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PMN101: Introduction to Spiritual Formation: OB

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Guyon Response Paper

I had no idea there were so many different ways to pray before I read the book. Of course, I was aware that every person approaches this subject differently and more importantly, every person has a unique vision of and approach to prayer. I had the following thoughts as I read the first chapter, "Thirsting of God" in particular: Do I pray frequently? What is a prayer? What time do I pray?

I'll be the first to admit that I'm not the most religious person and that I don't pray every day. In "severe situations", I pray. Whether it's a good or bad thing. I give thanks to God whenever I am given the opportunity to experience something really wonderful, such as studying and playing basketball in New York. I pray to God for guidance and support whenever I'm going through a trying time in my life (such a sickness or a death in the family, for instance). When I turn to God, I feel strengthened and relieved. I typically go to my room or a quiet area to talk to God; somewhere I can be by myself without being bothered. I occasionally express my ideas and words aloud, but other times I just remain mute; I think God is also aware of my silence. The proverb "speaking is silver, silence is gold" quickly sprang to mind when I read the chapter, "The Benefit of Silence" in the book. I frequently withdraw and seek tranquility during trying times. In some circumstances, keeping quiet is more helpful for me than talking about it. I don't always center my prayers on a specific Biblical scripture in my brain when I pray. At this point, I just want to vent my frustration.

The second chapter, "Scriptural Meditation," however, inspired me to try this approach. I chose a verse from the Bible and kept my attention there; I turned off all other thoughts. It was a positive encounter. I found the chapter titled "Starting the Trip" to be the most interesting. I started to think a lot more because it applies to my current circumstance. My life is about to undergo a significant upheaval, but one thing will never change: God. Because he sees and comprehends me wherever I am on this planet. He keeps my loved ones and friends in Florida safe while I'm in New York; but it's also a brand-new encounter with God for me. Although being raised as a Catholic, I don't actively practice my religion as often as I should. What does it mean to be a believer? I ask myself this question frequently. Is a person simply a believer if they consistently attend church and pray? Must I demonstrate my faith? I had no idea there were so many diverse ways to communicate with God, as I mentioned at the opening of my essay. I'm not quite familiar with these facts and I constantly communicate with God in the same way; I can't wait to try either approach. I am really open to discovering new things about God or to experiencing new things through prayer. I wish to advance personally and intellectually.

The second half of the book "Experiencing God Through Prayer" is another topic I'd like to cover. I selected a few passages that provoked a lot of thought in me. "The Formal Prayer" is the fifteenth chapter. I pondered the significance of formal prayer in Christianity in this chapter. Christianity frequently uses and records formal prayers; prayers are then memorized and spoken by heart. Whether it's at home, the church, or another location that feels appropriate. The Lord's Prayer is a well-known example for Christians. No matter how steadfast a person's faith may be, I am certain that every Christian is able to memorize the Lord's Prayer. The Lord's Prayer is to me like dribbling a basketball; it is something I will always remember. After that, I questioned the significance of formal prayer. I would contend that the majority of Christians hold the notion

that prayer can strengthen their faith. By establishing a relationship with God through prayer, people can better comprehend God's purpose for their lives. I found this chapter to be very remarkable because the Lord's Prayer holds a special place in my heart. What it means to be led by God is discussed in the chapter "How to Be Led by the Spirit". When you hear this, your immediate instinct is to get up and move, but that is not what is meant in this situation. More "mental or psychological" guidance is involved. The phrase can also signify to wait until God commands you to act. It is also claimed that people who follow the guidance of the Holy Spirit are descended from God. It's hard for me to follow God's guidance. I frequently wonder how things are meant to operate and how I will know when God is directing or leading me. Is there any way to even recognize this? Does this only occur in the unconscious mind? Questions that I had but had not yet found answers to come together in this chapter. Finding solutions to them is, in my opinion, also very tough. Is there even a solution to this? Really, I don't believe that. You will either sense this advice or not. You can think of it as an internal input. Although I wouldn't say I don't experience this Spirit, I don't believe to the same degree that other people do. More specifically, with those who more fully embody their beliefs than I do. When I experience "inner input," there are moments when I wonder if God is behind it. God influences my subconscious and leads me to make a choice that will help me personally advance.

As a conclusion, I can state that the book has at times caused me to reflect deeply on both my faith and who I am as a person. Although I claim to not be the most religious person in the world, I have discovered that I simply define and live my faith differently; this does not imply that I do not believe in God. I believe the book has made me a better person and that I have matured in how to communicate and practice my faith.