

The triads were a beautiful, empowering, and fun experience. While I cannot say for certain that our triad times will continue post-class, we continue to stay in touch with each. It feels like a support group where we can encourage each other and provide feedback since we are already comfortable with each other. Praise God for the conversations that we had and the ones that we still continue with!

To be fair, it took about one to two sessions together to start feeling more comfortable. At first, it felt inorganic to start sharing within a structure. However, we quickly realized that this structure was helpful for everyone to feel comfortable and to get to know each other. This structure provided us with the right environment that would set the tone for the rest of the sessions. These were key sessions to allow us to familiarize ourselves with each other. However, I give credit to my triad friends for being vulnerable and open to going deeper quick.

In these first couple of sessions, this is where it did feel more like counselling sessions. We closely followed the structure of Speaker, Listener, and Observer in sessions one and two. While it did feel structured, it became less robotic as each shift in roles took place. What I noticed in these early sessions was that there was encouraging feedback, but a hesitancy to share any growth areas. It is also possible that my triad could not think of any growth areas. I did provide quick feedback on how one of my triad members mostly commented as a listener, but they also paired it with asking a couple of quality questions.

Starting with the second session on day one, our structure of Speaker, Listener, and Observer began to slowly disappear. However, this was did not take away from the conversation. In fact, it began to flow more like a conversation rather than counseling. There were still quality questions asked and some feedback, but it felt more like a dialogue rather than a structured session with defined roles. We were able to encourage each other and ask

challenging questions freely instead of waiting for a role to come to us. On the other hand, we were respectful in giving each other time to ask questions and respond to them.

With the third session, that is when the triad structures ceased and deeper conversations started flowing. Each person began to share fears, confessions of sin, and deep struggles. We still asked each other questions, but also began to encourage one another. This is where I began to notice takeaways for ministry.

One major takeaway was building a culture of sharing and openness. It took a session or two, but it took the effort of the entire group to maintain a confidential space where judgment would not be passed, but listening and the opportunity for freedom and growth. While the structure of Speaker, Listener, and Observer was useful to break the ice, someone inevitably needed to share some deep thought first to open up the conversation. By the end of our sessions, it felt like we had begun a good work to start this culture between us. The takeaway here is that, in order to build this culture, someone needs to initiate this and continue to nurture it.

Another takeaway for ministry is about friendships in ministry. As Martin repeated in our class times, “you may need new friends to grow and take your growth to the next level.” This was apparent in my triad time. We asked each other challenging questions with a ministry-focused mindset. All of us have had mentors and spiritual directors in our lives, but not many, if any, ministry friendships. We were not asking each other questions to mentor each other, but to challenge each other to grow in the areas that we had shared. This maybe a personal challenge, but I was more comfortable sharing my challenges in ministry with ministry friends over a mentor or spiritual director. The questions that were asked were coming from a friend rather than a teacher or coach. It felt safer.

As for grades for my triad members, each of my members would receive an A (Soraya Angulo and Ashleigh Weaver). Both listened well and provided encouraging feedback to each person. Both of their verbal and non-verbal communications indicated that they were listening, interested, and attentive to each conversation. Each asked open ended questions, summarized any speaker's sharing well, and were non-judgmental. Empathy was noticeable in the verbal and non-verbal. For example, we heard the phrases "that must have been difficult" or "that sounds incredibly challenging" on numerous occasions. Little advice was thrown around if any. When questions were asked, they were for clarity and directional in processing (for example: "what would it look like if you did take that step in your ministry?").

To be more specific, Ashleigh already has a counseling background, so listening was a natural part of her training. Being the listener was where she shined. She asked challenging questions in a graceful and validating manner. You could tell her tone of voice was trained well, if not just natural, to be gentle and affirming. Every triad member expressed how comfortable they were in answering her challenging questions because of her tone. If I were to take away any points from Ashleigh is that I would have wanted her to dive deeper with her sharing. While she shared deep thoughts, it almost seemed like these thoughts were only somewhat deep. It seemed to take her more time to be comfortable with the triad and what she shared.

For Soraya Angulo, she admitted that she is a talker early on. This became evident during our triad times, but her communication always indicated that she had been listening (such as summarizing) or was providing context for her questions. Her use of verbal and non-verbal encouragement was natural and powerful. Of all our triad members, she likely went the deepest among us. She was vulnerable and raw with her sharing. The only growth area that I gave her feedback early on was to try and talk less when prefacing a question.