

READING REPORT FORM

PMN 101 – Introduction to Spiritual Formation

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With integrity, I have read this book (circle one): Thoroughly and Entirely—100%
Quickly but Completely—100%
Thoroughly but NOT Entirely—_____%
Quickly and NOT Completely—_____%
Not at all

Signed: 

1). Where did this book “take you apart?” How did God use it in “spiritual surgery?” (please use quotes & page numbers)?

One of the most difficult chapters for me to read and process was chapter 3, *Belonging*. Particularly the section about the shame and grace cycles. Vulnerability is a concept I have no desire for, it makes me feel exposed and often times unsafe. My natural instinct is to hide and disconnect from others when something is wrong or I have done something I regret. I am particularly challenged by the living in the light portion (pg. 75), where individuals choose to be transparent about their situation instead of hiding. This is where my flight would kick in. If I am vulnerable with someone, my first instinct is to run but in the grace cycle, the following step is to keep mental and physical connection with others. This entire section challenged me to evaluate the way I have approached my mistakes and to be mindful of how I deal with the ones to come. It helped me realize my unhealthy tendencies and gave very clear instructions on the right way to handle my mistakes.

Another chapter that was honestly difficult to read was chapter 4, *Brokenness*. Many areas of this hit home for me. The time in my life where I felt most broken occurred before I was a Christian. I was raised in a Christian home so I knew who God was and thought He was real but wanted absolutely nothing to do with Him. After accepting Christ and walking in a relationship with God, I have begun to deal with the aftermath of the abuse and bad decisions that caused the brokenness in my life. I find myself struggling with truly accepting grace and redemption in that area of my life. On page 93, the author writes “In the kingdom of God, there is no limit to God’s grace.” This actually made me tear up. No matter what I have done, God’s grace is sufficient.

Thinking back to the time of my life which caused such deep brokenness, sometimes I struggle to accept that there was a purpose to it all. I often find myself thinking, did that really have to happen? On page 94, the author writes “This truly is a blessing to be broken.” This is a truth that I am still having to work to believe each day. Even though my experience deeply

affected me and caused such great pain and suffering, God's mercy and love can be seen in every aspect of those few years of constant brokenness. I have to remind myself how truly wonderful it is to have a testimony like this that exemplifies such love and redemption.

2). Where did you agree most with the author? Disagree most?

I agree with the author most in that we can truly be close to God, and what always seems to get in the way of this is our own shame, doubt, and avoidance. We truly are our biggest obstacles. God has freely offered himself to us, all we must do is accept and pursue a relationship with him. Oftentimes we find ourselves stuck in the shame cycle that drives us away from God and allows the Devil to convince us that God wants nothing to do with us.

As for a point of disagreement, I do not outright disagree with the author however in chapter 7, Hearing God's Voice, I am a bit skeptical of the process of praying for others in the way they describe. I do firmly believe the Holy Spirit can and will work through us to intercede and pray for others, but the steps in this chapter are so structured, and I question whether the ways of the Holy Spirit can be identified in such rigid steps. I think it is very much possible that in these steps, the Holy Spirit can move in marvelous ways, but I do not want to confine the way the Holy Spirit inhabits our prayers to one distinct form. God is all powerful and His Holy Spirit can move in more ways than we can imagine, so I think it is important to also emphasize this.

3). What was the key spiritual truth you gleaned from this book? How are you integrating it into your personal spiritual formation process?

Firstly, this book gave me insight on myself and taught me different ways to examine the trials I have experienced, the characteristics God has given me, and the mistakes I have made. Reading this book taught me that to start my spiritual journey, I must first have a desperation for God. This desperation pushes me to pursue God, listen for His voice, and tune my heart to His desires. The portion of each chapter where a particular discipline was addressed, such as the *discipline of listening prayer* or the *discipline of honesty*, were some sections I found most applicable to life. A discipline becomes second nature through practice and implementation into everyday life, and this practice takes conscious effort. As I have begun to journal about these different things, I have received conviction pertaining to many of these disciplines and have already begun to practice them. I have people holding me accountable and written record to document this process in order to stay on track.

This book challenges us with an abundance of ways in which we can work on our spiritual journey. In all honesty, this can look quite overwhelming and seem like a never-ending journey. It is in these times that I feel overwhelmed when I am directed to prayer. My spiritual journey does not progress by my own efforts rather through my surrender to Jesus and with the Holy Spirit filling me and guiding my every step. My prayer during the entirety of this course has been for God to take me out of the way of myself and fill me with the Holy Spirit so that God can be glorified in my life. I have been continuously reminded that this life I live is not my own, but merely one entrusted to me by God to bring Him glory.