

## Integrative Paper

### Part 1: Assessment

#### **Who I Am - Spiritual Well-Being Reflection**

Every time someone asks me about my experience in Seminary, I always say that it has changed my life in an incredible way. The way that I would describe my experience is like when someone wants to bake a cake and has the best intentions to do so, but they do not have the ingredients to prepare it. That is exactly how I felt before starting Seminary. I wanted to know God in a deeper way, I knew I needed emotional and spiritual healing, and I wanted to help other people, but I did not know how to do it or where to start. During the two years and a half that I have been in ATS, I have experienced an incredible transformation. I did not realize how much of my childhood was affecting my present until I went through ISF and Soul Care. After doing my grief journal, having counseling, and taking Soul Care as a class during a whole semester, I came to a point where everything I wanted was to pursue my healing. During this time, I was very intentional in doing different things that would take me closer to God.

Last year during the summer, God put in my heart to go to Mozambique during the three months of vacation. At the beginning, it did not make sense for me financially and practically because I was in the middle of my masters. However, God gave me a dream where He showed me that my spiritual growth was not dependent on practicality but in taking risks that would take me closer to His character. During these three months, I experienced the most incredible things I have ever experienced, from the power of the Holy Spirit to deep and great conversations with God about my past, present, and future. I believe that having this experience in the middle of my Seminary time has been an incredible blessing because it has given me a totally different perspective for missions and my own personal ministry.

- **Highlights during my Seminary experience:**

- Living by myself: One of the biggest opportunities that I had during Seminary was to be able to live by myself. I know that for many Americans living by themselves is very normal; however, for great part of the Latino culture is not normal for young women to live by themselves. This experience was not only a great opportunity to grow and be more independent, but it gave me a totally new perspective in regard to being fully dependent on God for all my needs. Also, it gave me the opportunity to be out of my home for a season where I needed it, I needed quiet time and solitude because of the healing process that I was going through.
- Out of my comfort zone: I have always been very confident and extrovert; however, when I moved to Nyack, I realized that everything that I was doing was out of my comfort zone and for a time I did not feel myself. Speaking in a different language, working in a different job, and being around different people, was something totally out of my comfort zone. Even though it has been one of the hardest experiences I have ever had, it has helped me to realize how much more I need to grow in terms of doing things not out of my own strength or capabilities, but trusting that God is the one that gives me the strength.
- Healing in my relationship with my mom: I have always considered my mom a friend and we are very close. However, during my first semester of Seminary, I realized how much of my own wounds were originated because of the different things that she has done in the past (e.g. get divorced three times). After reflecting and being honest with myself, I realized that there was some resentment towards her because of all the things that happened when I was younger. Thankfully, we had the opportunity to go to a

counselor together to talk about our relationship and it was a great experience. We spoke about things that we had spoken in the past but with more honesty and openness. It was a great opportunity for us to work on our relationship and get so much healing.

- Missionary School in Mozambique and South Africa: As I mentioned above, one of the best experiences that I had during my time in Seminary was being able to go to a school that trains missionaries. The focus of this school is the supernatural and the power of God and coming from a more conservative background there were times that it was kind of strange for me. However, God used this time to bring so much healing into my life and He gave me a bigger vision of who He is.
- Getting married: Finally, one of the most incredible highlights during my time in Seminary was getting married. This might not mean much for some people, but in my case, after experiencing three divorces in my own family, it was really hard for me to trust and believe in marriage. God knew about this and He gave me an incredible godly man who keeps teaching me about the love of God every day. The process of being engaged and preparing for the wedding has been an incredible opportunity that God has used for my own personal healing and growth.

- **Current Reflection - Calling:**

In regard to my calling, I believe that God is calling me first and foremost, to do ministry with my husband and as a family in the future. We are part of a church planting program in NYC and our desire is to plant a church/ministry for international workers and students. Our main focuses would be on (1) building a strong sense of community (since the majority are far from home/family) and (2) spiritual formation in a personal and communal level. We are passionate about global missions, and we believe that as we continue to develop the spiritual component,

this group of people would be empowered by the Holy Spirit to fulfill the callings that God has placed in their lives in a local and international (e.g. country of origin) level.

Secondly, I believe God is calling me to work in women's ministry. I would love to work with women in a holistic way: (1) physical (sustainable fashion, diet, fitness), (2) emotional (especially healing of wounds), and (3) spiritual (spiritual formation and growth). I am currently co-leading the women ministry in my church, and my desire is to continue to learn within the church dynamics. However, in the future, I would love to pioneer or be part of a ministry that is more evangelistic (including non-church goers and even other religions). I believe that God is using my experience in the Fashion Industry to give me the opportunity to meet and connect with women that are non-Christians. I would love to continue to grow in the area of Sustainable Fashion Entrepreneurship and the effects that it has on social issues, especially on opportunities for community development in the non-Western world.

### **What I believe - Philosophy of ministry**

“Ministry philosophy is the result of leadership emergence – the ideas, values, and principles whether implicit or explicit that a leader uses as guidelines for decision making, for exercising influence, or for evaluating ministry.”<sup>1</sup> In this paper, I will construct my own philosophy of ministry. In the first section, I will share my theological foundations for ministry (including statement of faith), in the second section I will share my core ministry values (1) Spiritual Formation, (2) Community, and (3) Empowerment; and finally, in the last section, I will share the non-negotiable spiritual practices that I currently practice in my personal life and ministry.

One of my grandmother's favorite phrases is “disfruta el momento” – “enjoy the moment”, and since I was very young, she would always remind me that life was not about the

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<sup>1</sup> The Making of a Leader, Chapter 8.

next season or the next experience, but that it was a 100% about the moment that I was living. To be honest is easier said than done, but it did not take me too long to realize that those three words can change anyone's life, and they have definitely changed mine. As I write this paper, I have been reflecting on how God has brought me from a place of lack of awareness, superficiality, and brokenness, to a place where I have learned to love my self and the things that I do. I am learning to fall in love with God every day and to be a little more present at the moment, present with Him and with people around me.

### Theological Foundations for Ministry

- **What do I believe?**

I believe that as Christians we are called to (1) have a personal relationship with God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit and (2) from that place of fulfillment share the good news with others. As Jesus said in Matthew 28:19-20, "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age". We are called to share with others what we have already received, as Jesus said, "freely you have received; freely give"<sup>2</sup>.

I believe that every person has a specific calling in their lives, that God has created each one of us with specific gifts in order that we may fulfill the purpose that He has prepared in advance. As Paul said, "But I do not account my life of any value nor as precious to myself, if only I may finish my course and the ministry that I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God."<sup>3</sup> One of the most important questions that every person wonders is:

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<sup>2</sup> Matthew 10:8, NIV.

<sup>3</sup> Acts 20:24, ESV.

what am I doing on earth?, and the Gospel not only responds that question, but it gives a deeper understanding of the meaning of life and a supernatural empowerment to the believer.

- **Statement of Faith**

1. The original Bible<sup>4</sup> is God’s written Word and is the final authority, it was inspired by the Holy Spirit. “All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.”<sup>5</sup>
2. There is one God in three persons – God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit<sup>6</sup>.
3. God created the whole world, He created humanity in His image<sup>7</sup>. The fall is the result of Adam and Eve’s disobedience. Because of their sin, humanity was separated from God and the Garden of Eden<sup>8</sup>.
4. Jesus was born from the Virgin Mary, conceived by the Holy Spirit. He is fully God and was fully man on earth<sup>9</sup>. Jesus lived a sinless life and died on the cross to forgive our sins and give us eternal life<sup>10</sup>. He died, resurrected, and was ascended to heaven to be seated at the right hand of God the Father<sup>11</sup>.

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<sup>4</sup> 66 books of the Old and New Testaments.

<sup>5</sup> 2 Timothy 3:16-17, ESV.

<sup>6</sup> Matthew. 3: 16-17, John 14: 16-17, Romans 14: 17-18, 1 John 5: 7-8

<sup>7</sup> Genesis 1:27

<sup>8</sup> Genesis 3

<sup>9</sup> Matthew 1:23, Luke 2: 7, John 3:16, Zechariah 9:9, Isaiah 11: 1

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1 Corinthians 15:20-23

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Acts 1:6-11

5. Jesus death restored the separation between God and humanity<sup>12</sup>, He is the only way to salvation, he is interceding for us in heaven. Salvation is by grace alone, there is no work that can be done to earn it, it is a gift from God through believing in Christ<sup>13</sup>.
6. After Jesus ascended to heaven, He sent the Holy Spirit to empower all Christians and testified His mission on earth<sup>14</sup>. The Holy Spirit bears fruit in the lives of the believer to glorify God and His kingdom. Christians need the Holy Spirit in order to live lives align with God's character<sup>15</sup>.
7. There is one Universal Church, Jesus Christ is the head of the church and every believer is necessary for the fullness of the body of the Church<sup>16</sup>.
8. Jesus commanded all believers to proclaim the Good News, make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to follow all He has commanded the Church<sup>17</sup>.
9. Jesus Christ will come again to the earth to consummate the final judgment.<sup>18</sup>
10. At physical death, the believer goes to everlasting fellowship with the Lord, and the unbeliever goes to everlasting judgment and condemnation<sup>19</sup>.

- **Core Ministry Values**

In this section I will focus on three core values: (1) Spiritual Formation: a personal relationship with God and inner-transformation, (2) Community/Justice: embodying God's intended society, and (3) Empowerment/Multiplication: upside-down values of God's kingdom.

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<sup>12</sup> Matthew 27:51

<sup>13</sup> John 14:6

<sup>14</sup> Acts 2

<sup>15</sup> Galatians 5:22-23

<sup>16</sup> Ephesians 5:23

<sup>17</sup> Matthew 28:19-20

<sup>18</sup> Revelations 22:20, Hebrews 10:37.

<sup>19</sup> Revelation 20:11-15

### *Spiritual Formation:*

“And one of the scribes came up and heard them disputing with one another, and seeing that he answered them well, asked him, ‘Which commandment is the most important of all?’ Jesus answered, ‘The most important is, ‘Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.’ The second is this: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ There is no other commandment greater than these.”<sup>20</sup> Just as the scribe (within his own Jewish context at the time) asked Jesus “which is the great commandment?”, I believe that nowadays people are asking themselves a similar question, “what is the most important thing in life?”. Sadly, many of them do not have Jesus responding to that question, but on the contrary, the “standards of society” are the norms in which people base their answers. Therefore, the younger generation is more passionate than ever about philanthropic work, “healthy habits”, and finding new ways to “feel inner-peace”; however, the majority of these “standards” are external/worldly, and little do they know about a deep transformation in their hearts and souls.

One of my favorite stories in the Bible, which represents this deep desire to live a more purposeful life, is found in John 4: 13-14 “Jesus said to her, ‘Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again, but whoever drinks of the water that I will give him will never be thirsty again. The water that I will give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life.’” In this story, the Samaritan woman had a personal encounter with Jesus, which led to a life transformation. She was trying to find a momentary physical need; however, as Jesus was talking to her, He pointed out that her thirst was not really a physical need, but a spiritual need.

I believe a personal encounter with Jesus is essential for true transformation. This encounter, would not only help us to grow holistically but also, would empower us to live a

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<sup>20</sup> Mark 12: 28-31

purpose-driven life, a life that would expand God's kingdom and fulfill the Great Commission. It is through the Great Commandment/Spiritual Formation (inner-healing, prayer-filled life, emotional growth, character development, etc.), that we would be able to be part of Jesus' Great Commission/Missional Endeavors.

*Community (Justice):*

A verse that has changed my perspective on having a heart for justice is Jeremiah 29:7, "But seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile, and pray to the Lord on its behalf, for in its welfare you will find your welfare." Many times, we want to see our family, close friends, and people that we love do great things in life and prosper. We pray and intercede for them, and we are always ready to give them a hand. However, in this verse, God is telling the people of Judah to seek the prosperity of a city that it does not feel like home, on the contrary, it is a place that has caused them so much pain and disappointments. How do we seek the prosperity of the city? I believe that we need to start in our microcosm (small community) to be able to impact the macro context (city). As Jeremiah mentions in the verse above, it is not only through "doing" for the community, but also through being present – by praying, interceding and deepening these relationships is that we find true transformation first in our heart, and secondly, in the city.

Being born and raised in Peru and seeing the great physical needs that people have, has made me more aware and intentional when it comes to social justice. On the other, living in the United States during the last three years has helped me to realize the huge need for community, belonging, and true relationships. One of my biggest desires is to be able to intertwine the community aspect with social justice issues, and in this way, embody God's intended society

(justice) on Earth. This core value could be represented in different ways, from eating dinner as a small community to advocating for fair-trade in the fashion industry in NYC.

*Empowerment (Multiplication):*

One of the last conversations of Jesus is narrated in Acts 1:4-5, “And while staying with them he ordered them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the promise of the Father, which, he said, ‘you heard from me’, for John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now.” A few verses later (7-8), just before Jesus’ ascension, He said, “It is not for you to know times or seasons that the Father has fixed by his own authority. But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.” In the Christian world, the Great Commission (Matthew 28) is the most used verse when it comes to missions; however, I believe that the last words of Jesus (Acts 1) is what we are missing in the mission field. Bible Schools and Seminaries teach, prepare, encourage, and send missionaries to the mission field, but it is only the Spirit of God that will give us the power needed to fulfill His mission on earth.

I believe that true multiplication is only possible through empowerment. First, the empowerment of the Holy Spirit, and secondly, the empowerment of the body of Christ – the Church. Low control and high accountability in a non-hierarchical structure are necessary to see the organic growth of the Church. I believe that the expansion of God’s Kingdom occurs when we embody the upside-down values of God’s kingdom: willingly becoming disempowered/weak/last, and fully dependent on the power of the Holy Spirit.

- **Non-Negotiables**

In this section I will focus on the non-negotiable practices in my personal spiritual walk and in ministry: (1) Rest and Balance, (2) Humility, (3) Spiritual Vision, and (4) Celebration.

*Rest and Balance:*

“Whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord and not for men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the inheritance as your reward. You are serving the Lord Christ” Colossians 3:23-24. I believe that in everything we do, we are called to do it with excellence. Always being fully present in what we do and being faithful in the small and big things that God puts before us. However, balance is necessary. We are not human doings, we are human beings and we need to go back to the source of life, God. As Jesus said in Luke 10: 41-42, “Martha, Martha, you are anxious and troubled about many things, but one thing is necessary. Mary has chosen the good portion, which will not be taken away from her.” It is when we rest in God’s presence, at His feet, that the desires of our hearts are aligned with God’s heart for our lives.

One of the biggest struggles in big cities is “the hustle and bustle”, the busyness that sometimes takes over our daily life, and without realizing it, over our entire life. In my personal life and relationship with God, it is non-negotiable that I practice spiritual disciplines such as sabbath, solitude, contemplation, and silence. In regard to my ministry, I am always looking into new ways and opportunities to practice/teach spiritual disciplines that would take us closer to God’s heart. I have realized that the main obstacle for women in the city to strengthen their relationship with God is the lack of time and ability to organize their agenda in order to spend time in the secret place.

### *Humility:*

“Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross” Philippians 2:5-8. This verse is one of my favorite verses about Jesus’ character because it is almost impossible to believe that someone would do something like what He did. Many times, when I read a verse or a passage, I try to think about how I can see that verse applied in my own life in a practical way. However, when it comes to these verses, I cannot think about any example that is even closer. Even though it is impossible to imagine such a thing, it is incredibly encouraging to see that Jesus’ humility is an example of how we are called to live on earth. My biggest desire is to learn from this example of humility, to be able to give away not only physical things in order to become humbler and more in need, but also give away “the standards” of the world, the things that are unseen but, in many ways, give us power and recognition.

As my husband and I continue to do ministry together, our prayer has been that God will not take us to the next place if we do not have the humility to be part of it. We can be intellectually prepared and even have the connections and opportunities, but if we do not have the humility and a learner’s posture, we count it as unworthy to pursue. Our Father is faithful, and He wants His people to be changed, transformed, and renewed. I believe it is a non-negotiable to have a humble heart before the Lord, because it is then that His name is glorified, it is then that we become nothing, and He becomes everything we are, and we need.

### *Spiritual Vision:*

*“Faith provides eyes for the heart”<sup>21</sup>*

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<sup>21</sup> When Heaven Invades Earth, Bill Johnson.

As Paul prayed for the Ephesians (1:16-19) "... that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of him, having the eyes of your hearts enlightened, that you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe..." It is extremely easy to get in the routine of our everyday lives and forget about the reality of the Kingdom of God, who we are, who God is, and who/what is that He is calling us to be/do. In my personal life and ministry, I believe the power of the Holy Spirit is indispensable to change the way I see people and circumstances around me. As believers, we need the Spirit of God to give us the wisdom and revelation to be able to see with God's vision. As Paul mentioned in 1 Thessalonians 5:19-21 "Do not quench the Spirit. Do not despise prophecies, but test everything; hold fast what is good." The Kingdom of God is an upside-down Kingdom, many times opposes our intellect and what is seen by our physical vision, we are in need of His revelation and as we learn to discern and align our spiritual vision with His, we are able to test the Spirit of God and move accordingly.

*Celebration:*

"Celebration is central to all the Spiritual Disciplines. Without a joyful spirit of festivity, the Disciplines become dull, death-breathing tools in the hands of modern Pharisees."<sup>22</sup> One of my favorite books is "Celebration of Discipline", because it encourages believers to pursue their spiritual journey through inward, outward, and corporate disciplines; and by practicing these spiritual disciplines is that we find freedom, deliverance, and true joy in God. I have been a Christian since I was born, but throughout my teen years, I struggle with seeing the Church as a place filled with joy. Every time I would go to youth group, Sunday services, or any other

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<sup>22</sup> Celebration of Discipline, 238.

activity I thought it was good for me and my relationship with God, but it was not something that I would truly enjoy or “have fun” doing. Even though the Gospel is supposed to present the good news of Jesus and to set the captives free. Sometimes, the Church has presented Christianity as a religion of duties and “to-dos”, rather than a true deep relationship with our Creator. “The joy of the Lord is not merely a good feeling. It is acquainted with suffering and sorrow, heartache and pain.”<sup>23</sup> When I refer to finding true joy and celebrating God in our every day, I am not talking about superficial joy or just “having fun” in a meeting, I am talking about the joy in the Lord that can only be given to us by grace through Jesus.

“And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they received their food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved” Acts 2:46-36. The way that I see ministry is the way Acts presents the Church, a group of people united in Christ, always ready to help each other, always with a grateful heart in spite of the circumstances, and always present in the moment, first and foremost present with God, and then, present in and within the community.

### **Why I am ready for ministry - The 5 Levels of Leadership**

“Success is peace of mind which is a direct result of self-satisfaction in knowing you did your best to become the best that you are capable of becoming” John Wooden.<sup>24</sup> As I was reading John Maxwell and Coach John Wooden story, I was reflecting on how much someone can impact the life of another person just by working with them in a specific aspect of their life (basketball practices) and only during a period of time (the most impactful learnings for the players was during their university years).

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<sup>23</sup> Celebration of Discipline, 248.

<sup>24</sup> 5 Levels of Leadership, 279.

- **Level of leadership:**

Currently, my level of leadership according to Maxwell's book is level 2: Permission. I am currently working at Hope Midtown Church and I oversee the Connection Team. When I started this position a year ago, the team was not very solid, and they wanted to strengthen the team. After a year, the team is very "healthy", and I am going to start overseeing the Connection Team in Hope Chelsea, a church that we are re-planting in November 2019. I believe that the reason why I received the opportunity to start the team in Chelsea, is because of the results that my pastor saw in Midtown. Also, since the team in Midtown is currently running by itself, I had the opportunity to start co-leading the women ministry, which is giving me the chance to connect with women at a deeper level. My goal is to start building the Connection Team in Chelsea, and eventually also start a women ministry in this church.

- **What does this show you as a leader of others?**

One of my biggest realizations by working in this church is that someone is not a leader in one context, but on the contrary, God has given us the capability to lead in different contexts. In my case, I was a brand manager in a fashion brand in Lima, and I had a team that I worked with. I felt very comfortable in this position and I enjoyed working with the team. However, when I moved to the States, I thought that because of cultural barriers it was going to be hard for me to be able to lead. God has shown me during this time that being a leader is not dependent on a position, a place or a specific context, but it is dependent on our capacity to be able to contextualize our leadership abilities to the different circumstances that He places before us.

- **Identifying blind spots in your soul and leadership:**

Asking different people about blind spots in my soul and leadership has been very helpful because it has helped me to realize what are the things that I need to work on. Personally, I love

constructive feedback because it gives a better perspective of where I am going, and it directs my efforts in a more productive way. After reflecting and thinking about the different feedbacks that I have received during this assignment and also throughout my life in different leadership positions, I have come to conclude that I need more balance. As many people noticed I am very passionate, and I am always leading from that place of passion and excitement for the things to come; however, this can become leading out of emotions rather than strategic and analytic thinking. Especially, as times goes on, and God continues to be faithful in opening more and more doors in leadership, I believe that the responsibilities are higher and the expectations for me to lead from a place of maturity and wisdom are increasing. God has been speaking to me about the balance between passion/boldness and patience/wisdom in my leadership, and it has been a huge confirmation and blessing been able to receive feedback from people that love me and want the best for my future.

- **Where do you see yourself in the ministry maturing process?**

I do not have many years of experience in ministry personally; however, since the majority of ministry that I do is with Piero (who has many years of experience in ministry), I had to mature at a faster pace in this process. I believe that emotionally and spiritually God has been preparing me for years to be able to go through the maturing process in ministry in a faster way. I am currently in a place where I feel emotionally/spiritually stronger than in the practical ministry aspect. Since I have not had much experience in ministry, many things are new for me. At the same time, since we do ministry in NYC, I believe that we are able to learn so much because of the fast-pace reality of ministry in the city. My short-term goal in terms of my maturing process in ministry is to get more involved in women's ministry and to continue to learn how to contextualize the Gospel for women in an urban context.

- **What are the checks and lessons God is teaching you?**

God is teaching me that when it comes to ministry, we do not only need good leaders, but we also need people that are in tune with His Holy Spirit. I believe that there are more leaders in ministry that have leadership qualities than leaders that have learned how to discern the voice of God. In my personal life, God is teaching me to listen to His voice in a clearer way and to be able to discern in the Spirit what is that He is doing in different situations and circumstances.

Another big lesson that God continues to teach me, is that things are not about me. Many times, I make it too much about me, and my personal goals or desires; but He continues to take me back to the bigger picture, and His larger work for the Kingdom.

- **What are your strengths and weaknesses identified in this process?**

When I was around 12 years old my basketball coach, who was also my dad's basketball coach when my dad was in high school, told us that we were to play "how we wanted people to remember us when we died". And without thinking about it too much, I thought about the word "passionate". I have always been very passionate and when I was 12 years old, I decided that I wanted to play basketball with all my passion.

Around 3 years later, when I was 15 years old, I was chosen to be part of the Basketball National Team. After many months of training, I was part of the 5 players that would start the games. During one of the practices, our team was not putting their heart in the field, and my coach stopped the practice and said the following, "Andrea is not one of the best 5 players, but she will continue to be part of the 5 players who start just because of her passion". I knew that I was not an excellent basketball player, and of course, there were other girls that were better than I was, but I never fully realized how much people saw the passion and heart that I had for the things that I did (in this case playing basketball).

The reason why I shared this story, is because it has been something that marked my life forever. Many times, people are more focused on being the best in whatever they do, and since I was very little, I decided to not focus more on being the best in what I do but rather, in doing **my** best. As Coach John Wooden said, there is peace of mind when we try to do our best instead of trying to be someone that we would probably never be able to be, “the best”. I believe that my biggest strength and a gift that God has given me is to be passionate about what I do. When it comes to ministry, my focus is on spiritual formation and emotional healing, especially in international and women ministry.

On the other hand, one of my biggest weaknesses is to learn how to find balance. Because I am very passionate and a huge feeler, sometimes it can be hard for me to pause, think, analyze, and then act or respond. I believe that my next season in regard to leadership development is to learn how to balance my emotions and my thinking, in other words, to balance my desires and passion, with the wisdom that God gives me.

- **What is your leadership style?**

My leadership style is practical and minimalist. I am not the kind of leader that wants to add more initiatives and more ways in which we can solve problems or get results. On the contrary, I love to see what the group or organization is already doing and from there, see in what way we can use the fewer resources to maximize our potential and results. Coming from a business background has helped me to be able to see ministry with different eyes. I have realized that many times in ministry we think that more is better, more small groups, more teaching, more discipleship, but many times we forget about the quality of what we are given. Someone can be going to four different small groups throughout the week and has less transformation than

someone that goes to one small group every other week. I believe in the power of quality rather than quantity.

Something that I have been realizing more and more is the short amount of time that people and especially leaders have in the city. Because NYC is a culture that is goal-oriented, many times people are on the way, always pursuing their next goal (professional growth or academics). With all their responsibilities, people tend to accommodate their Christian life on Sunday morning and one night during the week for small groups when work is not too busy. The question that God has been putting in my heart is: How can we make the best of these periods of time that people are giving to their spiritual life throughout the week? This group of people is very comfortable with teaching/learning since the majority of them have high levels of education; however, many of them are not super comfortable with the practicality of Christianity. I am praying and trying to learn about how we can join God in the work that He is doing in the city, where people are willing to give short periods of time, and we as the Church have the opportunity to not only connect with them in an intellectual way but also within the depths of the Christian life.

“But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you” Matthew 6:33. As leaders in ministry, churches, or organizations, sometimes we can get so involved in our work that we forget about the greater work of God upon His people. My prayer and desire are that I will continue to seek His kingdom above all, above my ministry success, above my own leadership, and above my earthly desires. My prayer is to continue to learn about God’s character and continue to lean to who He is.

### **Where God is Calling Me – Ministry Context**

- **Church/Ministry Administration:**

One of my biggest passions is administration. My current primary role at church is focused on planning, and organization and is something that I believe God has gifted me with the ability to have a bigger picture when it comes to organizing and delegating. Many times, we believe that the pastor/preacher/teacher is everything we need but we do not realize the work that is needed to run a conference, event, or even Sunday services. One of my favorite phrases is “less is more” and I believe this is a huge need for the church. We need to focus less on the administrative and details to give more time to the spiritual component as we run the church. A clear example was a conference that we had this week. It was a big conference and we had to organize everything a few months before; however, because we took the time to organize and planning prior to the event, we were able to enjoy the conference and even some of us had time to be part of the prayer team. I believe that as we give the importance needed to the administrative area of the church/ministry, we would be able to minimize efforts and prevent unnecessary waste of time.

- **Women’s Ministry:**

As I mentioned above, I believe that God has called me to women ministry in a holistic way (physical, emotional, and spiritual). I will explain this point with more detail in the “developmental plan” section.

- **Spiritual Formation:**

During my late teens and early twenties, I struggled to understand my calling or what at that time I will call my purpose in life. I always knew that God had something special for me, but it was always hard to believe that He would communicate it to me in such a clear way as He has done it today. Starting next year, my husband and I are starting a 2-year spiritual formation pipeline among Internationals (I would explain this point with more detail in the “developmental plan” section). We would love to focus on two primary things: (1) personal spiritual formation:

growing in the understanding of having a close relationship with God, listening to the voice of God, healing of wounds/memories, deepening our understanding in Scripture, and spiritual disciplines; (2) second calling: work and faith, hands-on ministry experiences, and having the opportunity to have intercultural trips and experiences.

### **Sexuality – Three Major Topics**

“Jesus summarized the whole of the commandments into two: loving God and loving our neighbor as ourselves. The frustrating thing about this is that it is both profoundly simple and difficult at the same time. And the difficulty seems to be especially apparent when our neighbor also happens to be gay.”<sup>25</sup> As Debra mentions in her book *redeeming sex*, one of the hardest things for traditional/conservative Christians is to see the gay community as part of those that we are called to love. In my personal experience, I have really close girlfriends who consider themselves lesbians for many years. To be honest, at the beginning it was shocking news but as time went on, I have learned to see them with the same eyes as I saw them before I knew about their sexual orientation. As I have been thinking and reflecting on this topic of sexuality, I have realized the need that we have as ministers to have open conversations about it. I believe that one of the biggest reasons why the gay community has such a strong rejection of the church is because we have not been present, open, and available to this group of people.

The three major topics that I would love to teach about sexuality are:

- **Sexuality and Spirituality:**

As Debra talks in the second chapter “Modesty Gone Mad”, I believe that we as the church and believers has set a list of behaviors and ways in which we are supposed to behave. However, many times this way of behavior has crossed the line to a legalistic

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<sup>25</sup> *Redeeming Sex*, 167.

way of living and therefore, many are trying to go against it by choosing to walk in the opposite direction, liberalism. In my culture, many times we tell someone what to do but we do not explain the reason behind it. The main reason why I would love to teach about this topic of the interconnection between sexuality and spirituality is that I believe that we are not human beings that have sexuality divided from our spirituality. On the contrary, we are people that are holistically engaging God, ourselves, and others in a way that both our sexuality and spirituality are present.

The way in which I would love to teach this subject is by first talking about the need to understand ourselves as a whole and not to divide different aspects of our lives. What I mean by this is that many times our sexuality can be affected by our emotions or spiritual component, and therefore, it is important that we as believers understand that every part is connected to each other. In this case, I would love to address any sexual issues that have happened in the past (especially if it is among women). In this case, someone that has been abused has high chances to have a distorted view of her own sexuality, which could range from deciding to be lesbian to having sexual problems with her husband. One of the reasons why one of my closest girlfriends decided to become lesbian is because she had two different sexual relationships with guys in which none of those ended up being good for her. She ended up being disappointed and because her best friend was a lesbian for years, she decided to try and see if she might be a lesbian and that perhaps that was the reason why she did not feel fulfilled when she had sex with these two different guys. I believe that there is a need to address the emotional and spiritual component in terms of past traumas and experiences, to go deeper into a “sexuality” topic which is on the surface of the iceberg of the heart.

- **The Role of Women and Men:**

Another topic that I am very passionate about is the role of women and men. “Then the Lord God said, ‘It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him’<sup>26</sup>. When God spoke these words, I believe that His intention was for women and men to fulfill different roles. Throughout the years in different cultures, men have advocated to maintain a superior role upon women; and on the contrary, in other cultures, women have been advocating to gain equality in both sexes. The reason why I would love to teach about this topic is because I believe that God’s intended role for women and men was to be different, not one superior to the other; but on the contrary, to work symbiotically and produce even better results. I believe that as we continue to set stereotypes between women and men, we are not allowing each role to grow to their fullness, but we are setting parameters designated by a society that is not Christ-centered. One of my favorite books to study the different women from the Bible from a Christian perspective is “Women of the Bible: 52 Bible Studies for Individuals and Groups” and I would love to use this curriculum to teach among women. What I love the most about this book is that there are different women who represent different roles in the Bible from a mother to a judge, from a poor woman to one of the most powerful women of all history.

- **The Meaning of Marriage:**

Finally, the third topic that I would like to teach about is “the meaning of marriage” using Tim Keller’s book. The reason why this is one of my favorite topics when it comes to the role of sexuality in society and the church is because I believe that the church has not given enough attention to the importance of marriage and therefore, there are many

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<sup>26</sup> Genesis 2:18

dysfunctional families that are affecting the younger generation. I believe that one of the biggest reasons why the gay population continues to increase is because of the lack of guidance and self-discovery. When someone does not have the family present, the person tends to seek counsel and attention outside the home, and this usually ends up being young lost people trying to help other young lost people. No wonder why the younger generation feels more confused and disoriented than ever when there are families that are not able to be emotionally and/or spiritually present in the house.

I would love to focus on the meaning of marriage and the importance of a Christ-centered couple working together for the expansion of God's kingdom. In my personal life, I have experienced three divorces in my own family and those moments in my life have been some of the most difficult, filled with insecurities and fears. My prayer and desire are that young marriages would understand at a young age the purpose of this union. One of my favorite talks last year, was Pete and Geri Scazzero talking about their growth in their sexual life. Hearing people that are so mature and solid in their Christian journey talking about real and true struggles about their marriage and sex life have been one of the most encouraging talks in regard to marriage and sexuality within marriage. As divorces and couples cohabiting increases, I believe that the church is going to play an important role in bringing awareness and restoration to the younger generation about the meaning of marriage and sexuality within the Christian life.

## **Part 2: 3-year developmental plan**

In the following lines, I would divide the developmental plan in two: (1) International ministry and (2) Women's ministry.

### **Target:**

- **Transnationals:** It refers not to the diaspora community itself, but to a person that maintains active, ongoing interconnections in the home and host country, and with communities in other countries as well.

Given our background as transnationals, our current age, experience, and most importantly--calling to transnationals; we have decided to focus on upper-level (junior/senior) international students, graduate-level international students, as well as young international workers/professionals.

**Vision:** We envision a Christ-like community of international workers and students.

**Mission:** We want to embody the Good News of Jesus Christ in word, deed, and power, so that those who are discipled by the Gospel may reach a holistic identity in Christ and, as a consequence, they may impact the circles of influence God has called them to.

**Core Values/DNA:**

- **Spiritual Formation (Discipleship):** We believe disciple-making is essential for true transformation. We want to help potential international leaders to holistically know their identity as children of God in Christ Jesus through deep intimacy with the triune God and a personal encounter with Jesus; so that they may expand God's kingdom with the holistic Gospel within the circle of influence God has called them to. (John 4:13-14)
- **Community (Justice):** We want to embody God's intended society (justice) on Earth. Though fellowshiping around the table is an essential part of who we are, we believe that community (microcosm) and justice (macrocosm) cannot be separated. We are committed to being a missional-incarnational community by both equipping potential international leaders in our community and engaging in social justice issues as a community. (Jeremiah 29:7)

- **Empowerment (Multiplication):** We believe that true multiplication is only possible through empowerment. True empowerment comes when the body of Christ is willing to (1) be empowered by the Holy Spirit, and (2) through the Holy Spirit's empowerment the Ecclesia empowers others and propels them to God's missional calling in their lives. We believe true empowerment/multiplication is only possible when we embody the upside-down values of God's kingdom: Willingly becoming disempowered/weak/last. (Acts 1:4-8)

### **Timeline and Structure:**

- **Intimate** (1-4 people): Intentional & informal life to life meetings (Current, Weekly)
- **DNA** (3-12 people): International Vision Team (April 2020, Monthly)
- **Discipleship** (5-18 people): Discipleship Pipeline (March 2020, Weekly)
- **Missional/Communal** (20-70 people): International Parties (May 2020, Twice a year)
- **Celebration** (100+ people): International Gatherings (Potentially May 2021, Monthly)

### **Discipleship Pipeline (2 years):**

Year 1:

- Alpha International (4-15ppl; 10-12 weeks)
- Gospel Encounter (4-15ppl; 4 weeks)
- EHS (4-15ppl; 9 weeks)
- NCI S.D. Retreat (15-70ppl; 24 hours)
- Monthly Outreach with partnering Non-Profit/Church

Year 2:

- Soul Care (4-15ppl; 9 weeks)
- Second Calling (4-15 ppl; 10-12 weeks)

- NCI Inter-cultural Trip (10-30ppl; 1 week)
- Monthly Outreach with partnering Non-Profit/Church

### **Women Ministry**

#### **Target:**

- **Transnationals:** transnational/international young women living in urban cities (NYC).

#### **Timeline and Structure:**

- Breakfast and reflection (5-10 women, every other month) / Targeting Christian women
- Experiential Activity (10-20, 4 times a year) / Targeting Christian women and non-believers
  - Dance: focus on inner healing
  - Painting: focus on meditation
  - Fashion and Beauty experience: focus on identity
  - Workout session: focus on holistic being (physical, emotional, and spiritual)
- Gospel Encounter (4-15 ppl, 4 weeks in 2020)
- Women's retreat (yearly, February 2020): focus on spiritual practices