

Assignment Title: Learning Experience 3 (Final Integrative Project)

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Professor: Dr. Martin Sanders

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## **SECTION 1**

### **Pre-Course Condition**

### **Lack of Compassion and its roots**

At some point in my ministry career, I became very fixated on organizational structure and bringing about cultural change within a church. Along the way however, I've lost sense of what it means to come along side people and inspire life change in people's lives. I would use words like "executive" or "entrepreneur" to typecast myself but what I was really doing was avoiding the need to enter into people's worlds. I created a boundary that separated me from the very people I was trying to bring life change to. What I really needed to do was address the lack of compassion in my heart and where it was coming from. I was passionate about ministry but not about the people in it, and that became a problem.

When the course started, there were very specific moments of the lecture that spoke directly to my soul. Some of the questions that really helped me to integrate the material of the course was when Dr. Sanders asked "How is the compassion level for the people you don't like?" and "Are you willing to love the worst people on the planet?"<sup>1</sup> When those two questions were proposed to our class, something in my soul began to shift. I began to uncover unsuccessful moments in ministry that kept me from cultivating deeper relationships. These particular moments consisted of times when I wasn't able to produce results in a previous ministry and moments where I felt like I failed the very people I was entrusted with. I also had to address the moments where I felt sheer rejection from the very people I was trying to reach out to. I even had to address the bitterness, anger, and frustration that came along with working with Korean folks and had to process with the Lord how I could better love my people. My lack of compassion is still getting addressed.

### **Conceptual but not quite formative**

I always loved the idea of change and the concept of becoming an agent of transformation to the church and to the people around me. The issue was not my passion or love for change, but the fact that it stayed merely conceptual wherever I was. I was well informed with theories and practices that *other* people have done in their churches and organizations, but I lacked to be that very agent of change to the people around me. I was loud but not effective. This kept me frustrated for quite sometime.

Several things factored into my frustrations. Often I was placed in positions where I didn't have enough influence and other times I was placed in influential positions but all my insecurities would rise up and cripple me from following through. There were instances where substantial change would come about through my leadership, but people would get hurt along the way. Organizational shifts and cultural change was taking place at the expense of individuals getting offended. I began to learn that my presence often uncovers people's insecurities, sometimes for the better, but often for the worst. I began to realize that I needed to address my leadership style and habits.

### **Post-Course Reflection**

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<sup>1</sup> Day 1, Lecture 3

### **Pivot in the Soul**

Although this course wasn't a Soul Care course, it thoroughly and effectively addressed the soul pieces that prevented me from living as an agent of life change. My insecurities, my woundings, and even my shortcomings began to surface. After going through with the course, I realized I didn't want to just become a revered leader who people looked up to. I didn't even want to become a well-versed leader who knew how to wield power. I wanted to become an individual that learned how to enter into people's worlds and become an agent of transformation. This course has definitely inspired me to bring about life change in ways I never thought of before. It gave me new words and concepts to explore and to implement right away.

### **Encounter with Max**

Less than a week after the course ended, I was so stirred and inspired by having taken this course. Of course there was massive grieving and addressing of my past failures happening, but I was still genuinely stoked to see how I could implement these concepts learnt and wanted to interact with people in deeper ways.

Couple of days after the course ended, I was at my local park having my alone time with the Lord. It was my usual appointment with the Lord and I was just enjoying His presence and rest with a nice cigar. I was asking the Lord how I could integrate all that I've been taking in from the course. Right then and there the Lord spoke to me and said "Talk to the guy who is a couple of benches away from you." I responded right back to the Lord saying, "No Way. Now? Here?" After wrestling with the Lord and after pacing back and forth for a good half-hour, I finally caved into what the Lord was prompting me to do. Before I approached the gentleman, I asked what the Lord wanted me to ask or say to the guy. *The Lord told me two things: 1) Ask him about Andrea. 2) Someone he knows has passed away. Ask him who passed away.*

Now I am a believer in the prophetic and the God's desire to release things of Heaven onto earth, but immediately what I felt was fear and doubt. But I decided to go for it anyway. I wanted my faith to grow. I approached the gentleman and all I said was "Sir, my name is Sammy and I'm just someone who is learning how to hear from God. Is it okay to share some things God's been sharing with me about you?" I learned that the gentleman's name was Max. Max reeked of marijuana and he looked rather disoriented but he was open to listening. I asked him about Andrea, which then he responded by saying he didn't have any idea who that was. I then preceded to ask him if someone may have passed away and he said someone died the night before. It was his best friend and roommate who passed away from choking on his own vomit. His roommate was an alcoholic. Max was utterly devastated and he was clearly trying to smoke his pain away. The Lord prompted me to just sit with Max in his pain. No religious jargon. No Christianese prayers. Just sit, ask good questions, and listen. After a good conversation, I offered him a prayer and left the park.

This past Tuesday (about one month later), I went to my normal spot again and there I met Max again. He looked very excited to see me. I asked him how he was doing and immediately he blurted out, "Sammy, I was waiting for you for the past month!" I asked him what happened in the last month. Max told me he found out who Andrea was. Apparently he asked his network of friends and co-workers if they knew of an Andrea. He eventually found out that Andrea was the

grandmother of Max's roommate's<sup>2</sup> son. The son of the roommate that passed away, found closure knowing that God knew his father and his grandmother. Max is not of the faith and yet he preceded to testify of what's happened to all his friends and co-workers. He was so thankful, that he carried a cigar cutter that he bought as a gift to give to me when he was to meet me. We are scheduled to do dinner together next Friday at his home.

I've literally asked the Lord to help me enter into people's worlds and he's helped me enter into a stranger's home. Max was sharing how he was so thankful for someone to have someone sit with him during the time he was grieving and devastated. I've never seen concepts and frameworks from an academic course come alive so quick in my life. I'm thoroughly excited for more.

## SECTION 2

### **Personal Practices**

When I use my encounter with Max as a personal case study, I believe God is doing something new in me in order to cultivate me as an agent of change. I believe God is carefully and intentionally setting me up to experience more moments where I can be intentional with approaching people and even strangers. What I noticed recently after the course was the way I was listening to people. It clearly shifted. For some reason, I became a lot more observant of the words people use when they tell their story and also became attentive to *how* they tell their story. I'm learning how to slow down and observe more of individuals's thought process and thought construct. This has become extremely helpful when listening to my family members, my church members and even when I'm listening to my friends. I'm learning how to start conversations with the assumption that "no one is like me."

**Daily Life:** I am actively learning to slow down in typecasting and categorizing people during conversations. My brain seems to be wired in a way that typecasting and categorizing takes places very quickly (in my own standards). I'm practicing not coming to conclusions earlier on while having conversations with people, even if I'm right. I realized listening is not about me being right, rather it's about me being present. I'm also actively learning how to become friends with strangers. The goal I set for myself is 1 new interaction with 1 new person per month. The area I find that I've been improving on is asking better and interesting questions. I would love to move beyond the "How are you's" to "why don't you tell me your story." I would love to use the park and the bay that I go to as spot to meet individuals outside of the church.

**Family:** What is so ironic is that right after the course ended online, I chose to move back in with my parents a couple of weeks later. I honestly thought I would find it difficult to live with my parents again especially at the age of 31. HOWEVER, what I'm actively seeing in myself is a willingness to enter into my parent's world. This is a very new thing mission in my life. I also figured that this would probably be the last time I live with them before I get married, so why not now. It's been about two weeks since I've moved in and already I've learned to subtly observe them and intentionally ask fun but insightful questions. My relationship with them is being restored in new ways. It also seems like they're learning new things about me. Even though

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<sup>2</sup> Friend that passed away

they're the parents that raised me, they seem to be seeing where and how my worldview has been shaped as I was growing up. My father currently hasn't been to a church service in years and hasn't been interested about faith recently. I would love to have good conversations about faith with him over some whiskey.

### SECTION 3

#### Design of Discipleship Course

This class has impacted how our is currently designing and implementing our discipleship course for our English Speaking congregation at our church. I am one of two pastors who is currently designing the curriculum and a big emphasis has been put on life change and cultural impact.

#### Course Description

Life Course is designed to lead students into deeper life change and to help students to live out fully God's call in their lives. The course will challenge students to follow Christ holistically (**making right with God**), grow in deeper faith (**building intimacy with God**), and make lasting impact in community & culture (**loving others like God**). Life Course will be taking place in 4 Phases:

1. **Transformational**
2. Communal
3. Developmental
4. Missional

#### Course Goals (Phase 1 - Transformational)

1. Each student will learn how to use Emotional Intelligence to advance the Kingdom of God.
2. Each student will participate in exercises and assignments that allows for deeper levels of self-awareness, freedom, and breakthrough.
3. Each student will be positioned to take steps towards unpacking what their God-given calling is.

#### Course Topics (Phase 1 - Transformational)

Harnessing EQ, Self-Awareness & Community, Grief Journaling & Processing, Shame & Community (Transforming your relationships), Family Dynamics, Inner Healing, Identity, Calling, and Hearing from God

*Phase 2-4 currently being written up.*

Currently, we are curating our content through the concepts and frameworks received from the Life Change class and implementing it in our discipleship design process. Phase 1 of our discipleship began this past Tuesday with a group of 7 Deacon Leaders of our congregation. As we progress along in the phases, one of the major outcomes we would love to see in our leaders is having them become agents of renewal in the church and in our region.

In the final phase, Missional, we're planning to have our deacon's design a ministerial project that will leave lasting impact in our church's zip code. This won't be a mere write-up of a

project. We're wanting to see our deacons integrate their heart for life change and have it become a reality in our neighborhood. This will include learning how to partner with the city, politicians, non-profits, advocacy groups, and resource people. It will also entail them starting a project that helps fund and raise awareness to important causes in the Queens region. Each leader will have an opportunity to usher in the Kingdom Come in substantial ways. The key goal here will be learning how to build life changing relationships and curating projects outside of the church building. This will take about 1.5 years to prepare for. We are planning to invest in the 7 leaders that are currently partaking in this discipleship course.