

Spiritual and Character Development

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Thanks to Dr. David Bjork

- 'In both traditional and younger churches (of Nigeria) second-generation nominalism is a big problem. Double standards are widespread, and immorality, membership in secret societies and compromise with the world bring strife and disrepute to the gospel'
- '(In Nigeria) extravagant lifestyles and oily showmanship usurp spiritual depth and biblical preaching as indicators of anointing. Instances of corruption, theft, embezzlement and sexual immorality are tragically frequent. Accountability is often absent; the "big man" dynamic plays into the same materialism, pride and carnality that cripple Nigeria politically and economically'
- Jason Mandryk. (2010). *Operation World*. Colorado Springs, CO: Biblica Publishing.

Willow Creek *Reveal* Study

- Church activities and programs have failed to produce Christlikeness
 - Time spent in church does not predict spiritual growth
 - Instead, personal spiritual practices predict Christ-centered living

Willow Creek *Reveal* Study

- "We should have started ... teaching people that they have to take responsibility to become 'self feeders.' We should have ... taught people how to read their bible between service, how to do the spiritual practices much more aggressively on their own." Hybel, pastor of Willow Creek
- "In other words, spiritual growth doesn't happen best by becoming dependent on elaborate church programs but through the age old spiritual practices of prayer, bible reading, and relationships. And, ironically, these basic disciplines do not require multi-million dollar facilities and hundreds of staff to manage." Bradley Wright, Sociologist

Why churches often fail to provide for spiritual transformation and discipleship

- The leadership believes numeric growth is an indicator of success
- The leadership believes financial growth is an indicator of success
- The leadership believes the quality of its programming is an indicator of success
- The leadership believes the member's level of participation in programming is an indicator of success
- Transfer growth (from other churches) is as valuable as evangelistic growth
- Belief that a greater variety of programs will attract more participants and induce spiritual growth

SPIRITUAL FORMATION

- **Spiritual Formation:** The nurturing of the Christian's inner being after the pattern of Jesus the Lord by the indwelling Spirit in the body of Christ, and the living out of the Savior's values in loving service to others
 - Spiritual formation is about becoming like Jesus Christ at the level of values, relationships, and behaviors.
 - Rom 8:29; 2 Cor 3:18; Gal. 4:19; Eph 4:23-24

Spiritual Formation

- Spiritual formation is:
 - The transformation of every dimension of the self:
 - Mind, will, emotions, morality, relational capacity, actions and behaviors
 - A synergy of the divine initiative and our human response
 - Phil 2:12-13; Eph 5:25; 2 Peter 1:3-9)

Practice Healthy Spiritual Habits

- Spiritual practices regularly undertaken train the spirit in holiness to help us return to the godly path when we stray
 - Disciplines are NOT vehicles for earning favor, but means by which we place ourselves where grace can transform us
- Revolting against legalistic regimens of the medieval church, Protestants devalued the spiritual disciplines
 - However, 1 Tim. 4:7b; cf. 1 Cor. 9:25-27; Heb. 5:14

Healthy Spiritual Habits

- Silence & solitude: The state of interior stillness that disposes the heart to hear and receive God
 - Psa 46:10; 131:2; Zech 2:13
 - Our lives are so busy that God can't get our attention long enough to make Himself known
 - Solitude is the furnace of transformation

Healthy Spiritual Habits

- Prayer
 - 'God ordained prayer not for His sake but for our sake. Prayer cleanses the heart and makes it more receptive to the divine gifts' [Calvin]
 - 'Petition, asking for things, is a small part of prayer. Confession, and petition are its threshold, adoration its sanctuary, the presence, vision and enjoyment of God its bread and wine. In prayer God shows Himself to us' [Lewis]

Healthy Spiritual Habits

- *Lectio divina* – meditative, prayerful use of Scripture
 - *Lectio*: deliberate reading the text (Read)
 - *Meditatio* – thoughtful reflection on what is written (Reflect)
 - *Oratio* – pray what is read back to the Father (Respond)
 - *Contemplatio* – attend to the voice of the Spirit through the text (Rest)
 - *Incarnatio* – live out all that the Word & the Spirit have laid on one's heart

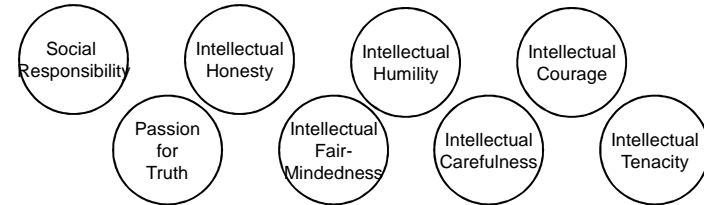
Healthy Spiritual Habits

- Keep a spiritual journal
 - A record of all God brings into our lives with accompanying insights, emotions and responses (Ps 102:18)
 - A recollection of God's ways, a tool for self-discovery, a rich occasion for dialogue with God
 - A vehicle for transforming encounter with God
 - Read journals of Augustine (*Confessions*), Teresa of Avila (*My Life*), Nouwen (*Genesee Dairy*), etc.

Healthy Spiritual Habits

- Examen: Prayerful reflection of the day/week to identify God's presence and discern his direction
 - Pause, seek God's presence
 - Give thanks
 - Review the day
 - When have you felt at peace?
 - When have you felt not-at-peace?
 - Confession
 - Look forward to the day to come

Positive Intellectual Character



Dow, P. E. (2013). *Virtuous minds: Intellectual character development*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press.

Intellectual Character

- **Social Responsibility:** Using one's knowledge to act rationally and considerately on behalf of others
- **Passion for Truth:** Unwavering desire to know and truly understand the truth
- **Intellectual Honesty:** Communicating one's knowledge with integrity
- **Intellectual Fair-Mindedness:** Ability to treat all viewpoints alike regardless of one's beliefs or interests
 - There is an "inherent link between intellectual fair-mindedness and listening" (Dow, 2013, p. 52)

Intellectual Character

- **Intellectual Humility:** Self-forgetfulness of the degree of one's own knowledge and ability
 - "Intellectually humble people see themselves not as owners but as good stewards of the truth" (Dow, 2013, p. 75).
- **Intellectual Carefulness:** Giving sufficient attention to details in order to avoid making errors
 - "It is more from carelessness about truth than intentionally lying that there is so much falsehood in the world." Samuel Johnson
- **Intellectual Courage:** Pursuing truth even when the pursuit of truth or potential truth itself is frightening
- **Intellectual Tenacity:** Working hard and persisting in the thinking process