

**Learning Experience Paper:**  
**Spiritual Reality**

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SF503: Initiation to Spiritual Formation OA

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My dominant childhood feeling is insecurity and uncertainty. I grew up under a mother who has a very strong personality and had severe mood swings. As a child, I remember I would always tip toe around her trying not to get in trouble. When I didn't feel like I was walking on eggshells, my mother would smother me with love and be overprotective. I would often be bullied for being a mama's girl because my mom always fought my battles for me as a kid. My father was my safe haven that protected me from my mother's mood swings; however, he started to occupy himself with work and friends as I grew older. Ever since my father passed away from cancer at the age of 18, I had to learn quickly to support myself while attending college to be an independent adult.

Because of this dominant childhood feeling, I fear being abandoned or being depended on. I fear appearing weak and vulnerable in front of people. I often find myself wanting to appear like I've got a handle of all my situations. I didn't want anyone to be under the impression that they can control me or think that they can hurt me. While taking Biehl's assessment, I had a low score on my need to feel secure and thought that I valued making a significant difference more, but as I kept thinking on this, I realized I may not seek physical security, but I crave emotional security. I don't enter into relationships or build upon them if there isn't a sense of emotional security. This is often seen when I choose a romantic partner. I look for resilience and maturity so that I can feel safe.

My surest, safest style is to be a rescuer. I always want to be the heroine in a lot of people's lives, especially the students I teach. I want to be the teacher that changed their lives and gave them hope and security while they are with me. This leads to my single greatest strength which is to be controlling. I'm good at managing situations, helping people reach a collective goal, persuading people, and working under set guidelines. I'm often referred to as the "matriarch", "alpha female", or "tribal leader" wherever I go because I always take control of situations, and people entrust me to help them reach their goals. Although controlling is my

safest, surest style, I can also become very overcontrolling and intimidating. I overreact when I'm stressed and I'm prone to intimidating people with a look or excessive force. I try to win at all costs especially when it comes to an argument about something I strongly believe in.

Biehl's assessment reflects similar results as my enneagram scores. My top 3 enneagram scores are 8, 1, and 7. Enneagram 8s are bold, aggressive, and outspoken. I am constantly told that I'm intimidating, strong, tough, or too bold. Despite these comments, I know that I am soft inside like most enneagrams 8. We overcontrol and intimidate others out of the fear of being weak or controlled by others, and we strive to protect ourselves. We love to be independent, and value self-respect. One strength I like about enneagram 8 is that we can boldly speak on injustice and stand up for the weak. The weakness that I am always trying to work on as an 8 is not being able to stand people being incompetent. It often leads me to judge others and discredit them from the progress they've made or acknowledge their efforts.

As I reflect on various assessments I took in this course, I noticed I have a strong need for control. Even though I have this need, I strive to be good and have integrity. I am disciplined, self-reliant, and purposeful. 1s are perfectionists and I find a lot of 1 qualities when I do work. I need things to be organized and I seek to find purpose in everything I do. Some weaknesses of 1s are that they are rigid, inflexible, and judgemental. Although I am flexible and laidback, I am very judgemental and I'm not good at hiding it.

I think that the flexibility and laidback quality I possess are a reflection of my identity as an enneagram 7. Enneagram 7s are extroverted, spontaneous, and optimistic. I am very extroverted and I love to spontaneously do things. I believe my strength to be flexibility and laidback quality comes from my ability to be spontaneous. A weakness I have as a part of being a part of enneagram 7 is that I try to get away with things by being fun when I am uncomfortable. I also lack grit in that I start a lot of projects, but I seldom finish if I get bored. If

I'm not entertained or feel free, I would try to veer away from that project in search for something more enticing.

As I took the learning modality, I learned that I am an auditory learner. I scored 2 points for visual (A), 6 points for auditory (B), and 2 points for kinesthetic learning (C). I was surprised to find out that I was an auditory learner because I always thought I was a visual learner. After taking this modality, I remembered that I performed better in school just by listening to the teacher. I seldom had to read (unless required) to do well in school. I believe that as a teacher, giving verbal encouragement and praises is crucial; however, I didn't think that this would mean that I'm an auditory learner. The areas I scored visual points are in expressing my emotions through facial expression and watching something during my down time. As I have expressed before, I am bad at hiding my emotions and it's easy to tell when I am pleased or not. My kinesthetic scores come from the fact that I quickly read over news and love to talk while walking or jogging with friends. I like to remain active and have fun, which I think is an enneagram 7 quality I possess.

According to Scazzero, my family is a level 3 rule-bound family. There was love, but a lot of it was based on what I could do for the family. There were aspects of manipulation, intimidation, and following set guidelines of rules from my mother. I was almost always disciplined by my mother rather than my father. Growing up, whenever I did something that would benefit my mother, I was considered a good daughter and when I did something that didn't benefit her, I would be considered a bad daughter. I think that this value is heavily embedded in the Asian household because we are family oriented. We have a long culture in which the younger generation has to serve the older.

Out of the 6 stages of faith, I am currently at the wall and the journey inward. I will know I'm past this stage when I can have a greater appreciation for holy unknowing (release of control) and deeper ability to wait for God (patience). I am very impatient and like to have

control over my situation. I think I will know I'm past this stage when I can freely trust God with my whole heart and be patient with Him. I know that in His time that God makes everything happen smoothly and quickly, but I have a hard time waiting to get to that moment. I often want to rush through some growth processes the Lord takes me through.

When I am unhealthy, I use God to run from Him. I dive myself into work claiming that it is for God's will when it's really to keep myself distracted. I found that I often kept myself distracted so that I don't have to deal with the emotional baggage I have in a season. During seasons of mourning, I tend to stay distracted or be hostile before I finally come before the Lord. This was reflected in my assessment inventory. I can also get very aggressive and rude with complete disregard to other people's feelings when I am in this unhealthy state.

According to the assessment inventory, I'm generally an emotional adult. I can be a child in the area of limiting my spiritual gifts. I think this is because I resort to keeping myself distracted when life gets tough. I am an adolescent when it comes to living in vulnerability, making incarnation my model, and slowing down. As I have mentioned, I find it very hard not to judge those around me when I feel something is wrong in my standard. However, I am an emotional adult in the area of visiting my past and grieving because I did a lot of this when my father passed away. It helped me grow and overcome the pain rather than bury it within me. This was taught by my mentor and the reason I think I scored highly on my spiritual well-being test.

On the spiritual well-being test, I have received a 108. For the religious well-being, I got a 57 and a 51 for my existential well being. As I've said, I think that I have a high spiritual well being score because I've learned over the years to pour out my feelings and honesty before the Lord. I was always taught by a spiritual mentor to be like David in which no matter what he was going through, he poured out to the Lord. In the times I meet with Him, my identity is clarified and renewed. Because I feel like my time with God is crucial in shaping my identity, I'm satisfied with my life and have a clear direction of where I am going. In the moments I'm with

the Lord, he shows me the dreams He has in His heart for me and His kingdom. I am able to gradually trust Him deeper and dare to dream with Him. I also have a high religious score because I believe God built and is building a history with me. Every year, I notice how far He carried me and how He opened doors to be with me as I dare to dream His dreams. I do have doubts and “dark nights of the soul”, but I’ve learned to lift my gaze to the lover of my soul.

When I took the spiritual gifts tests, I found out my top spiritual gifts were administration, leadership, encouragement, shepherding, and mercy showing. I took the test on two sites and they both indicated that I had strong administration skills. This is seen in my role as a teacher and a pastor. I believe that being organized is crucial to success and I love to help other people get organized. When I am leading a group of people, I always prioritize planning, executing, and celebrating goals that we’ve met. I find great satisfaction in helping people focus on a vision and make it come true as a team. I find myself often stepping into the leadership position when it is unclear, and people will rely on me to fill that position wherever I go.

As I started to grow in Christ, I started becoming more encouraging and mercy showing. Though I am naturally judgemental, I began to see through my failures and life experiences that what people needed more than judgement were kind words and understanding. I’m often critical of my own self and others especially when it comes to work. I would say that the Lord taught me how to show mercy and encouragement to others by having others show it to me. As I began to realize that encouragement and mercy was crucial in this critical society, I began to display it more little by little. Because of all that the Lord allowed in my history with Him, I was able to relate to diverse groups of people and their emotions. The Lord is continuously changing my heart so that I can display more of this to others and encounter the God that loves them.

I feel that shepherding is similar to being a leader. I think in order to be a good leader, you must care, edify, and love the people you are leading. I pray for the group of people I teach and serve so that God will encounter them personally. I ask God to pour into me His heart for the

ones I shepherd, and I've experienced moments God renewed my heart for people. Even still, I have a hard time asking other people for help because I feel that I can do a lot of the things independently. Although I've learned over the years to ask for help and be gracious to myself, I have more growing to do in this area.

Through all 6 of the assessments I've done thus far, I've learned that I'm naturally bold, protective, judgemental, and controlling. As I lean into Him and His word, He is constantly changing and molding me so that I can be more like Him. He is refining my natural attributes to use to stand up for the weak and disheartened. He is using my desire for fun to be with children and encourage others around me. I see that he is using my administrative skills to meet a common goal for His kingdom. As I grow to know and abandon myself, I know that He is molding me to be like Him in being merciful. I still struggle with being judgmental of others, but as God works through my heart, I stand in hope that He will transform me to freely love as His daughter.