforming agent, what is it that he is doing and how do we open to what he is doing?
- ▶ What is our part and what is the Spirit's part in transformation?
- ▶ *¹² Therefore, my dear friends, as you have always obeyed—not only in my presence, but now much more in my absence—continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling, ¹³ for it is God who works in you to will and to act in order to fulfill his good purpose. Phil 2:12-13*

Spiritual Formation and the Will: 3 Dimensions

Vital / Impulsive Will

- Will outwardly moves towards things that are attractive
- Drive: "I want to" "It pleases me" become the drive.
- We can become identified by the things we are attracted to if this is all there is
- Example - An alcoholic, workaholic, shopaholic

Reflective Will

- Will is oriented toward what is good for the person as whole and not just desired
- Drive: "It's the best for me"
- When you bring this will to life in Christ – Inner transformation is possible
- Example - God is glorified in all you do (Col 3:17)


Embodied Will

- Where Reflective or Impulsive Will has sunk down into your body
- Drive: "It naturally flows out of me"
- The Will becomes habituated towards vice or virtue.
- Example: Playing piano effortlessly. As formed in Christ – praying without ceasing, loving your enemies



Spiritual Formation in Christ

- Christian spiritual formation is the process through which the embodied/reflective will takes on the character of Christ's will. It is the process through which Christ is formed in you and me.
- Christ transforms embodied will so that what comes out of you automatically are the words and deeds of Christ. *Dallas Willard*
- I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me. Galatians 2:20 KJV



Goals in Spiritual Formation: Connecting to God

“We are to continually present ourselves to God and be open to Him at any given moment. To allow ourselves to be impacted by another person – the Spirit. There will be times when we will be preoccupied on something and riveted to it that we are not open to the Spirit. We need to develop new habits of opening to God. Our goal is not so much transformation but to attach ourselves to God. God does not exist for the sake of our perfection or for our spiritual formation but to be loved. The goal is to connect to God.”

John Coe, PHD



Goals in Spiritual Formation: Live Now in the Kingdom of the Heavens


When Jesus presents his Gospel of the Kingdom of the Heavens he is emphasizing the direct and immediate availability of God to his children. The Supreme Lord of the Universe is here and now present to care for us and guide us. Sadly, we tend to think the exact opposite. We sing of heaven as “by and bye” as if it is only a far off and a way later.

In each situation of our life we have the choice whether to live by our flesh (natural human abilities) or the Spirit of God; whether to live from our visible circumstances or the invisible Kingdom of the Heavens in our midst (John 3:3-6; Romans 8:13; 2 Corinthians 5:7; Galatians 5:16).

Bill Gaultiere



Implications for Spiritual Direction

- In light of all that we've discussed, why would the ministry of Spiritual Direction be important to the process of Spiritual Growth & Formation?
 - What would you say the role/responsibility of the Spiritual Director would/should be?
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Implications for Spiritual Direction

- If we are going to engage in the process of spiritual formation, we will need to face directly the substance and dynamics of what is happening in the spirits of people.
- Spiritual formation is a “messy” process because peoples’ lives are messy. The Bible itself says a great deal about this and we cannot avoid dealing with it if we are going to do true spiritual formation.
- Although the intellect is an important part of the human spirit, it is not the only part. . . a person’s “spirit” also includes their will, emotions, attitudes, memories, perspectives on life, and so forth. Since the transformation of all such things is the object of the Holy Spirit’s work, it is essential to engage a person on all these levels in the process of spiritual formation. This includes the corruption that plagues our spirit due to our fallen sinful condition as well

Richard Averbeck



Implications for Spiritual Direction: What is my role in this relationship

- This is a 3 member relationship – me, directee/client, Holy Spirit
- It is a space for a directee/client to come out of hiding and to experience grace in a non-judgmental relationship.
- If a directee/client can come out of hiding and be “known and loved in their bad,” this can help them open more honestly with God. (Romans 8: Fully loved & accepted)
- It is a place for the SD to help the directee/client ‘notice’ God and his Spirit in their current circumstances



Implications for Spiritual Direction: What is my role in this relationship

- This is a space to discern – what is going on in the directee/clients prayer life with God, his personal devotional life with God, what is her experience of God like?
- It is a safe space, full of grace, curiosity, and a listening heart that seeks to be ‘with’ the directee.
- It is not about giving advice, solving theological issues, correcting theological ideas, fixing their problems
- It can be a place to try new spiritual practices to open the heart to the Spirit and transformation.
- It is a place to receive Empathy – From the SD and Spirit.