

The Psychology of Christian Character Formation

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There are various elements of a Christian story that form the basis of [character formation](#) in an individual (Heie, 2015). Most of the elements fall under spiritual formation, which is otherwise referred to as sanctification. Spiritual formation is vital in experiencing character formation. The literature, biblical and theological surveys of nature have shown seven elements of spiritual formation, which are very important formative strands of the person in mission formation, person-community formation, and person-in-formation (McGrath, 2015). These elements are a means to character formation and must act together to impact spiritual formation. In this study, we are only going to discuss five of those elements. The remaining two elements depend on the Holy Spirit, so we will discuss them as part of the five elements. These elements include enhancing spiritual learning, being missional, building relationships, developing community, and growing into Christ-likeness.

Growing Into Christ-Likeness

The reason why Jesus died on the cross was to restore the fallen man. Therefore, every individual must work hard to possess the character of Jesus. It is usually a process in an individual's life. It involves recognizing the presence of God in our daily lives. At other times, it involves seeing God in every area of our lives, not only in big things but in everyday life. It is what is called taking the Christian story (Fischer, 2001). When an individual does this, it is likely for him to be transformed and become like Christ and carry on his mission of redemption on the face of the earth. This process of being transformed into Christ-likeness can be considered in three categories: discipleship, assimilating Christian values, and living the Christian story.

Being Missional

Being missional comes from the biblical concept of shalom. It is God's plan of redemption upon his creation. It involves sharing the life of Jesus (love in action), being a witness of the holy spirit (Hope in action), and proclaiming the kingdom of God (faith in action). All these are included in the gospel story. It is, therefore, clear that the mission of Jesus becomes the source of a renewed vision and life of an individual or church. It involves living as people of God and living as people set aside for the redemption plans of God.

Enhancing Spiritual Learning

Individuals and the church as a whole must be willing to learn from the bible and the Holy Spirit. Spiritual learning helps individuals to have bible centeredness and critical thinking, which are critical for character formation (Brown, 2014)

Developing Community

Developing a community involves commitment, time, and effort. It mainly involves [incorporating spiritual](#) formation elements and loving relationships. For most of the epistles Paul wrote, he directed them to communities and not individuals. Even though most of them were meant to solve some crisis, they contained a lot of advice concerning collective behavior and relationships. Therefore, it simply meant that Christians should build their faith communities to bring them together in building their faith and help each other grow spiritually (Brown, 2002).

Building Relationships

Building and having relationships with human beings impact spiritual formation. The relationships of spiritual formation involve knowing and loving our neighbors, knowing and loving ourselves, and knowing and loving God (Talbert, 2004).

In the ministry of Jesus, one of the standard terms mostly used was the term disciple. It was used to refer to the followers of Jesus. Hence, the term discipleship is primarily used in the book of Acts and the gospel books. This name is not common in the Old Testament. The beginning of discipleship can be traced back to God's calling. The idea of discipleship originated from a covenant between the Jews and God. It was the covenant between Abraham and his offspring. In return, the progeny of Abraham was to be used by God to be a blessing to all the people in the world. The theme of God in the Old Testament was fulfilled in the New Testament with the coming of Jesus. Those who responded to Jesus' call had to pay the price of believing in Jesus and listening to his summons (Bland, 2015).

It meant quitting one old life and finding a new life in God. by obeying the will of Jesus. The disciples of Jesus followed him everywhere and also imitated him. Discipleship meant total allegiance to Jesus. But it was to be in various ways. They were to leave everything they had and follow Jesus. These included their families, property, and professionals to take up the cross of Jesus. From the disciple of Jesus, it can be observed that when discipleship and spiritual formation overlap, the result is character formation (Bland, 2015). As I said, discipleship involves doing the will of God by leading a life in obedience to his will. Therefore, discipleship has all the elements of spiritual formation that I discussed earlier. It, therefore, facilitates persons-in-community formation, person-in-mission formation, and person-in formation. Christians can live a lifestyle without drifting away from God these is through observing certain spiritual habits or disciplines. Discipline is an activity an individual

does, and he ends up becoming more intimate with Christ.

They involve bible study, prayer, and many more (Jung,2015). The development of spiritual discipline is a work in the process of grace in our lives. God has given us grace so that discipline can result. Discipline is a wonderful habit that has been given to Christians for them to grow, mature, and become disciples. One should become focused on following the disciplines and should not give up during early attempts that might prove fruitless. One should set a specific time of the day to exercise discipline.

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