

SPIRITUAL FORMATION and the Educational Mandate of Prairie

Historically:

Stephen F. Olford notes, “I have met graduates from this school all over the world. They are usually known for two distinctive Christian qualities – spirituality and stickability.”¹ Although the term spiritual formation may not have been used in past generations of Prairie’s history, the concept of spiritual formation as understood in our contemporary situation has been a key aspect of the Prairie educational program since its inception in 1922. The notion of what we currently term spiritual formation has included such terms/phrases as sanctification, spiritual growth, the crucified life, godliness, the deeper life, discipleship, the Spirit-filled life, consecration, and the committed life. Of course, all of these terms also include a variety of meanings. But all of these terms, as well as others that are not noted here, have purposed to describe the historical commitment of Prairie to develop spiritual depth and commitment in students. The Prairie learning community has a history and heritage of spiritual formation.

This component of the Prairie education could be illustrated by a myriad of examples. Only a few will be included here. Prairie’s books (e.g. *The Crucified Life*, *Discipleship in Depth*), Prairie’s conferences (e.g. *Keswick*, *Missionary Conference*), Prairie’s classes (e.g. *Discipleship*, *Prayer*), and Prairie’s commitments (e.g. practical ministry, church involvement) all illustrate the critical commitment to spiritual formation. Spiritual formation is fundamental to what Prairie has always provided in its educational mandate.

Recently:

In the last decade the faculty of Prairie Bible Institute developed the Taxonomy of Student Outcomes. The following material is taken directly from this Taxonomy document. It demonstrates that spiritual formation is not a historical relic of the Prairie education but a contemporary commitment and critical component of the educational paradigm.

“God desires to work in the whole of the believer’s life to restore the image of God in Christ through the Spirit, so that each individual believer might reflect the character of God in relationship with Him (Gen 1:26-27; Rom 8:28-30; 2 Cor 3:18; Eph 4:22-24; Col 3:10). This work of God is an act of grace, essentially manifested in the believer through a love for God and love for others (Mt 22:37-40).

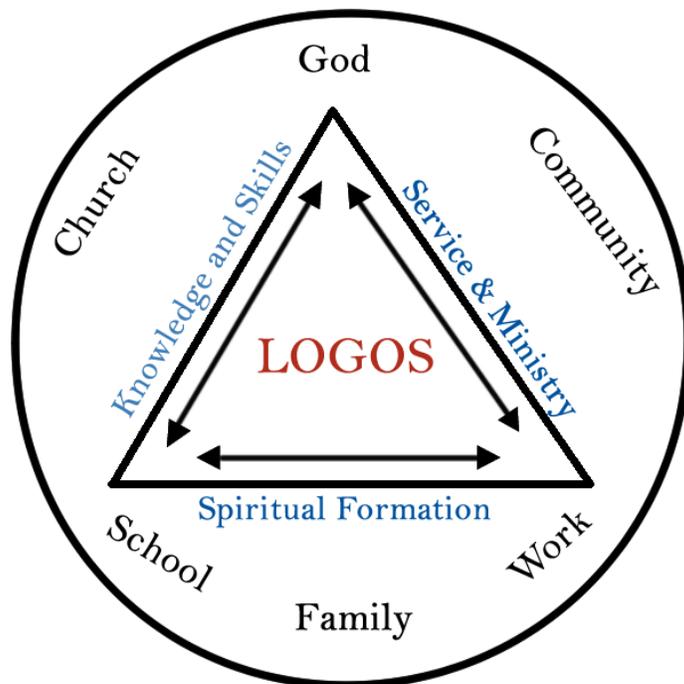
There are several implications of these facts that influence our ministry as faculty to students:

- We desire to see our students mature in their reflection of the character of God in relationship with Him, in love for Him and for others.
- We desire to see holistic, integrated development in our students.
- We acknowledge that we ourselves have not attained full maturity in Christ.
- We recognize that this development is ultimately the work of God in His grace.
- We recognize that the specific outworkings of this development are unique to each individual.
- We recognize that this development is a process that will not be complete until our full redemption at the coming of Christ.

While it is impossible to categorize and quantify personal development, the following represents a summary of the specific domains in which we as an educational community, working alongside the Church, would like to see growth in the lives of our students.

The following diagram represents the personal development we desire to see in our students. The triangle represents the student as the focus of this process. The three main domains of personal development—Spiritual

Formation, Knowledge & Skills, and Service & Ministry—all inform and interact with one another, with the Word of God, the inspired Scriptures and incarnate Christ, at the core of this process. The surrounding circle represents the relational context in which this process is actually worked out.



Discipleship calls us to the sincere life of the Christian mind, but also having the Christian mind calls us to sincere discipleship. These are not competitors but rather complement one another toward holistic Christian post-secondary education.

(Endnotes)

1 Harold W. Fuller. *Maxwell's Passion and Power*. (Huttonville, ON; Maxwell Foundation, 2002) pg. 68

