

Forum 1

Based upon your reading of the Averbeck articles, explain your understanding of both the importance of a biblical theology of spiritual formation and the importance of the Bible for spiritual formation. Divide your thread equally between these two components of the DB prompt.

The importance of a biblical theology of spiritual formation

A solid biblical theology of spiritual formation is crucial because it forms “the basis for sound Christian spiritual formation.”¹ At the core, Christian theology is a theology of “spirituality.”² Christians are people of the Spirit and the word. Understanding the Biblical foundation of spiritual formation would help both to motivate its practice and to provide guardrails for the path of spiritual formation that we must take. This will, for example, protect us from the assault of wrong ideas about spirituality from new age spirituality and other eastern spiritualities.

Early on in his article titled, “Spirit, community, and mission: a biblical theology for spiritual formation,” Averbeck does a few things that underscore the importance of a good Biblical theology of spiritual formation. First, he points out three themes that run through the Old and New Testaments that show how God transforms Christians into the image of Christ. These themes are, the Holy Spirit working in us individually to form us, among us to form a community of believers, and through us to impact the world.³ Secondly, he proposes a definition of spiritual formation as, “the ministry through which we seek to stimulate and support the ongoing spiritually transforming work of the Holy Spirit in and through the personal lives, relationships, and ministries of genuine believers so that we all progressively become more conformed to the image of Christ according to the will of God the Father (Romans 8:26-30).”⁴ In the rest of his piece, Averbeck proceeds to show how spiritual formation is shown throughout the Bible as God’s revelation gradually unfolds. Unlike a systematic theology that would answer a question topically and say what the Bible as a whole says on the issue of spiritual formation, Averbeck approaches his piece using a biblical theology paradigm and follows the story of the Bible as it unfolds showing at different stages how a theology of spiritual formation is embedded in what the Bible teaches. This is very important to the serious Bible student or believer who is interested in spiritual formation because it builds their faith and gives them confidence that indeed, spiritual formation is a ministry ordained by God for the purpose of forming us into the image of Christ.

The importance of the Bible for spiritual formation

For the Christian, the Bible is the ultimate guide for faith and practice. It teaches us how to believe and how to live in ways that glorify God. In his chapter, titled, “The Bible In Spiritual

¹ Richard E. Averbeck, "Spirit, Community, and Mission: A Biblical Theology for Spiritual Formation," *Journal of Spiritual Formation and Soul Care* 1, no. 1 (2008): 01.

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid.

Formation,” Averbeck writes, “Spiritual formation is based upon the Bible as God’s reliable and authoritative revelation. The Bible, our primary source of truth, guides and informs the use of spiritual disciplines and models of spirituality as they have emerged worldwide and throughout time.”⁵

The Bible not only describes what spiritual formation was like in the individuals depicted throughout its pages, it prescribes how spiritual formation should be for us as well.⁶

As God’s word, the Bible has divine revelation that teaches us about spiritual formation. In addition to that, it shows us how to use the Bible (God’s word) in doing spiritual formation.⁷

One may conclude by saying that the Bible is the source of all right Christian doctrine and practice, including spiritual formation. Without the Bible, there would be no Christian spiritual formation. That’s how important the Bible is for spiritual formation.

Bibliography

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Averbeck, Richard E. "Spirit, Community, and Mission: A Biblical Theology for Spiritual Formation." *Journal of Spiritual Formation and Soul Care* 1, no. 1 (2008), 27-53.

⁵ Alan Andrews, ed., *The Kingdom Life: A Practical Theology of Discipleship and Spiritual Formation* (Carol Stream: NavPress, 2014), 275.

⁶ *Ibid*, 284.

⁷ *Ibid*, 277.