

Journal Article 3: Spiritual Formation and Christian Psychology

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March 16, 2020

This student will attempt to discuss Mangis' response to a book written by Charles Willard about the role of the church and his perspective as to how it connects to Christian Psychology. The summarization of Mangis Journal Article was a discussion on the relationship between spiritual formation and Christian Psychology. He concurred with Willard that the church had abandoned its emphasis on spiritual formation, which is achieved through spiritual disciplines, forming one's inner life through the dwelling of the Holy Spirit.

He speculated that preaching and teaching would not bring about spiritual formation, and psychotherapy singlehandedly will not create disciples to growing and living Christlike. "Psychology is not primarily in the business of spiritual formation," (Mangis, 2004, p. 260), and Christian psychologists are not "primarily in the position of being teachers of the spiritual disciplines." (Mangis, 2004, p. 260). He inquires about the belief that fellowship in the church can provide therapy for Christians. Psychology and Christianity are at odds for their essential purposes, as seen when God may use pain to influence humankind's inner soul to bring change to that person while counselees seek therapy to find help for their suffering (Mangis, 2004). Christianity and Psychology can be integrated into Christian Psychology as an approach for the spiritual formation process that has started in a Christian who seeks out counseling (Mangis, 2004).

This student's reaction to Mangis's article is a relief that she is not alone in her thoughts about the state of the church regarding spiritual formation. She agrees with the comments that the focus for many pastors is preaching and teaching and neglecting the foundation that discipleship is a process of becoming more Christlike (Mangis, 2004).

Today's pastor is anxious about an array of ministry tasks, such as church growth, counseling therapy, management, and administration. There is so much to do. It isn't very easy

for a pastor to know where to focus his or her attention. For example, there is the need to understand evangelism and church growth, to become engaged in the local community, to visit and to counsel the members of the church. Neglecting to focus on the spiritual formation process is critical because it is from this foundational task that pastoral and church ministry can flow.

Mangis believes that Christian Psychology can aid in the process of spiritual formation, and this student concurs. However, he believes that it is not the primary "business of spiritual formation," to which this student disagrees. According to Cloud & Townsend (2012), all growth is spiritual growth, which includes emotional growth. The objective of the Christian counselor is to walk alongside their clients. They can help them realign with God and his purpose for them, to help them come into an understanding of their pain while growing psychologically and relationally.

Spiritual growth or spiritual formation is about pursuing the life of decency that God intended. Through God's divine plan, one meets and enters into a relationship with Him, he or she transforms into a new person who continues to be formed and molded by God. This divine encounter with God can assume several forms that are dependent on a person's personality and temperament. This student believes that the forming and molding continue in a process that takes place from the ongoing strengthening of the relationship with God, which develops the person from being continuously spiritually formed.

It is the opinion of this student that Christian counselors are part of God's divine plan and one of the primary business of spiritual formation. "Where there is no [wise, intelligent] guidance, the people fall [and go off course like a ship without a helm], But in the abundance of [wise and godly] counselors, there is victory (Proverbs 11:14, AMP).

References

Cloud, H., & Townsend, J. (2004). *How people grow: What the Bible reveals about personal growth*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

Mangis, M. W. (2004). Spiritual formation and Christian psychology: A response and application of Willard's perspective. *Journal of Psychology and Theology*, 28(4), p. 259-262.