

Jeff Keady – DML811: Spiritual Formation For Leaders
Learning Experience 2: Integrative Paper

PART 1 – PLAN OF GROWTH

The State of my Soul

In 2010 I embarked on my M.Div. journey, after 23 years in ministry with a B.S. in Bible & Pastoral Studies. The 4 years and 3 months I spent in the program at Bethel Seminary in St. Paul were completely life changing. I was not the same person on the inside in 2014 when I graduated. Ten years later, I found myself two years into a new ministry in a church three times bigger than my previous one. I had an undeniable realization that I needed to continue to grow and learn in a structured, academic setting that would take me out of my comfort zone.

Dr. Reimer said, “no one makes it to 50 without being disappointed.” This is where I found myself, only I got there at 56. I was not so much disappointed in how my life had turned out, but in what I believed I would not accomplish during the rest of my life if I did not make intentional significant changes, yet again. As far as I have come, and as much as I have accomplished both in family and ministry, I realized that I would never reach my Kingdom potential by accepting what was, but by radically challenging myself to move forward.

Having come into the Alliance at age 40, and attending Bethel Seminary for my M.Div., I had not yet studied at an Alliance school. Therefore, I was excited to discover the D.Min. program at ATS, and quickly did the necessary pre-work to begin the program in just six weeks.

I realized that my soul care was lacking after about nine months into my current ministry. I was changing on the inside, but I did not understand how, and believed it was not for the better. Major changes happened in my and my wife’s lives when our three oldest children married and had our (seven) grandchildren within just a couple years; we transitioned churches, communities, and homes; I lost 80 pounds and transformed my health; and we now served in a larger church in

a much larger community. I thought I “would do just fine”, but in the back of my mind (soul) I was concerned with my spiritual health.

God definitely had my attention and I entered the ATS program knowing I would get some major engine work done on the inside, not just a simple oil change and tune-up. I was ready and willing.

I have a podcast with the mission to provide “*ministry encouragement for pastors of small churches*”, with more than 340 episodes. I have talked with dozens of pastors, coaches, counselors, authors, professors, and scholars on the podcast, and become friends with many of them, but all those conversations did not accomplish in me what my nine days in NYC for this course accomplished. I can’t un-see, unlearn, or unknow what I have processed in the areas of family legacy and loyalty, fear and woundedness, soul care, spiritual authority (or lack of it), dealing with lies, and probably the most important, intimacy with God. Throughout my work on these assignments, I have earnestly attempted to avoid what Dr. Reimer cautioned me about in the assessment interview: “Don’t get caught living too much in the optimistic places of your mind.” Therefore my goal is self-awareness fueled by honest intention.

The work I need to focus on most is my personal connection to Jesus, hearing his voice and developing close intimacy with him. While dealing with family sin patterns, lies, and wounds is needed, most necessary is my inner life with the Spirit and my intimacy with Jesus. This relates primarily to my identity as his follower, apart from my family or vocation. I think this work is prerequisite to my vocation as a pastor, and the responsibility that Scazerro describes when he says “Lasting change in churches and organizations requires men and women committed to leading from a deep and transformed inner life.”¹ I absolutely need depth and transformation in my inner life if I am to reach my Kingdom potential.

¹ Peter Scazerro, *The Emotionally Healthy Leader*, (Grand Rapids MI, Zondervan, 2015), 48

Intimacy with God

I did not have a close relationship with my dad as a child. Dad was an alcoholic, and invariably spent more time in bars and on the softball field than he did at home after work. I had three sisters so did not have healthy male relationships as a child. What lies have I believed for most of my life, subconsciously, because of my father wounds?

- I don't measure up?
- I'll never be the man and athlete and soldier my father was?
- I'm not important enough to spend time with?
- My father doesn't really care about me or for me?
- I am not desired by others, therefore, what's wrong with me?
- Success and accomplishment will be enough to fill the void?
- God is not around, isn't really interested in me, and is unreliable?

These lies have gravely impacted my intimacy with the triune God. Mercurio referred to it as "Father-Disconnection." I did not recognize it for many years, and then in my M.Div. program I worked on self-awareness and began to realize these lies existed. But in the six years since completing my Master's I have stalled, never fully processing these things. I have tried to "live in the fullness of the Spirit" as the antidote to my areas of perceived weakness and lack, but never fully grappling with these lies and wounds has taken its toll and held me back.

I am guilty of talking and not processing, talking about symptoms and not engaging the root causes. I have focused on behavior, trying to gut it out, but have not processed what was needed in the areas of truth, responsibility, forgiveness, re-learning, and trust.

Have I used my pastoral call as a way to offset imbalances and wounds in my life? I absolutely believe God called me to pastoral ministry, but perhaps I have leaned on that as a

cheap substitute for intimacy with God? Reimer says “Many people confuse doing religious activities with experiencing God’s presence... Religious activities, which don’t lead to soul satisfying drinks from the fount of Living Water, will never quench our spiritual thirst.”²

Ministry has been the target I’ve been shooting at while trying to hit intimacy with Jesus and fullness in the Spirit. I believe my inability to achieve intimacy with God, even while being a pastor, is related to my disconnect from my dad and so my disconnect from my Father.

My interaction with a spiritual director/coach for Learning Experience 3 in this course has convinced me that I need more than 4-6 weeks of coaching sessions. At a minimum I need 4-6 months of weekly sessions with a counselor and spiritual life coach. Dave Jacobs has agreed to continue meeting with me twice monthly. I know what is ahead. I will have to move out of my comfort zone and engage intentional soul care where I face the monsters in the closet, the issues I have been holding at arm’s length, and the foray into the yet unknown and unrecognized that I must be willing to discover and bring into the light. At 57 I am running out of time and want to live fully surrendered, in close intimacy with Jesus, and with the fullness of the Spirit. I have long wished for this but have not yet achieved it.

Engagement Plan

Ashbrook talks about the seventh mansion and that it “represents the ultimate degree of intimacy with God that one can experience in this life: spiritual union with the Trinity.”³ Over the years in my teaching and preaching I would put three chairs in a small circle in the front of the room or auditorium. They represented the triune God, sitting together, in a small group,

² Rob Reimer, *River Dwellers – Living in the Fullness of the Spirit*, (Franklin TN, Carpenter’s Son Publishing, 2015) 89

³ R. Thomas Ashbrook, *Mansions of the Heart*, (Minneapolis MN, Augsburg Fortress, 2009), 190

chatting, visiting, and otherwise loving one another. I would put a fourth chair in the middle of them and say this is what God is inviting us into, his intimate circle of fellowship and love. They are inviting us into the empty chair to be in a relationship of love with them, forever. Have I been wishing for that seventh mansion, teaching about it, believing it, and yet all the while unaware of what it would actually take to get there? Soteriologically, faith locates us in that chair, but I now realize I must further develop the spiritual practices required to achieve a much deeper level of spiritual intimacy with God.

With a counselor I need to work on the wounds and the lies that I have neither engaged, processed, or resolved. The lies I listed above may result from a lack of personal connection with my father. But the wounds are different. They caused the lies I have believed, but the wounds aren't the lies. I was not even aware of some of the wounds. In working through the course material and books, conducting the interview conversations, and examining my assessments again I spent a fair amount of time thinking and remembering. A number of memories surfaced that I either had forgotten or had never seen in the same light. Several revelations came out in the conversations with family members that were like missing puzzle pieces for me. Some required forgiveness from me, others lament.

Some of these things that happened, things that I only knew of partially or not at all, were these the reasons why I was raised the way I was? My parents' separation for many months in my first year of life, the dominant alcoholism in the majority of my parent's and grandparent's families, the shotgun weddings, the unhealthy relationships, and very possibly my mother's first marriage she never told us about? All of these discoveries explain why my parents were hobbled in their parenting ability, and why so much of my upbringing was actually healthier than I even remember.

A counselor/coach needs to help me unpack these things over the coming year. But I cannot simply focus on the past.

With a spiritual life coach, I need to engage more deeply, intentionally, and consistently spiritual intimacy with the triune God and step into the vital union disciplines talked about in the course. In the area of physical health I have crafted a daily routine, and now I must do the same with my soul care. Suffering and sacrifice have been a fairly consistent part of my life, and they have yielded depth in both me and my wife Debbie. We have walked roads of pain and loss and are the better for it.

However, I have not engaged in solitude and silence. I would like to say that I have, but if I am honest the little I have done amounts to just that, very little. The Soul Care book and Mansions of the Heart really whet my appetite for what could be, and these are the books I want to process for the purpose of deeper intimacy with Jesus.

The three soul care principles that I will engage over the coming year are #1 identity (lies), #3 overcoming family sin patterns, and #5 healing wounds.

PART 2 – RHYTHM OF LIFE

As I approach this rhythm or rule of life, my focus will be on intimacy with God, but my goal will be, as Ashbrook terms it, “spiritual union with the Trinity.” It is with that in mind that I share the following plan.

In my Spiritual Coach assignment, I developed a plan for soul care that consisted of thirteen spiritual practices that would help me go deeper with God. Most of these come from that list. Here are daily, weekly, and less frequent spiritual practices and disciplines.

DAILY

Everything spiritual is enhanced by my positive health and wellbeing. Therefore, my first three daily disciplines will be rest, exercise, and a healthy diet. I experience God more fully when I am rested, active, and properly fueled. While these may seem more physical and less spiritual, I cannot get to the spiritual when I am tired, out of shape, and eating unhealthy foods.

- Rest – I am at my best when I get at least 7.5 hours of sleep.
- Exercise – While I will have a workout regimen that includes various aspects of cross training, I will at a minimum get 30 minutes of aerobic exercise every day.
- Healthy Diet – A diet low in carbs and high in protein is my general approach.

I will have four other daily activities to bring me into God's presence and power: Scripture reading, prayer, silence, and meditation.

- Scripture Reading – for the following year, I will read through the Bible in a year, in the Chronological Bible. I do this on my tablet or audio Bible, often while exercising.
- Prayer – I will be utilizing a prayer journal, writing out my prayers, requests, and intercessions, and then recording how God has met me in those prayers and their outcomes.
- Silence – I will start with five minutes of silence, twice a day, morning and evening, and see how the time grows from there. This will be coupled with my meditation time.
- Meditation – I will meditate on a verse or two from the day's Scripture reading, making it simple until this repetition is a familiar routine.

WEEKLY

- Solitude/silence – I will schedule a 30-minute time of solitude in the auditorium weekly. This is currently a practice, though much less frequently. I normally sit in the

listener/worshiper's seat and consider what the heart of that person needs as they come to seek and worship God each Sunday. God speaks to my heart in ways unique to that venue.

- Fasting – I will fast from Wednesdays 6:00pm – Thursdays 6:00pm, spending time in the evening and morning seeking God in prayer for others. This will be a new discipline for me.
- Individual Worship – I will schedule time three mornings a week to spend in personal worship and prayer. This involves singing, Scripture reading, liturgical prayers, and confession.
- Corporate Worship – One service a week I will enter as a worshiper. Even if I am preaching in it, I will engage in corporate worship and praise with the Body of Christ.
- Sabbath – I set aside Friday as a day for home and family. We often leave town to be with kids/grandkids or just away together. I will prioritize this even more. I now miss probably ten Fridays a year as a Sabbath, so I will try to make it non-negotiable. Fridays with my wife, void of ministry intent, truly refreshes me for the other six days.
- Filling Relationships – I will schedule at least one time a week with a friend or colleague who fills me up and does not drain me. This may be a lunch, a phone call, or even a podcast conversation.
- Podcast Recording Conversation – Recording for my 200churches Podcast fills me up! The mission is “Ministry Encouragement for Pastors of Small Churches.” I produced a weekly episode for 6+ years, and only in the last year did I begin missing weeks occasionally. When I do it is noticeably missed in my spirit. I am the lesser for having fewer conversations. I will return to a weekly format.

TWICE/MONTH

I will meet with my Spiritual Coach, Dave Jacobs. Dave is at SmallChurchPastor.com and has been coaching pastors for almost thirteen years. We will be focusing on Reimer's Soul Care book and Ashbrook's Mansions of the Heart. Dave will hold me accountable to this Rhythm of Life approach, as he will have a copy of it.

QUARTERLY

I will take a one day retreat each quarter for personal renewal where I will review the previous quarter and reset for the coming quarter. This will not apply to ministry initiatives, but to my intimacy with God. There is a Christian Retreat Center right outside my town that I will use. It is close, secluded, and conveniently gets me out of my daily grind without going far.

ANNUALLY

In the winter of 2020-2021 I will make my first visit to a monastery. I will need to locate one somewhere in the United States. My goal is to spend a week there, understanding that their schedule may inform mine. I know I have a lot to learn in the areas of solitude, silence, liturgy, prayer, and contemplation. This will be a major investment of time and money that I expect will return dividends in my walk with Jesus and value as a person and pastor.

PART 3 – PLAN FOR SPIRITUAL FORMATION REPRODUCTION

(I began to work on this section before the Coronavirus pandemic developed. I have not adjusted it for the current reality, believing the small control group will be able to implement the plan.)

I have a church of 500, with eight elders and three pastoral staff. Our leadership year is July-June and so this plan is for July 1, 2020 – June 30, 2021. I will almost be through my fourth year of ministry in my current church by June 2021. Fifty percent of the staff will have turned

over by then and half of the elder team will have come under my ministry. Our primary value as a church is love and our mission is to provide hope to lost people through Jesus.

At the start of our ministry year each of the elders invites one or two other men into a year-long growth process with the elders of our church. These “extra” men meet with us during the first hour of our monthly elder meeting as we journey through a book together. Before each elder meeting, the men would have read that month’s chapter and then met in small groups to discuss it. We then all meet, unpack, and debrief the chapter for one hour.

In this Reproduction Plan the men will journey through Emotionally Healthy Spirituality by Peter Scazzero. This is the foundational book that lays a foundation for Scazzero’s Emotionally Healthy series. This plan will involve monthly mentoring in small groups, a large group monthly study, the Emotionally Healthy Spirituality⁴ book and workbook, the updated eight sessions⁵ of teaching by Scazzero through his Emotionally Healthy Spirituality course, Scazzero’s Day By Day 40 Day Journey with the Daily Office⁶, and a two-day spiritual retreat in January. The material we will engage together covers the vast majority of the topics and themes we have covered in our course. The active ingredient in this plan will be the relational mentoring of the men by the elders. The goal is clear growth in each man’s emotional and spiritual vitality. Here is the schedule for the execution of this plan:

JULY

July 14 – Elder Group meeting: Orientation evening with the new men for the coming year. Focus on relationships and hearing their stories. Assign Chapter 1 for the August meeting.

Small Groups are assigned and meet to study chapter one.

AUGUST

August 11 – Elder Group meeting: Discuss and debrief Ch. 1 – The Problem of Emotionally Unhealthy Spirituality - *Something Is Desperately Wrong*.

⁴ Peter Scazzero, *Emotionally Healthy Spirituality*, (Grand Rapids, MI, Zondervan, 2017)

⁵ Peter Scazzero, *Emotionally Healthy Spirituality DVD Series*, (Zondervan, 2017)

⁶ Peter Scazzero, *Emotionally Healthy Spirituality Day by Day*, (Grand Rapids, MI, Zondervan, 2018)

Small Groups meet to study chapter two.

SEPTEMBER

September 15 – Elder Group meeting: Discuss and debrief Ch. 2 – Know Yourself That You May Know God - *Becoming Your Authentic Self*.

Small Groups meet to study chapter three.

OCTOBER

October 13 – Elder Group meeting: Discuss and debrief Ch. 3 – Going Back In Order To Go Forward - *Breaking the Power of the Past*.

Small Groups meet to study chapter four.

NOVEMBER

November 10 – Elder Group meeting: Discuss and debrief Ch. 4 Journey Through The Wall - *Letting Go of Power and Control*.

Small Groups meet to study chapter five.

DECEMBER

December 8 – Elder Group meeting: Discuss and debrief Ch. 5 Enlarge Your Soul Through Grief and Loss - *Surrendering To Your Limits*.

Small Groups meet to study chapter six.

JANUARY

January 15/16 – Emotionally Healthy Spirituality Retreat – Retreat Center in Newton IA.

Friday, January 15

6:00pm – Steak Dinner

7:00pm – Session 01: The Problem of Emotionally Unhealthy Spirituality

8:00pm – Session 02: Know Yourself That You May Know God

Saturday, January 16

8:00am – Breakfast

9:00am – Session 03: Going Back in Order To Go Forward

10:00am – Session 04: Journey Through the Wall

11:00am – Session 05: Enlarge Your Soul Through Grief and Loss

12:00pm – Lunch

1:00pm – Session 06: Discover the Rhythms of the Daily Office and Sabbath

2:00pm – Session 07: Grow into an Emotionally Mature Adult

3:00pm – Session 08: Go to the Next Step to Develop a “Rule of Life.”

**each teaching is 25 minutes or less, leaving time for small group discussion around each topic*

FEBRUARY

February 9 – Elder Group meeting: Discuss and debrief Ch. 6 Discover the Rhythms of the Daily Office and Sabbath *Stopping to Breathe the Air of Eternity*.

Small Groups do a service project in the community together.

February 23 – April 3: Emotionally Healthy Spirituality Day by Day – A 40-Day Journey with the Daily Office. 40 days of devotional material, twice a day at morning and evening. This will be a serious commitment of the men to developing spiritual rhythms in their lives.

MARCH

March 9 – Elder Group meeting: No chapter discussion. Focus of this month is on personal journeys, questions to this point, and prayer.

Small Group meets for friendship and accountability. Continue to read through the Day by Day readings.

APRIL

April 13 – Elder Group meeting: Discuss and debrief the material from the 40 Days readings.

Small Groups meet to study chapter seven.

MAY

May 11 – Elder Group meeting: Discuss and debrief Ch. 7 – Grow into an Emotionally Mature Adult - *Learning New Skills to Love Well*.

Small Groups meet to study chapter eight.

JUNE

June 8 – Elder Group meeting: Discuss and debrief Ch. 8 – Go the Next Step to Develop a “Rule of Life” - *Loving Christ Above All Else*.

June 13 – Recognize and celebrate the men who completed the mentoring in the morning services.

It is often said that you can accomplish more by doing less. Someone else said that focus means to follow one course until success. I believe, again, that Scazzero’s material covers much of what this Spiritual Formation course is about, and that if I utilize his materials throughout the year, and focus the men with common language and repetition, we can accomplish much in their lives. The active ingredient will be relational mentoring.