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Reimer/Sanders

Learning Experience 2: Integrative Paper

God has been preparing my soul for this module long before I realized this was where He was leading me. I came into the module exhausted. My husband had broken his leg a month prior and we had been out of work since. When I work backwards through the timeline of life I cannot discern a season of rest, even a day of rest, for years. It seemed that as soon as one trauma settled the next one would drop.

About 9 months before our module, I met with Dr. Sanders and began a process of professional development that evolved into soul care. The conversations, directions, and opportunities I was able to go through and unpack were incredibly revelatory and brought God's healing into places I never discerned as wounded.

A year prior to this module I was operating as a Deist. I knew God, but I was so lost in the pain I was experiencing that I blamed God for being absent. I had convinced myself that I was the problem in my family and was carrying immense shame, responsibility and disappointment over my father's death. I believed God was good, but it just wasn't for me because I believe in my core that I was not capable of good therefore I could not receive good. I began reading Soul Care to prepare for a lecture and never finished the lecture prep.

Soon after that Dr. Sanders invited me to meet and provided enough pointed questions every few weeks that I began to unravel pain I had buried and unpack all the drama. Many people point to my Father's sudden death as the greatest loss in my life, but it simply is not true.

The greatest loss would be the strenuous family dynamics that resulted in cut off and hostile fused relationships for the last 10 years of my father's life.

Through the questions from Dr. Sanders, support from my Pastor, and a therapist I walked through 28 years worth of confusion. The further I distanced myself from my family the more I realized that I grew up in a home with a toxic sibling. This revelation should have brought relief, instead it cause me to feel like the enire bedrock of my life had eroded beneath me. I no longer knew what was true anymore. It was easier to assume responsibility and believe I was crazy, because I could control the solution to that problem. To admit that my sibling was the problem also meant I had to surrender the solution and relearn all my perceptions, memories, and theology.

I was surrounded by spirit filled people who made all the relearning process manageable and possible. Two men took time out of their summer to help set me free from some stuff. My Pastor and his wife embraced my outbursts of tears, and were sensitive to where the Spirit was working to create environments for me to grow. By the time I approached the module I was exhausted; mentally, physically, emotionally, and spiritually. If there is one thing I know to be true about myself, it is that God moves mightily when I am tired. The drives into the city provided 2 hours of silence and solitude each day for Him to meet me. Some of those drives are the source of my most profound encounters with God.

Many of the areas that I grew in self awareness cross boundaries and are interrelated, or cyclical, at times. I know I struggled with repentance because I could not think of anything I needed to repent of. This flowed from a lifetime where I was identified as the "perfect child". Since my identity was wrapped up in perfection, I found myself bound to fear and anxiety as the

weight of perfection filtered every decision I made. I was always quick to forgive, but I realized it was to maintain the identity of “perfect” and used conversely used to wager power so that others could not hold any faults I had against me.

Each of these four principles largely revolve around performance for me. At one point I believed these struggles stemmed from people pleasing, but I realized that I would rather be known for my achievements. Performance dictated favor, so I learned to value the opinions of people over the people themselves.

Repentance.

I have struggled with repentance on both ends of the spectrum. My childhood was fostered in a performance-based home. It was not about who was right as much as it was about who looked right. Whoever was in control of their emotions won the fight. Any emotional outburst came with consequences even if there was merit to your response.

I also grew up in a home where it seemed that no one apologized without being incredibly angry. If I have to repent then I must have done something wrong. If I have done something wrong then I will not be loved any longer, because the standard for relationship was to maintain perfection.

I did not see repentance modeled, and to the best of my memory I don't recall instructions for correction being given. When I made a mistake or was wrong, I did not know how to correct the behavior so I would hide the behavior. I would reframe the behavior pattern to justify why it was not wrong instead of figuring out what was right or making adjustments to know what was right.

I read a quote by Andrew Murray this year which read, “Only that which is really confessed is really forgiven” and was incredibly convicted. I wanted to believe that my blanket statement confessions were actually producing spiritual growth. The reality was blanket confessions don’t flow from conviction. I never felt convicted because I never believed I was wrong. I did not fall too far from the family tree.

To grow in this area I must begin being radically honest with God and with my community. I need accountability because despite what my nickname was I am not perfect. It is arrogant and religious to believe otherwise. I need to encounter people who will adopt a “no pretend” policy. I need people in my everyday who I can share feelings with as they emerge. I need to do a total life confession. The practice to develop repentance is vulnerability.

Forgiveness

Refusing to forgive someone felt powerful. It was like spiritual blackmail. I remember thinking that a person was indebted to you when you forgave them and could not hold your offenses against you. Forgiving someone quickly also made you look good. I was always the first to forgive, but I never forgot. I remember logging forgiveness in my brain like a card catalog to whip out whenever needed.

This tendency to hold a grudge as a child painted my development as an adult. My sibling would cite times from elementary against me as an adult to prove that I was punishing him today. When we were children, favor never came or returned with forgiveness. It seemed impossible to restore trust once I had messed up.

So now that I have come to these realizations about my sibling as an adult, I am easily convinced I am just holding a grudge to punish him by setting up healthy boundaries. I find myself having to consistently remind myself that I have done the right thing.

To grow in the principle of forgiveness, I need to hold to my boundaries. My boundaries actually help prevent offense from coming in and stop bitterness from building up against him. My boundaries create an environment where I can bless my brother.

Overcoming fears

Dr Reimer said in class “The opposite of faith is disobedience”. So often when the Lord gives me a clear instruction I will ask him for a plan B or a second opinion. I have set the expectation of perfection so I will not move until I am certain it is correct. This is essentially a control issue. I do not want to look foolish, so I am going to control the outcome.

To grow in the principle of overcoming fear I have to practice silence and solitude so that I can encounter His presence. I am learning how to trust His voice and my interpretation again. In His presence I am consistently reminded of who He says I am. His presence brings healing to the wounds I am tempted to cover up and protect. His presence brings comfort that compels me to move into where He is leading.

In His presence I learn to trust that everything flowing from His hands his good. To paraphrase Ingrid Davis, His presence leads me to “joyful submission” as opposed to dutiful “sorrowful surrender”. I want to move to follow the Lord boldly instead of desperately hoping I heard Him right.

Identity

My brother and his ex-wife mockingly called me perfect child and it shamed me into submission. It painted a standard of achievement I could not reach and was bound to in all

aspects of life. Instead of be seen as a failure, it was easier to quietly hide, lie, and reframe. My identity did not match the name I had been given and I believed I was the problem.

It led me to believe that I was not capable of good. Every sermon I gave was analyzed and reduced to heresy. My family did not celebrate my engagement because I had settled, my graduation because it was just from Nyack, my Master's degree because the ceremony was too long or my first job as a Professor because it was only adjunct and wasn't ministry. When I entered ministry every step was criticized to the point where it was said from the pulpit that "Anna was only good at ministry theoretically." Nothing I did was good enough because I was not good.

God has moved mountains when it comes to my identity and self talk. I got to have some great carpet time during our Saturday session of the module. I spent the whole time looking into the eyes of the Father to see his love washing over me. I literally heard Him sing a song over me that He wrote for me. I still hear it on repeat today. I know Dr Reimer says he could only listen to a song 30x before it gets old, but this one is different.

To grow in developing my identity I need to cultivate deeper intimacy with the Father, understand the capacity of my authority, and own/develop the spiritual gifts He has given me. Intimacy will come through spiritual disciplines. Authority will be understood and expanded through obedience and opportunity. Developing spiritual gifts will be done through education, seminars, mentoring, opportunities, but primarily through trusting the Holy Spirit to supply the power.

Part 2:

Daily

There are a few practices I have committed to engaging in daily to maintain a healthy soul-rhythm.

- Bible Reading:

Bible reading is an important part of my morning. After graduate school I felt like Bible reading lost all meaning as I could not just read to hear God's voice. I constantly found myself exegeting, researching, and doing culture or word study as I tried to read.

Suddenly my devotions became a time of production instead of restoration. I decided to use a journaling Bible instead of a study Bible for devotions and I was finally able to just read and reflect on God's word. I have also found that I must replace my journaling Bible every few years so that I don't get distracted by notes from different seasons.

- Repentance

Specific repentance is another integral practice to implement in my prayer time. It counteracts a long time family pattern of pride. In the past, I felt I was practicing repentance as I vaguely whispered blanket confessions of sin. When I pray asking God to "Search me, God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting" I am more sensitive towards God's heart over my actions than my own judgment of intentions.

- Silence & Solitude

Silence and solitude used to be my top fear. I literally could not drive alone without calling someone to talk. I hear God's voice and experience his presence when I remove the distractions around me. I have set a simple goal of 15 minutes each day with no people, no scripture, no music, nothing. In a family of workaholics, I need to prioritize being still instead of surrendering to being busy.

- Running & Nature

Exercise has always been a primary way that God speaks to me. It is essentially an extension of silence and solitude, but for some reason I know God's heart for me and his creation when I am running.

This daily practices are all intentionally solitary and reflective. If I am not purposeful with scheduling time away from people, I will not ever be alone.

Weekly

- Intercession

I have committed to blocking out a 3hour time block each week for intercession. This was an assignment for Empower from Mike Plunket's session and I thoroughly enjoyed it! I shared my experience with some other members of the leadership team at my church and we have committed to spending one night a week interceding separately together over the needs of our church and the people we are reaching out to.

- Grief Journal

I do not think my soul could survive intentional grief daily, but I do need to implement a structured routine of grieving. I considered grief a weak emotion for so long that I instinctively am obstinate to the practice of grief. I am open to moving this to a monthly item, however, I want to become familiar with the practice.

- "Not Pretend" Friends

Coffee with friends needs to be a weekly practice with grieving to encourage vulnerability, practiced honesty and full life confessions with the people I walk with.

This is separate from mentoring relationships.

- “Read for Me” Wednesdays

The temptation is to only participate in spiritual development to produce from what I gain. I need to be reading books without the intention of researching for a sermon or for a class. I began identifying Wednesdays as my “read for me” day. In this category I read devotional books of my choosing for development not preaching.

Monthly

- Fasting

I have implemented the practice of beginning the month with a 24-48 hour fast. This is uncomfortable for me as I was not allowed to fast by my parents. I understand the worry it initiated from, however, it also speaks to a deeper pattern of control as a stronghold. I need to practice fasting because I need to know that God is present even when I am uncomfortable as my source of joy.

- Mentoring

Each month I want to meet with a mentor. It is very easy for me to get lost giving my time to others without making time to pursue personal growth. I also need this mentor to be someone who is willing to directly point out where I am wrong and present counter opinions. I do not encounter many people who are willing push back against some of the thoughts I have.

Yearly

- Retreats [social or solitary]

Retreats were a crucial part of my spiritual development as a teenager. I have set a soft goal of 1 retreat each year of at least 3 days. District Conference does not count as a retreat.

- Development tool

Each year I want to attend a seminar, certificate program or conference to participate in, not to lead or volunteer within. District Conference does not count.

Assessments:

In class Dr. Reimer gave several tools to evaluate the status of our souls. One metric was to see if we were petty, defensive, or compulsive. Another required us to check our “spiritual gauges” for compassion, brokenness, peace, and passion. A third was a gauge for our need of intimacy with God “HALTB”; checking hunger, anger, loneliness, tired, or boredom levels.

In addition to those tools I have identified a few measurable responses based off of the three specific areas this plan is looking to develop intentionally.

Performance -> Delighted In

- Journals [Personal]

I write out my prayers, devotion reflections, and anything I hear in my times of silence or solitude. If I am actively pursuing the steps I am outlining above then I should be going through about 2-3 moleskin journals a year.

- Books

“Read for Me” Wednesdays should have me finishing about 3-4 books a month or 36-48 books a year. A safe estimate of reading 40 books a year should be accomplished.

Authority

- Asking for opportunities in inopportune places

As discussed in class, increasing my umbrella of Authority is an overflow from intimacy.

An indicator of whether or not I have surrendered control would be to ask for

opportunities to talk about Jesus or move in His power in less than opportune times.

These times could be at the grocery store, in the middle of my busy schedule, or right

before I preach a well-prepared sermon.

Vulnerability

- Ask your post it people

“Post-it people” is a concept from Brenee Brown. She believes that our friends we walk closely with have a better read on our accomplishments and growth because they are not factoring in our intentions. If I feel as though I am developing but it is not discernable from the outside, then I probably have not been as transparent as needed

PART 3

Soul Care for MLT

The River is a small church currently launching out of redevelopment in Pearl River, NY. Our town is populated with over 80% Irish immigrant families. The Catholic Church is part of the culture in Pearl River. There is deep evidence of a desire for belonging as the community is

very tightknit from schools, to sports, to Masonic temples. Relationship is the key piece to ministry in Pearl River.

Most of our congregation and leadership are not from Pearl River. A majority are still affiliated with Nyack College, though the number is shrinking as the campus consolidation moves closer towards completion. Our Ministry Leadership Team is predominantly Nyack graduates who participated in Personal Spiritual Formation, with the exception of one member.

I selected our Ministry Leadership Team as the group to pursue Soul Care for a few key reasons. First, missional relationships are dependent on healthy people. We cannot take people to freedom we have not yet found ourselves. Second, if one person were to walk each person through soul care one at a time no progress would be made. If we can train a group of people, who already operate at leadership capacity, we are just increasing the tool belts of leaders to equip others further.

Below you will find a sample calendar to walk our 7 person Ministry Leadership team through Soul Care. Ideally this program would run from February through August as the year for church generally follows the school calendar. We would spend one month on each principle. I believe that a slow approach with leaders will allow for deeper discussion and processing to increase the likelihood of integration. As Dr. Reimer said in class, "If we go deep with a few, we will go far."

Instructional Calendar:

<p>Principle Based off of Reimer's 7 Principles of Soul Care</p>	<p>Week 1. Lecture We will meet for worship, prayer, the DVD teaching, and minor processing</p>	<p>Supplemental Reading Each reading was selected to compliment the principle and equip leaders to bring transformation to their areas of ministry and the leaders under their direct care.</p> <p>Leaders will be responsible for reading 2-3/6 books to teach to their small groups for this model.</p>	<p>Female Small Group Current model reflects 4 participants</p>	<p>Each leader will be responsible for developing 3 questions to interact with both the text and the principle to generate deeper conversation and self awareness within the content.</p>
	<p>Week 2. Small group Each month the MLT will meet in respective small groups for processing. The discussion will be led by different leaders who have read supplementary readings. The leaders will present key findings from the supplementary text and ask 3 pointed questions integrating the text with the principle.</p>		<p>Male Small Group Current model reflects 3 participants</p>	
	<p>Week 3. Creative Assignment This week the leaders will be responsible for participating in a creative integration of the principle. Some months are solo, some are social.</p>			
	<p>Week 4. One on One Each leader will have a 30 minute one on one with Anna or Tim for prayer and processing.</p>			

Sample Calendar:

Principle	Meetings & Assignments	Side Reading	Discussion Leader	Questions
Identity	1. Lecture	"The Gift of Being yourself" Benner	Female 1	
	2. Small group			
	3. Trash		Male 1	
	4. One on One			
Repentance	1. Lecture	"Pathways to	Female 2	

	2. Small group	the King” Reimer		
	3. Rocks		Male 2	
	4. One on One			
Overcoming Family Sin Patterns	1. Lecture	“Surrender to Love” Benner	Female 3	
	2. Small group			
	3. Family Tree		Male 3	
	4. One on One			
Forgiveness	1. Lecture	“Boundaries ” Cloud & Townsend	Female 4	
	2. Small group			
	3. Scars		Male 1 & 2	
	4. One on One			
Healing Wounds	1. Lecture	“Handle with Care” Wilbert	Female 1 & 2	
	2. Small group			
	3. Dr.’s Orders		Male 1&3	
	4. One on One			
Overcoming Fears	1. Lecture	“In the Gap” De Jesus	Female 3&4	
	2. Small group			
	3. Bridge		Male 2&3	
	4. One on One			
Deliverance	3 Day Retreat			

Week 3 Assignments:

Identity: Trash Hunt	<p>Leaders will be instructed to walk through their home and collect random pieces of trash that could clue their group into guessing their identity. Display the trash in a clear Ziploc bag.</p> <p>As a group, the leaders will guess which bag belongs to each member. Enter into a discussion about identity and legacy. Who does God say you are in full truth over the lies and trash that you believed for so long? Paint a cement paver for a walkway declaring the truth of God . How can we leave a legacy of identity?</p>
Repentance: Rocks	<p>On there own time leaders will take a trip to the ocean [any body of water] Walk along the shoreline and collect flat rocks as you process the points of repentance the Lord has brought up to you.</p> <p>Write each point of repentance on a new rock as you are walking At the end of your walk, bring your collection of rocks to a pier Verbally repent of each thing and drop the rock into the water</p>
Overcoming Family Sin Patterns: Family tree	<p>Create a family tree that includes the generation after you, your generation, your parents, and your grandparents.</p> <p>Look through your family and mark divorces, affairs, addiction, abuse, strained relationships, mental health, physical health, other religious practices, and notes about the person’s character.</p> <p>What trends do you see emerging?</p>
Forgiveness: Scars	<p>Identify the primary person each leader needs to forgive</p> <p>Using the henna marker, instruct the leader to write the name of the person in the palm of their non-dominant hand</p>

	<p>Reflect on your discussion of healthy boundaries and ask what it looks like to forgive this person.</p> <p>On their other palm write the word “ME”</p> <p>Dedicate 15 minutes of silence and solitude to pray forgiveness and blessing over this person and ourselves until the henna wears away.</p>
<p>Healing Wounds: Dr.’s Orders</p>	<p>Ask the leaders to identify the primary, or top primary, wounds they need to experience God’s healing in.</p> <p>Have the leaders reflect on what steps it will require to pursue God’s healing.</p> <p>Write a prescribed plan to pursue healing like a Dr would give orders at the end of a sick visit.</p> <p>Follow the prescribed plan until the one on one the following week.</p>
<p>Overcoming Fears: Bridge</p>	<p>Grab any building materials of the leaders choice.</p> <p>Give the leaders space to build a bridge however they would like.</p> <p>As they are building a bridge, ask them to pray and reflect on the people in their direct line of care [volunteers etc]</p> <p>Who is God asking them to bring through this process of soul care?</p> <p>How is God calling you to stand in the Gap?</p> <p>Who are you called to stand for?</p>

3 Day Retreat

	Breakfast	Breakfast
	Session 2: Why we need deliverance	Session 5: Testimony and Celebration!
	Solitude with application	Prayed out; Pray in
	Session 3: Group Equipping	Lunch & Depart
Arrive	Dinner	
Dinner	Session 4: Deliverance	
Session 1 ->Vow of silence		
Current Confessions		