

Church History: Spiritual Deception

(Part 5)

What is Spiritual Formation, and how does it contribute to spiritual deception?

"In broad terms, spiritual formation is the process of spiritual shaping and growth. . . Most often, it's a reference to the dynamic means of sanctification. It deals with the ongoing work of the Holy spirit and the various methods He uses to bring about spiritual growth our lives.

On the one hand there are the time-tested practical Christian disciplines we're all familiar with – things like personal and corporate Bible study, worship, prayer, discipleship, and service.

On the other hand, many of the leading voices in the Spiritual Formation movement stress the need for more intuitive interpretations of spirituality. They encourage believers to incorporate a wide variety of extrabiblical spiritual practices, such as contemplative prayer, silence, meditation, creative expression, and yoga. In fact, most of the popular methods of spiritual formation have been lifted from Catholicism, new age mysticism, or other religions and rebranded with biblical-sounding terminology." "Grace To You"

Who are the Spiritual Formation proponents?

"Sometimes we think of spiritual formation as formation by the Holy spirit. . . . That's essential. We can't evade it – formation by the Holy Spirit. But now I have something to say something that may be challenging for you to think about. Spiritual formation is not all by the Holy spiiit. None without he Holy spirit But there's always more involved. And here again we run into the problems of passivity over against activity. Here lies the deepest challenge to the very idea obedience to Christ in our times. We have to recognize that spiritual formation in us is something that is also done to us by those around, by ourselves, and by activities which we voluntarily undertake. There has to be method."

"Spiritual Formation, What is it and How is it done"? **Dallas Willard**

"From time to time God has raised up a parachurch movement to reemphasize a neglected purpose of the church. The Spiritual Formation Movement. A reemphasis on developing believers to full maturiy has been the focus. . . authors such as . . Richard Foster and Dallas Willard have underscored the importance of building up Christians and establishing personal spiritual disciplines. It has given the body a wake-up call."

"Purpose Driven Church" **Rick Warren** p. 126

"When I first began writing in the field in the late 70s and early 80s the term "Spiritual Formation" was hardly known, except for highly specialized references in relation to the Catholic orders. . . .Seminary

courses in spiritual Folrmation proliferate like baby rabbits. Huge numbers are seeking to become certified as Spiritual Directors to answer the cry of multiplied thousands for spiritual direction. And more."

"Spiritual Formation, A Pastoral Letter" **Richard Foster**

"The next reformation is due. It will focus on what it mneans to know god with a power that changes who we are and how we relate. I predict the Spiritual Formation Forum will play a vital role in the spirit's great next movement." **Larry Crabb**, the Association of Christian Counselors

What's so bad about Spiritual Formation?

"Spiritual formation is a popular new way to draw near to God. But beneath the good intentions lie dangerous practices that can in fact pull people towards occultism rather than God.

Contemplative Prayer and Meditation: What is the difference between Biblical mediation and New Age meditation: Who are the key supporters of contemplative prayer?

Labyrinth walking: An occult prayer ritual with repulsive mythical origins, is being infused into modern Christianity.

Spiritual Direction: A form of mystical mentorship, is becoming increasingly common in Western Catholicism and Protestantism.

Yoga: What was once described as new Age and occult is acceptable now in some Christian circles.

Spiritual formation is being encouraged in influential American evangelical churches. The United Methodist and Presbyterian Church exemplify the widespread infiltration of spiritual formation doctrine into the Church in the United States and beyond." John Whitcombe Dec.10, 2009

What is true biblical transformation?

Aim: _____
_____ Romans 8:29

Method _____
_____ II Corinthians 3:18

Purpose: _____
_____ Titus 3:3-7

"True biblical transformation, or spiritual transformation, begins with the understanding that we are sinners living apart from God. Our faculties have been corrupted by sin so that we cannot please God. True spiritual

transformation occurs as we yield ourselves to God so that He may transform us by the guidance and power of the Holy Spirit. At least half of every New Testament epistle is geared toward how to live a life well pleasing to God – by obedience and submission to the Holy Spirit in all things. Scripture does not only call us the redeemed, saved, saints, sheep, soldiers, and servants, but teaches us that only through the power of the Spirit we can live up to what the names mean.

This, then, is true spiritual formation – the reforming of our spirits by His Spirit into the image of Christ”

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